FRIENDSHIP, NETWORKS AND TRANSNATIONALITY IN A WORLD CITY: ANTIPODEAN TRANSMIGRANTS IN LONDON

David Conradson and Alan Latham

Author details

David Conradson and Alan Latham are Lecturers in the School of Geography at the University of Southampton.

Address for correspondence:

David Conradson and Alan Latham
School of Geography
University of Southampton
Southampton
SO17 1BJ

d.conradson@soton.ac.uk
a.latham@soton.ac.uk

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Abstract

In this paper we contribute to the growing literature on contemporary forms of global mobility. Our focus is upon young New Zealanders who move to the UK for a period of work and travel, typically basing themselves in the city of London. Beyond consideration of career opportunities, we find formulations of the self as creative project to be remarkably central to the mobility of these New Zealanders. Their time in London is often understood as a period of exploration, travel and new experiences. We note also the distinctive role that friendship networks play in sustaining and shaping this movement, in both practical and less tangible ways. Critically, we find that these friendship networks are themselves mobile, in some cases undergoing almost complete temporary relocation from New Zealand to the UK. This raises questions about how we think about contemporary international mobility, and the significance of friendship as opposed to kin- or neighbourhood relations within it. We conclude with a series of schematic statements regarding what is needed to more fully come to terms with the distinctive forms of mobility that these New Zealanders – and the Australians, South Africans and Canadians with whom they have much in common – embody as a way of life.

Keywords: Globalization; Migration; Friendship; Social networks; Individualization; Transnationalism
Each time I came back it felt as though
I had never left. I took a world with me

as a snail rides inside its own firmament …

(Kevin Ireland 1991: 72)

An ocean journey is an idyll broken bounded by two deflating experiences. When we
reached Southampton, the first words spoken to me by a native Englishman came from
an immigration official: “When do you intend to return to New Zealand?”

(A. K. Grant 1966: 150)

Introduction

The past decade has seen an enormous growth in work that seeks to understand
processes of globalization. A central element of this has involved a renewed
concern with processes of migration. Recognising that it is not just flows of
materials, images and money, but also flows of people that define patterns of
globalization, increasing attention is being paid to the ways in which the
contemporary world is bound together by personal and communal links than span
and weave together national and (increasingly) continental boundaries (see Castells

Much of this literature has focussed on the economic structures driving migration.
Yet what is increasingly apparent is that a significant proportion of these global
population flows cannot be understood within a straightforward economic rubric.
This is not say that economics does not matter. Far from it. But it is to suggest that,
for an increasingly diverse mix of people, a period spent living abroad – whether to
study, to develop a career, as part of a period simply spent travelling, or as an
experimentation with the possibility of emigrating permanently – is becoming a normal and almost taken for granted part of the life cycle.

Recognising the degree to which international mobility is becoming both more commonplace and more complex presents students of migration and globalization with at least two important questions. Conceptually it requires a reconsideration of the theoretical architecture employed to make sense of movement and mobility. If we recognise that movement and mobility are as important to the functioning of contemporary societies as stasis and fixity then we need to develop concepts that explicitly engage with this. As a range of writers from Nigel Thrift (1993; 1996; 1999), to Arjun Appadurai (1990; 1996), John Urry (2000a; 2000b), Ulrich Beck (2000; 2002) Nikos Papastergiadis (2000), Michael Peter Smith (2001), and Aiwha Ong (1999) have highlighted, social relations ordered through mobility are different to those dominated by stasis.

The second key question raised by contemporary patterns of international mobility concerns the kinds of techniques that are best suited to actually describing and mapping these new forms of sociality. If writers like Urry, Thrift, Papastergiadis, Beck, MP Smith and Ong offer a sophisticated starting point from which to think through mobility, it is arguably only MP Smith (2000) and Ong (1999) who have provided sustained empirical demonstrations of how these concepts might be employed. Yet if accounts of new patterns of mobility are to have sustained relevance, these insights need to be carefully anchored in detailed empirical investigations (cf. Favell 2001). This is not necessarily going to be straightforward. It will require experimentation with new research methods as well as the reconsideration and reengineering of a range of well-established methods.
In what follows we want to explore this interface between theory and the empirical in studies of global mobility. The aim of this paper is twofold. Firstly, we want to introduce and describe a group of migrants who are symptomatic of the increasing diversity of contemporary patterns of international migration: young New Zealanders in London. This is a group for whom a period of living and working abroad has come to be viewed as an essential part of reaching adulthood. It is also a group whose motivations and reasons for migrating are in many cases only tangentially related to economic factors. Secondly, we want to think how we as social scientists might best go about making sense of the worlds that migrants like these New Zealanders fashion and dwell within. Like all complex stories it is not always clear where to begin. But since we must start somewhere let us start in Willesden Green, London.

