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**THE CIRCULAR INTERNATIONAL MIGRATION OF NEW ZEALANDERS: ENFOLDED MOBILITIES AND RELATIONAL PLACES**

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ABSTRACT

Migrants’ social relations are reconfigured in terms of how the localised and distanciated are recombined in context of how individuals are embedded in the enfolded mobilities of increasingly mobile social networks. The paper is organized around three main propositions. First, that social relations are structured across three main and intersecting domains – family, workplace and community. Second, that social relations and networks are shaped by, and shape, the relational nature of places. Third, that the relational nature of places, and the reconfiguration of localised and distanciated relationships should be analysed across the entire migration cycle. These ideas are explored through a study of the Big OE from New Zealand to the UK, based on in-depth interviews with returned migrants.
INTRODUCTION

This paper examines how individual migrants’ social relations are shaped by the relational nature of places, and especially by shifting configurations of localised and distanciated relations (Amin, 2002, p.388). The reconfiguration of such relations is becoming more complex as the mobility of individual migrants is embedded in increasingly mobile networks and in enfolded mobilities. While social relations are formed within and between a number of social spheres, this paper focuses on the intersection of family, workplace, and community as key influences on migrants’ social networks, drawing on Voydanoff’s (2001) call to understand these three domains as interlocking micro systems. In the case of circular migration, we also emphasise how migrants’ experiences and networks, both abroad and after returning, are shaped by the relational nature of the places they inhabit and have inhabited. Echoing Urry’s (2007, p.46) comment they are ‘.. circulating entities that bring about relationality within and between societies at multiple and varied distances’.

After first discussing the conceptualization of these themes, they are then explored through a case study of circular migration between New Zealand (NZ) and the UK. Both constitute a mosaic of places that shape and are shaped by the social relations of migrants across the domains of family, workplace and community. Most migrants from NZ to the UK are drawn to London, and some places in London constitute expatriate bubbles that shape relationships and network. But not all migrants live in what are in effect ethnic enclaves (Werbner 2001; Waldinger 1993) in the capital, or even in London. Similarly, on returning to New Zealand, migrants settle in very different places, partly defined by the continuity of prior localised social relations, especially in relation to family, community and workplaces. The study explores how migrants’ social relations are
shaped by the relational nature of these places through in-depth interviews with returned migrants in NZ, an approach which seeks to ground ‘.. transnational vocabularies in accounts of the actual movements of things and people across space’ (Mitchell, 1997, p.110).

**CONCEPTUALIZATION**

*Globalization, Place and the Intersection of Family, Workplace and Community*

Globalization debates increasingly engaged with notions of space and place (Graham & Healey, 1999) from the 1990s. Doreen Massey (1994), in her work on the spaces of flows, argues that the globalization of social relations should be conceptualized in terms of flows rather than territorially bounded places. This was extended by Katz (2001) who emphasized the relational nature of places. As Amin (2002, p.39) argues: ‘... we might begin to think of places in nonterritorial terms, as nodes in relational settings, and as a site of situated practices’. These practices – both amongst migrants and non migrants - are maintained through various means, including shifting combinations of virtual and face-to-face contacts, and flows within and beyond particular places.

This conceptualization resonates with the notion of places as characterised by shifting social networks. This is specifically commented on by Pascual-de-Sans (2004, p.350) who argues that the concept of place offers ‘... an overall understanding of the bonds established by people – individually and collectively – with the places where they live and lived, through which they pass, about which they think’. The emphasis on ‘lived’ as
well as ‘live’ is particularly important in the case of migrants’ social networks, and takes us to the notion of transnationalism.