**A Life in London**

Sally is a New Zealander. She lives in Willesden Green, a multicultural and suburban area of northwest London that has many migrant communities and relatively good transport connections (the recently completed Jubilee Line passes through the area). Although a pleasant enough place enough to live, Willesden Green is also fairly non-descript, dominated as it is by monotonous rows of semi-detached houses. Here Sally shares a rented house (or flat as she would call it in her Kiwi vernacular) with four other New Zealanders, individuals who are also working and travelling in London in their late twenties. Like many other properties on her street, this house is a pebble-dashed 1930s semi with a small garden out the back. In terms of the recognisable material trappings of young professional living, there is little of note here: no television, no high-end stereo system, and no designer
furniture. In the interests of economy, the front lounge has also been turned into a bedroom. And yet all of the occupants are qualified professionals, working in hospitals, education, local government, and an engineering firm.

Sally herself is a primary school supply teacher. In Wellington, where she lived before leaving New Zealand, she had held a full-time teaching post. In her London supply-teaching job she works for a little over £100.00 a day, with no provision for any holiday or sick leave. Furthermore, her job effectively sits outside the British teaching career structure, with few prospects of advancement. Should she wish to pursue her career seriously in the United Kingdom she would have to invest a good deal of time and money gaining UK accredited qualifications. This, however, does not worry her greatly as she enjoys her job. Equally significant is the fact that her short-term employment contracts offer a great deal of valuable flexibility. Since coming to London almost two years ago Sally has alternated between periods of working and extended periods of travel in Europe (these often coinciding with natural breaks in the school year). As well as travelling around much of Europe, she has enjoyed two extended stays in Turkey working with a community group connected to her church.

There are a number of things that strike us about Sally. Firstly, she is one of a large number of migrant workers in London who do not quite fit with the dominant figures of the transnational literature. Considerable attention has been paid to the mobility of the global elite, for instance, whose movement is often shaped by employment in sectors such as financial services (Beaverstock, 1996; Findlay, 1996; Iredale, 2001; Koser and Salt, 1997). Equally, there has been a good amount of research exploring the movement and temporary migration of individuals and families from the ‘developing’ world to the industrialised west, such as the Mexicans who
work in California and the Filipina nurses who work in Britain (Smith and Guarnizo, 1998). But there has been surprisingly little consideration of more middling forms of transnational migrant – if we understand middling in both socio-economic and class terms. World cities like London are home to large numbers of young, relatively well educated, migrants, from other affluent countries – from Australia, New Zealand, Canada, the United States, Japan, and other European Union member states, to name a few of the more prominent examples – who are drawn to the city as much because of what it offers them in lifestyle and personal experience terms as by any narrow economic calculus. This, of course, is not to say that these migrants might not end up earning substantial sums of money. But these particular embodiments of relative youth, mobility and middlingness – of which Sally is an exemplar – suggest a need to reconsider some of the established categories of individual and group mobility employed in the transnational migrant literatures. Furthermore, they also require us to reconsider the role that places like London have in particular transnational imaginings.

Secondly, and closely related to the first point, we note that Sally has little ambition to remain in London or the United Kingdom long term. But then nor does she have any solid ideas about when, or indeed if, she is going to return to New Zealand. So what is Sally up to? This is not by any means a straightforward question. But it does seem that if we want to understand the motivations and dynamics of her mobility we need to consider how Sally is using travel and the experience of being a migrant as part of a project of self-fashioning. By this we do not wish to imply some heroic Nietzschean project of self-annihilation and self-reconstruction. Rather what we mean is a more prosaic (but no less interesting) process of sustained self-experimentation, exploration, and development afforded by
the liminality of travel. This is a process that is structured both by the act of moving to London and by the economic possibilities that London offers an educated, English speaking person like Sally. It is also a process that although somewhat open ended—remember that Sally had already spent two years working in London—is recognised as being temporally bounded. At some point Sally knows she will have to return to ‘real life’ even if it is not clear what that ‘real life’ will be.

Thirdly, we also note that if on first glance Sally’s movement appears highly individualistic, it is in fact enfolded within a range of established and enduring social relationships. Her housemates, for example, are all friends from her period studying at university back in New Zealand. And while Sally enjoys a fairly active social life in London, the core of this centres on a tightly knit and highly supportive friendship network whose origin again stretches back to Sally’s time in Dunedin and Wellington (and which includes her housemates). For all the disruption and change that Sally’s move to London has undoubtedly engendered, her life has thus remained remarkably stable. This stability points to another set of relations within which Sally’s movement is enfolded: that of New Zealand culture. It is no coincidence that Sally and her friends have all ended up in London at about the same time. These individuals are not uniquely mobile. As we have already mentioned, London is home to a huge number of migrants similar to Sally, of which many thousands are New Zealanders.\(^3\)

New Zealand is a nation both founded upon and significantly bound up with such mobility. And while Sally and her friends are 19,000 kilometres from ‘home’ they still remain in important ways connected to this culture.
Thinking about Mobility, Friendship, and the Self

How might we understand this apparently national culture of mobility that despite its distributed nature seems remarkably resilient? For that matter, how are we to understand the friendship networks that simultaneously embed Sally in both London and New Zealand? And, what should we make of the narratives of self-development and extension that, among their other effects, blur the distinction between economic and non-economic motivations to move?

We want to suggest three routes through which to begin to answer these questions. First, we want to examine the narratives of self-realisation and development that appear to be so important for migrants like Sally. Second, we want to explore how the patterns of mobility displayed by many New Zealanders in London are bound into particular networks of friendship and kinship that appear to have a remarkable temporal and spatial resilience. Finally, we wish to show how these narratives of self-realisation and temporary relocation emerge within a particular historical-geographic culture of mobility.

In exploring these issues, we draw upon preliminary findings from an ongoing project that focuses on New Zealanders living and working in London. We consider the experiences of ten individuals in particular, as articulated within semi-structured interviews, who were employed in professional fields such as teaching, planning, engineering, physiotherapy. Our intention here is not to undertake a sustained examination of these empirical cases. Rather through these examples we wish to develop a series of arguments about the particular interweaving of physical mobility, selfhood, friendship and national culture that many New Zealand migrants in London embody.


Mobility and self-realisation

One of the most striking and simultaneously puzzling characteristics of our interviews with New Zealanders in London was the background to their move to Britain. The majority of our interviewees had left apparently secure and well remunerated professional jobs to go travelling. We have already seen how Sally left a teaching position in a Wellington primary school that she had held for three years. But she is by no means unusual. Rachel and John are a married couple in their early thirties who had been living in Auckland prior to migrating to London three years ago. Both are university graduates who resigned from permanent positions to move to London. While John was fed up with the routine and internal politics of his publishing job for a prestigious national magazine (and had therefore been considering changing jobs), Rachel was committed and passionate about her work as a special needs teacher. Nonetheless, she felt compelled to throw her job in and travel. Why did she do this?

In explaining her decision to move to London, Rachel emphasises the experiences London offers her. Her life in London is organised around a hectic schedule of museum and gallery visits, interspersed with weekend trips away from London, either to the more historic parts of Britain or to mainland Europe. Interestingly, she also expresses a degree of relief at being away from the pressures of a permanent position, as this allows her to take a more relaxed attitude to her work than was possible in New Zealand.\textsuperscript{5} Rachel is also keen, however, to stress the non-permanent nature of her movement to London. It is precisely this opportunity to enjoy experiences unavailable in New Zealand and to live by a rhythm alien to her earlier existence that defines her life abroad. So clearly we need to acknowledge the experiential dimensions of Rachel's move. But equally we need to recognise the
extent to which her current pattern of life must be understood in relation to a wider personal biography.

There are number of ways in which this biographic extension of the self could be interpreted. Following Munts’ (1994) reading of Bourdieu (1984), we could see the anxious and energetic assembling of experience as part of a naked attempt to assemble cultural capital to be deployed when one returns ‘home.’ Certainly, there is an aspect of this in the actions of Rachel and those like her. But this seems a rather limited – and unfair – view of travellers like Rachel. Another, and we think more productive route, is to view Rachel, Sally or John’s movement in terms of a wider culture of self-exploration and self-development. Following the pioneering work of Anthony Giddens (1991; 1992), Ulrich Beck (1996; 1997) and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 1993; 1994; 2002) it is possible to interpret the style of mobility embraced by New Zealanders in London as being bound-up with a more general process of societal individualization, a process that places an enormous emphasis on the cultivation and nurture of the individual self.