Amongst migrants in particular, the bonds, connections and links emphasised by Pascual-de-Sans can be transnational. Although there is considerable ambiguity in the conceptualization of transnationalism (Vertovec, 1999, p.447), we understand transmigrants as ‘..those whose lived experiences transcend the boundaries of nation-states’ (Bailey, 2001, p.414) and ‘who develop and maintain multiple relationships – familial, economic, social, organizational, religious and political – that span those borders’ (Basch et al., 1994, p.7). In practice, these relationships varyingly rely on both ‘banal’ transnational linkages, and in situ sociability, as Scott (2004, p.402) demonstrates in a case study of British expatriates in Paris. By extension, there is a need to understand how the combination of banal transnational and in situ social relations is remade as international migrants move between places in the course of the migration cycle.

This leads to the question of how to unpack the ways in which place differences shape (and indeed are shaped by) migration. Migrants’ experiences are necessarily socially and spatially situated (Smith, p.236), but that there is a need to structure how this is analysed. A starting point for this is the call by Nagar et al (2002, p.366) for understanding of how ‘… globalization processes are embedded in community and household scales’. Given the importance of work to the mostly young adult migrants involved in circular migration from NZ to the UK, we contend that there is also a need to examine how globalization is embedded in workplaces as well as the community and household.
The above discussion takes us to Voydanoff (2001, pp.1610-11) who, although not specifically writing about migration, provides an useful conceptual framework that links these three areas. He argued that the domains of work, community and family constitute inter-related networks of face-to-face relationships (Bronfenbrenner, 1989) that are linked by two types of mesosystems: the separate links between the characteristics of any two microsystems, and the combined effects of two microsystems on a third one. Voydanoff adds that three types of relationships make up the interfaces between the microsystems: (i) independent and additive; (ii) mediating and (iii) interactive. The inter-relationships are further complicated because the boundaries between the three domains of work, community and family are blurred. This is illustrated by 'a lack of geographic separation between home and paid work, and overlapping networks and obligations'; for example, the development of social ties at work that spillover into the community (p.1611). These independent and combined microsystems, and the overspills between them, are central to our analysis.

The mediation and interaction between microsystems is highly structured at a number of different scales. Of particular note for our study of NZ-UK circular migration is that prior links between countries, based on colonial, economic or cultural ties (Castles & Miller, 2003), can lead to persistent migration flows. This is reinforced by well-embedded social networks, based on ethnicity, kinship and friendship (Bauer & Zimmermann, 1997), which effectively reduce the real costs of migration, as well as guiding migration flows (Vertovec, 2000), and shaping migrants’ social relations.

At the scale of individual places, expatriate bubbles are one of the most distinctive means by which social relations are shaped by prior links between countries or places. A migrant sub-cultural enclave has '… protective functions whereby psychological
security, self-esteem and sense of belonging are enhanced, and stress, anxiety, and feelings of powerlessness and alienation are attenuated’ (Ward et al., 2001, p. 86).

Given our understanding of the relational nature of places, expatriate bubbles should be understood as being defined by shifting relationships both within and between the multiple places that migrants’ inhabit or have inhabited. Yet we still know surprisingly little about the spatiality of such bubbles, not only in terms of their transnational dimensions, but also whether they operate as relatively well-defined nodes, or whether several nodes in a city such as London collectively constitute an expatriate bubble. This is important because the social relations of many migrants are significantly shaped by these bubbles. However, there are also many migrants whose lives are largely lived in very different types of places outside of such bubbles, even if they maintain contacts and relations with individuals and organizations within them.

As a focus for our analysis, we also found it helpful to think of these social relations in terms of the types of support they provide. Here we draw on Finch’s (1989) five fold classification which, although devised with kin in mind, can also be applied to non-kinship relationships: personal care, sharing accommodation, providing practical support, economic, emotional/moral support. The key question is the extent to which distance and proximity mediate the provision of such support in context of relational places. Increasingly, we understand that geographical proximity versus distance does not provide a simple guide for unraveling the provision of different forms of material and emotional support (Mason, 2004, p.421). Instead, as the mobilities turn emphasizes: ‘All social life, or work, family, education and politics, presume relationships of intermittent presence and modes of absence depending in part upon the multiple technologies of travel and communications that move objects, people, ideas, images across varying distances. Presence in thus intermittent, achieved, performed and always
interdependent with other processes of connection and communication’ (Urry, 2007, p.47). However, it also follows that the nature of intermittent presence and modes of absence is necessarily different for circular migrants than for non migrants.