In using the term individualization, Giddens and Beck-Gernsheim do not mean to suggest a process in which individuals have somehow become decoupled from social institutions. What they wish to highlight is how the central modalities of social power are now organised through the figure of the individual. The State and other institutions increasing assume an active and self-responsible individual as the central organising unit of society. At the same time, and in a closely related fashion, many of the key building blocks through which people had previously oriented their lives – things such as marriage, work, family, and education – have become explicitly matters of choice. They have become de-traditionalized. These relationships are no longer bound into the bedrock of tradition, but have instead become part of the
increasingly complex, fluid and reflexive project of forging a self. The result, as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 3) write, is that “[t]he normal biography thus becomes the ‘elective biography’, the ‘reflexive biography’, the ‘do-it-yourself biography’” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim 2002: 3).

Under these conditions of societal individualization – which Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002; see also Beck 1999; 2002) also claim are closely bound up with globalization – migration or an extended period of travel simply becomes another possibility open to the individual. It is a practice that offers both a potential break from the routines of work and the chance for all sorts of new experiences. Equally, however, its benefits and consequences must be weighed with regard to their potential influence on one’s future social and economic position. Here London as a destination appears to offer a perfect compromise for many New Zealanders interested in a period sojourning. As a legacy of its colonial ties with Britain, New Zealanders can obtain a two-year working holiday visa. There are no (or few) language difficulties. New Zealand university graduates generally have little problem having their qualifications recognised – a situation that is aided by the similarity between the New Zealand and British university systems – and can generally find relatively well-paid work through temping agencies. On top of all that, London is an attractive place to live. It is a ‘world city’ offering a wealth of possibilities in a dynamic and multi-cultural social milieu, whilst also being ideally positioned for travel to continental Europe.

This happy conjunction of factors mediates many of the uncertainties associated with the act of migrating. It also makes balancing the multiple imperatives of career, gaining new experiences, nurturing kinship and partner relationships, and maintaining one’s personal autonomy, significantly less problematic. It may well be
case that, as Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002: 26) phrase it, “the life of one’s own is an experimental life.” But one of the key attractions of London is that it does not demand that things get too experimental. All of the New Zealanders we spoke to were employed in areas that were closely related to both their previous employment and their professional aspirations for the future. For many like Sally, Rachel and John, their time in London was also more about tending their careers than progressing them. Whilst seeking to maintain a certain set of employment skills and a level of everyday work stimulation, they were not necessarily pursuing career development in any strong fashion. This is not to say that their earnings were insignificant – several were actively paying off student loans or saving for a house deposit back in New Zealand – but, on balance, career was considered less important than the experiences and travel London afforded.

Nonetheless, it is not the case that all New Zealanders treat their period in London in such career neutral terms. For some the attraction of London is precisely that it allows one to combine career progression with extensive travel. This progression is often about gaining experience that would be difficult to access in New Zealand, thereby enabling an individual to apply for higher-level positions upon return. For Mike, a civil engineer in his late-20s with a postgraduate degree, a significant element of his move to London was about the opportunity to gain some form of project management experience. In New Zealand he had worked for a medium-sized city council, addressing local water management issues as part of a small team. His job remit in this council was relatively static, however, with little obvious opportunity for progression. The opportunity to oversee a civil construction project in North London was thus especially valuable, as he would have had to wait several years for similar work in New Zealand. Despite this interest in his career,
however, Mike still saw his work in London within the context of an eventual return to New Zealand.

**Friendship networks, movement and mobility**

Being abroad for these New Zealanders was thus in part about developing one’s life through geographical mobility, about the exploration of both personal and professional possibilities. This dimension of individual creativity – an idea that might lead us towards a heightened view of personal freedom – does not mean that we are dealing with atomised individuals. These practices of mobility were also inextricably bound up with broader social networks. This of course is a well established observation, in that migration studies have consistently noted the importance of neighbourhood and kinship relations for international mobility (see Gabaccia 1984; 1988; 2000; Sassen 1996; Levitt 2001). But what is distinctive for these New Zealanders in London is the remarkable centrality of *friendship* networks to their patterns of mobility.

The first point we would highlight is that friendship networks play a central role in sustaining and supporting the movement of New Zealand migrants to London. Friendship networks offer important, if informal, systems through which new arrivals obtain accommodation, learn about job opportunities, and generally find their way through London. This leads us to our second and more substantive point. The acknowledgement that informal networks like those of friendship or neighbourhood are significant in migratory flows is not new. But what is striking about the movement of New Zealanders to London is the structure and dynamics of the friendship networks through which their individual mobility is organised, and the role that mobility plays in the development and evolution of these networks. When looking
closely at the spatial and temporal morphology of New Zealand migrants’ friendship networks, it becomes clear that networks are not simply conduits for mobility. In very real and important ways, friendship networks are implicated in why people are moving, when they are moving, and their experiences of London. What-is-more, friendship networks are involved not only in bringing people to London, but also in carrying them back to New Zealand.

To understand what we mean here we need to return to the ideas of individualization, de-traditionalization, and self as project outlined in the previous section. As Ray Pahl (2000) has recently argued, in the context of a de-traditionalized, individualized, self-reflexive society, friendship has become a key element of self-identification and development. As such, and especially because by definition friendship is a relationship that is built on choice, an individual’s friendship networks are something that must be tended and nurtured. This relational ‘work’ is not carried out on the basis of some utilitarian calculus of the material support that friendship might afford an individual at some later date. Much more central are the affective dimensions afforded by friendship – a sense of connection, shared values and times together, a sense of personal worth, and so forth. So, if we recognise that individualization is not only about the individual, then it follows that we need to understand the wider networks of relations that people seek to assemble around themselves. It also becomes clear that it is not just individuals who develop and evolve through the opportunities that friendship networks afford them; this is also true of the relations that constitute the networks.

This leads us to one of the more striking characteristics of many of our New Zealanders in London: the degree to which their movement was bound up with those of their friends. Take, for example, Jane, a primary school teacher who came to
London in her late twenties. Having worked in New Zealand for almost 6 years after university graduation, Jane and her partner saw a period of living and working abroad as a window of opportunity for travel and career exploration before becoming more settled, in terms of buying property and perhaps starting a family. The attractiveness of London in this regard was significantly shaped by the number of their friends who were already there. As Jane noted, when she arrived in London there were “quite a few people from Christchurch university days. There were about five different couples that were university friends. …So we had a good bunch of people together when we arrived.” This was a group with whom they had kept in regular contact via email and phone calls in the preceding years, and following their own relocation to London, these friendships were simply taken up in a more face-to-face fashion. Relationships that already possessed a certain energy and rhythm were able to develop and evolve further.

Critically, then, it is not only the individual who is moving but also significant portions of his or her friendship networks as well. As figure 1 suggests, elements of these networks are often transplanted from New Zealand to the UK in a progressive fashion, thereby fostering new transnational social morphologies. While these friendship networks thus undergo various forms of stretching and distanciation, their core topological characteristics – in terms of the key actors and density of connections – are generally preserved. Despite their geographical relocation, individuals actively continue to maintain their friendships, whether through face-to-face contact with people in London or by email, telephone and letter communication with more distant others. In some cases, however, the continuing outbound migration flow from New Zealand leads to a situation where more of the network is actually grounded in London than its place of origin. For those considering what to
do next in their careers and lives in New Zealand, the presence of significant numbers of their friends in London is then sometimes experienced as something of a pull factor, in terms of the UK as a destination if not the general practice of living and working overseas.⁷

** Figure 1 about here

An important question then becomes who or what is acting. Is it the individual or the network? Amongst our interviewees, the movement of portions of their friendship networks – whether through individual or couple-based relocation – exerted a clear influence upon their own mobility. This can be seen in the comments of Sally, the school teacher discussed earlier, who noted that “When I was in Japan, thinking about going home, I realised that a lot of my good friends would be here [in London]. And I mainly came because [Jackie] insisted that I meet them in England and that we’d all flat together. And that appealed, rather than going home, because I wasn’t ready to go home yet”. While the use of interviewee quotations in this way potentially reinforces the habit of thinking of migrants as singular, bounded and intentional actors – the individual who confidently declares that “I decided to travel overseas” – it is also important to consider the agency of social networks in drawing people in certain directions, in inviting and taking them to certain places, in making some pathways feasible and others less so.

The nature of this movement also gives us cause to re-evaluate the traditional view of long-distance migration as a matter of an individual being disembedded from their community and, to a lesser extent, kinship relations.⁸ To be sure, when our interviewees moved from New Zealand to the UK, there is a sense in which they
withdrew from a particular geographical context and from the weak ties that bound them to other people in these places. But the stronger ties of friendship and kinship were generally sustained. And for these antipodean transmigrants, significant portions of their friendship networks were maintained not at a distance, via email or telephone, but rather through their face-to-face re-enactment and reproduction in London. Indeed, the act of movement was often oriented towards the maintenance and development of these very networks. It is perhaps not stretching the argument too far to suggest that, for some of the migrants we talked to, their movement to London was about ensuring that they remained socially embedded.