This paper will explore how the social relations of migrants and returned migrants in one very particular type of relational space, constituted of the UK and New Zealand, can be understood in terms of place-related differences. These are understood as being articulated in the domains of the family, workplace and community, which can be independent, mediating or interactive (Voydanoff 2001). The particularities of the UK-New Zealand transboundary space, a relational space where state boundaries infuse its imagination even though the two countries do not share a common boundary, are addressed in the following section.

*Transnationalism ‘of the middle’ and mobile networks in the UK and New Zealand*

While the previous discussion emphasized the relational nature of places, Amin (2002, p.39, emphasis added) contended that places can be understood as ‘… spatiotemporalisation of associational networks of different length and duration’. The formation, and the nature of social relations, is shaped by the time span of social interactions. As Urry (2007, p21), drawing on Simmel (reprinted, 1997) argues ‘time structures the nuancing of the course of a gathering’, and this has particular significance for the specificities of migration flows. Whether international migration is on a permanent or temporary basis, and whether it is for six months or six years, has consequences for intercultural contacts (Ward *et al.*, 2001, p.162). By implication it also has significance for
social relations in the domains of family, workplace and community, within and between places.

Circular migration from NZ to the UK mainly involves relatively short-term migration in a long-established and substantial transnational space characterized by the well-developed meso structures of a diaspora (Cohen, 1997; Castles & Miller, 2003; Wilson et al., 2009, p.162). The main component is the so-called Big OE (overseas experience), the temporary migration of young New Zealanders largely within the regulatory framework of a two year UK working holiday visa regime (see also Uriely, 2001). Haverig (201?), drawing on the work of Rose (1999) deepens our perspective on the relationship between regulation and individuality by analysing the OE in terms of aspirations and practices that demonstrate individuals’ freedom as well as being a form of governance, understood in terms of disciplined selves. The Big OE is in part about how individuals invent and reinvent their identities, but individual choices in this respect are framed by visa regimes, employers, landlords and other authorities.

Whether visiting the UK under the auspices of this visa, or another entry scheme, they are mostly well-educated, young adult migrants, who have mid range incomes, and are motivated as much by social as by economic goals. Conradson & Latham (2005a) contend that such ‘transnationalism of the middle’ is relatively under-researched compared to say highly-skilled and unskilled migrants, especially the banalities of migrants’ every day lives. This deficit has, to some extent, been addressed in recent years (Wilson et al., 2009; Wiles 2008; Conradson & Latham, 2005b; Gamlen, 2005), but there are still gaps in our understanding of the social encounters of ‘migrants of the middle’. This is particularly apposite where ‘categories of movement dissolve into one another, and where circulation rather than permanence has become the dominant
paradigm of global migration’ (Allon et al., 2008, p.79) as in NZ-UK migration. Four distinctive features of this circular migration should be noted.

First, the NZ-UK transboundary space represents an assertion of cultural identity by both ‘reverse diasporas’ and ‘emergent diasporas’ (Wilson et al., 2009, p.159). The notion of a reverse diaspora recognizes the connectivity that is a legacy of the long history of British emigration to NZ. For Wilson et al. this is more of an ‘… assertion of cultural identity rather than … a residuum or anachronistic remnant of the earlier diaspora’ (2009, p159). Wiles (2008, p.118) refers to it as ‘not so much a ‘new’ transnational relationship as new forms of social and spatial relationships that are part of an ongoing, long-established connection’. However, increased diversification of immigration to New Zealand in recent decades, combined with the specific motivations of the Big OE, mean this should be considered ‘… an emergent diaspora in its own right that has evolved from and built upon historical, often practical, links with the original colonising country’ (p.165). Both definitions highlight the importance of ‘family ties’ to the UK. The ties may be to ‘remnant’ family members (increasingly distant relatives who have not emigrated), being driven by the availability of practical support such as sharing accommodation, or notions of identity. Alternatively, the ties may be to the geographically dispersed members of New Zealand born family members, with the UK and Australia being particularly important destinations in this respect (see also Coles and Timothy, 2004 for a more general discussion of diasporas and tourism).