Finally, and crucially, we can note that the movement of these individuals and their friendship networks was not one-way. It tended to be circular. New Zealanders who move to London are not, generally speaking, moving to make a new home in England. Instead they come to work, to travel, and to explore themselves through a process of temporary relocation. Their mobility thus differs significantly from that of earlier migrants, such as the British settlers in 19th century New Zealand, who departed without any clear intention of returning. They were going to stay. The mobility of these women and men, travelling in the reverse direction, generally has no such intended permanence. In some cases, individuals do find that their lives become entangled in a more enduring capacity with the society and places of contemporary Britain, but this permanence generally emerges unexpectedly over time rather than through clearly formed prior intentions.
Cultures of Mobility

Thinking about the modalities through which New Zealand migrants remain embedded within enduring communities of association brings us to our third theme: the more general culture of mobility within which our migrants are bound. The particular transnational social morphologies – to use Steven Vertovec's (2001) term – described in the previous section need to be seen as emerging from a broader culture of mobility within New Zealand society. Here two dimensions need to be considered. Firstly, there is a need to think about the ways in which the patterns of mobility exhibited by the many thousands of New Zealanders who leave the country each year for an extended period in London (and elsewhere) are bound up with particular cultural understandings of mobility. Secondly, we need to understand how these contemporary narratives of mobility – with their taken-for-granted assumptions about the nature and usefulness of geographical movement – are related to earlier patterns of mobility. Geographic mobility of either the international or internal kind is not new to New Zealand. It has been central to both the kind of society New Zealand has become, and to the kinds of strategies individuals and families have employed to better themselves.

Let us start by dealing with the popular narratives of movement. New Zealand is a remarkably geographically mobile population. There are many indicators of this mobility but two examples will suffice. Figures from the 1996 population census tell us that “just under 50 percent of the population usually resident in New Zealand had changed their place of residence during the previous five years” (Bedford 2001: 52). This is in itself an impressive enough figure. But it is even more impressive when one considers that it does not include New Zealanders who had left the country during this period. The volume of outward migration is equally significant. In the
1999 September year 72,000 people left the country with the intention of staying away for at least one year (Bedford 2001: 50-52). This is nearly two percent of the population. Indeed, the proportion is much higher if one allows for the fact the majority of those leaving are between 20 and 35 years of age.

Moving then, whether within New Zealand or internationally, is both normal and to a remarkable degree taken-for-granted. Indeed, one of the more striking elements of our conversations with New Zealanders sojourning in London was how ‘natural’, how ‘usual’, how ‘unexceptional’ they viewed their pattern of movement as being. Sally, for example, saw a period of overseas travel as almost de rigueur, part of a cultural expectation that she described as a matter not of if, but of when one might engage in travel. As she puts it, “I kind of feel that it’s been like a rite of passage. That it’s expected that you go. When all your friends and family ask when you’re going to do your OE.” In a similar way, others spoke of the widespread expectation that they would spend time overseas doing their ‘Overseas Experience’ (OE). Indeed, we noted in the previous section how friendship networks forged within New Zealand functioned to both facilitate and perpetuate this kind of movement.

We can, then, perhaps see the cultural norm of the OE as being part of more general processes of individualization and the valorization of the self that we have already argued are central to the patterns of mobility demonstrated by New Zealanders in London. As such, the OE parallels similar kinds of temporally bracketed, experientially oriented patterns of international mobility such as the British ‘Gap Year’, or the American European Tour (see Clarke 2004). But if we want to understand the particular inflections and dynamics of the New Zealand OE – the fact that it usually involves relatively long periods of time spent abroad, that it is often
bound-up with careful consideration of career plans and other economic imperatives along with the experiential, for example – there is a need to understand the relationship between the patterns of mobility that characterise the OE and older, more established patterns of mobility. While it is clear that New Zealand has always been a geographically highly mobile society, the dynamics and meaning of this mobility have changed substantially through time.

As a ‘settler society’ New Zealand was from its very origins based on mobility (see Oliver 1961; 1981; Sinclair 1980; Fairburn 1989; Belich 1996; Simpson 1997). But what is notable about New Zealand society is how migrants, once they had arrived, kept moving. Not only did they keep moving, their children did too. If the earliest planned settlements sponsored by the Anglican and Presbyterian churches envisaged New Zealand as a perfected, miniature version of the Britain they were leaving behind, most of the migrants who followed had more prosaic, materialistic aims. They sought the economic and social autonomy that had eluded them in Europe. Within the context of these basic desires mobility quickly came to be widely viewed as an important strategy for social advancement and security. Movement was both a central avenue through which people could better themselves, and an important resource that could be drawn on in hard times. Reflecting this attitude, in the 19th and early 20th centuries many individuals and families built up remarkable biographies of movement. In many cases these biographies were not restricted to New Zealand, but also took in nearby Australia and other international destinations (see Husbands 1992: Ch 5; Olssen 2003).

But mobility also came to take on a more complex cultural significance. In a process that appears to parallel that seen in the United States of America and other similar settler societies – a process that has been highlighted by commentators from
Vincent Scully (1969), Warren Susman (1973) and John Lukacs (1984), to James Jasper (2000) and Carl Elliot (2003) – narratives and mythologies of physical mobility became intimately intertwined with ideas of not only personal betterment but also of individual freedom and national identity. Mobility was not only about strictly economic imperatives, it was also an important – if often disputed – aspect of being a New Zealander. It came to embody certain ideals of personal autonomy, resourcefulness, adventure and self-expansion. The OE as a distinctive and recognisable style of mobility needs to be seen in the context of these broader cultural formations.

Conclusion

Contemporary social processes have conjured up some strikingly new kinds of dwellingness which only imperfectly map on to national borders.

(Urry 2000a: 133)

Clearly, we could say a good deal more about this national culture of mobility. To bring our discussion to a close, however, we would like to return to the general themes of mobility and globalization with which we began. The first point we would like to make is the degree to which the lives of our New Zealanders in London involve quite subtle and skilled negotiations of the emergent structures of globalisation. They have participated in the creation of a way of dwelling that involves a quite remarkable degree of mobility. They travel on jumbo jets from one side of the globe to the other, move between quite different types of labour markets, exploit the opportunities offered by Britain’s deregulated and permissive labour laws, coordinate and maintain relationships across thousands of kilometres, while also immersing themselves in the
sights and cultures of London and the rest of Europe. We doubt that New Zealanders are especially unique in their mobility. For example, we can see the weighing up by our New Zealanders of the personal, experiential and career opportunities offered by a period spent in London as paralleling the kind of dexterous maximising of one’s global possibilities described by Ong (1999: Chapter 4) in her study of foreign Chinese families (see also MP Smith 2001; Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Levitt 2001). There are, however, aspects of the ways that New Zealanders in London are using mobility that are distinctive. Ong’s foreign Chinese elite is concentrating principally on the work of capital accumulation. Transnational familial and kinship bonds are exploited to this end. In the case of our New Zealand migrants in London the balance between material and experiential gain, between family and self, was rather differently weighted – as was the fidelity with which they nurtured an attachment to a single original ‘home.’ As we have seen, the mobility of our London migrants was intimately bound-up with highly individualized practices of self-realisation and self-fashioning. Although they are obviously deeply entangled within the economic, these practices nonetheless do in certain ways transcend it. Both these groups are involved in the kind of “dwelling within travel” that James Clifford (in Clarke 2004) sees as central to many new styles of global mobility.\footnote{What we have been seeking to demonstrate here is the importance of recognising the plurality of ways through which such mobile forms of dwelling are configured.}

This leads us to our second point. Much recent work on globalization and transnationalism has pointed to the ways that peoples’ social networks are often strung across enormous distances (Eade 1997; Papastergiadis 2000; Urry 2000a). Martin Albrow, for example, has written of how we must recognise that through personal networks very ‘ordinary’, ‘unexceptional’, places are bound into the global:
The networks of individuals in a locality [like Tooting, in south London] can extend as far as their resources and will to use the communications at their disposal. Time-space compression allows the maintenance of kin relations with India or Jamaica as much as with Birmingham or Brentford

(Albrow 1997: 51)

Yet, we need to go much further than this straightforward recognition of the reach of personal transnational connections. This going further requires two elements. Firstly, there is a need to pay closer attention to the form, dynamics, and content of the relations through which contemporary – and one could also add historical – patterns of mobility are nurtured and sustained. That-is-to-say, work on transnational and global mobility needs to think more carefully about the increasing importance of de-traditional modes of association in structuring observed patterns of mobility. In many European and European based settler societies at least, we cannot take for granted that we know what terms like kinship or friendship mean or entail. As Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2001) argue, in an individualizing social world these relationships are open to interpretation and self-definition. We have seen with our New Zealand migrants in London how friendship plays a central role in organising and given content to their mobility. What we have also seen is the need to attempt to understand the nature and significance of these bonds of association. What is important about our New Zealanders’ friendship networks is not simply that they exist. It is the degree to which they offer affordances for mobility; the degree to which the sustaining and inspirational aspects of friendship actually shape and give form to much of the movement exhibited by our respondents.

This brings us to our second element. We have attempted to briefly sketch out the spatial-temporal reach and stretch of some of the key friendship networks of
our New Zealanders. If our text and diagram manage to convey something of the texture of our New Zealanders’ social networks, they do so in a highly schematic way. Yet it is not immediately clear how one might better go about mapping such networks. If the widespread use of multi-sited ethnography provides one possible route, we would also suggest that there remains value in employing more quantitative descriptors of the networks that sustain and structure contemporary patterns of global mobility. We need a much stronger sense of the durability and forms of interaction that comprise the networks through which global mobility takes place. Here we can draw on the considerable work of social network analysts such as Barry Wellman et al. (1988; see also Wellman 1982, 1998) and Claude Fischer (1982). We also wonder if more formal styles of network analysis might not provide a fruitful route for consideration (Faust and Wasserman 1994; Watts 2003).

Finally, we would like to observe that paying attention to the mobility of groups like our New Zealand migrants – thinking about the way they negotiate the emergent structures of the global – suggests the need for a careful reconsideration of how we understand national societies and world cities. As a number of observers have already argued, highly internationally mobile societies like New Zealand need to be viewed as distributed entities (Papastergiadis 2000; MP Smith 2001; Henare 2001/2002). Such societies are not tightly bounded, nor in certain respects are they tightly defined. New Zealand society, for instance, is as much to be found in places like London, Sydney, Melbourne or the Australian Gold Coast as in ‘New Zealand’ itself. But it is not just the most obviously highly mobile societies that are being transformed by mobility. So too are the key world cities on which this movement converges: places like London, Sydney, New York, Los Angeles and Singapore. The economic, social and cultural logic of London is being deeply reshaped by migrants.
like our New Zealanders. Without relatively skilled, flexible and accommodating migrants like the New Zealanders discussed in this article, London simply would not have been able to develop in the way that it has.
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the Royal Geographical Society for funding this research through their HSBC small grant scheme. We are also grateful to our respondents for participating in the research. Finally, we would like to thank colleagues at Southampton for their comments on earlier versions of this paper.

Notes

1 “Sally” and the other respondent names employed in the paper are pseudonyms.

2 To clarify, we are not arguing that no work has been undertaken on these migrants. There are a number of important studies that have begun to consider this kind of migration (see King and Patterson, 1999; O’Reilly 2000; West 2001; Favell 2003; Bagnoli 2003; Clarke, 2003). And obviously several of the articles in this special edition are concerned with just these kinds of mobilities. Nonetheless, it is fair to say that relatively little attention has been paid to this class of migrants.

3 It is not clear exactly how many New Zealanders there are residing in London. Estimates range from 10,000 to 100,000 (Bedford, 2001).

4 In order to provide some context for the empirical examples that follow, the table below provides some summary characteristics for each of our interviewees. In making use of our conversations with these individuals, our general strategy here is to summarise their perspectives rather than provide extended consideration of individual quotation. On the occasions we employ individual quotation, this is incorporated into the body of our text.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jackie</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Physiotherapist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Special Needs Primary School Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mike</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Water Engineering Consultant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Digital Publications Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sally</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Primary School Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kate</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Primary School Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Town Planner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Logistics Analyst</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jane</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Primary School Teacher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Corporate Lawyer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5 Despite the two-hour commute across west London that her current job entails.

6 The Working Holiday Visa is the most common form of entry status for New Zealanders living and working in the UK. It permits New Zealand citizens under the age of 28 to enter the country for up to two years and to undertake paid employment in this period. Those with a grandparent born in the UK or the Republic of Ireland are eligible for a four year “leave to remain” visa.

7 Here we also touch upon the geographically distributed nature of New Zealand, a country whose population is only loosely bounded by its national borders. Out of its 4 million inhabitants, there are for example around 400 000 (10%) living in Australia, plus sizeable groups in both North America and the UK (Bedford, 2001).

8 Obviously much of the contemporary work on transnationalism also highlights the degree to which migrants remain embedded in established social networks. The point we are making – drawing inspiration from transnational literatures – is the extent to which the social network itself is moving from place to place with migrants. It is not only individual migrants that sojourn in London for a period of years, undergoing change in the process. So too do their friendship networks.
In using this term Clifford seeks to highlight the ways in which individuals maintain their social connections and a degree of emplaced embeddedness whilst also being highly mobile. This is in contrast to the more traditional view where mobility is framed as disconnection.
References


Figure 1. *Emergence of a Transnational Friendship Network*