Secondly, as noted earlier, new communication technologies have changed how places can be understood as spatiotemporalisations of networks (Amin, 2002, p.39). Technologies have changed the ways in which individuals experience places as the folding together of local and distanciated relationships. Goss and Lindquist (1995, p.333)
express this in terms of co-presence and how social systems cohere and reproduce at two levels: intensive daily interactions amongst individuals who are ‘copresent in time and space’, and extensive interaction ‘across time and space, where copresence is unnecessary’. However, as social networks become more dispersed (through migration) ‘... we cannot equate closeness and communion with geographical nearness and daily or weekly co-present visits’ (Larsen et al, 2006, p.6), not least because of the transformational properties of new communication technologies such as Web2 and webcams.

There are parallels here with Clifford’s (1992) ideas on travelling culture. Clarke (2005, p.307) described how backpackers in Australia ‘travel-in-dwelling’ passively through the use of the internet, television, radio, and portable objects; and interactively through phone calls, e-mails, gifts and face-to-face conversation with other (backpackers). They also ‘dwell-in-travelling through backpacker and local communities, drawing on objects and technologies, sites, and events and rhythms’. Not all NZ migrants to the UK are backpackers, but Clarke’s work does highlight how transnationalism can be worked out through folding together relationships that are local and distanced, blurring the distinction between ‘home’ and ‘away’ and between ‘here’ and ‘there’. In the case of NZ-UK circular migration, the social situatedness of migrants in relation to other young ‘antipodean’ migrants (in London in particular) further blurs the distinction between home and away, and travelling and dwelling.

This brings us to our third point: London has strong, perhaps iconic, appeal to young migrants because of its economic dynamism, cultural opportunities and cosmopolitanism (Cohen, 1997; Conradson & Latham, 2005c). In common with migrants from most other high and middle-income countries, London is the main attraction within the UK for New
Zealanders (White, 1998), accounting for 47% according to the 2001 census (Conradson & Latham, 2007, p.238). And in absolute terms, there is a striking 2004 estimate by the NZ Commission that some 200,000 New Zealanders live in London, making it the fifth largest NZ ‘city’ (Wilson et al., 2009, p.163).

The co-presence of such large numbers of New Zealanders facilitates the arrival of new migrants, in terms of accessing jobs, accommodation, and leisure networks. A particular twist is given to this by the way individuals are situated in social networks that are themselves mobile. This may be the outcome of a collective decision, or of a series of individual decisions, taken in context of a particular migration discourse within a network.

Many New Zealanders are attracted to London because substantial parts of their networks of friends (and sometimes family) have relocated, or are planning to relocate, to the UK. As Conradson & Latham (2005b, p.294) conclude: ‘In important ways, friendship networks are implicated in why people are moving, when they are moving, and their experiences of London’.

One implication of large-scale migration is that London offers young New Zealanders the possibility of living within an expatriate bubble, with the bubble partly being constituted for individuals through the relocation of large segments of their social networks.

Expatriate bubbles are not, of course, homogeneous, and they are also worked out at different scales. Some places in London, such as Acton, Cricklewood, and Earls Court, do become a residential focus for New Zealanders and can become highly localised communities within which migrants socialise. This may be reinforced by sharing houses with other New Zealanders, including family, friends ‘from home’, or other young ‘antipodean’ migrants; these connections may then provide links to other antipodean networks, whether locally or elsewhere in London. Migrants may also work alongside
other migrants, often specifically from NZ, or other white migrants from developed
countries, rather than the range of migrant groups in the UK. Finally they are embedded
within a London-wide bubble that is articulated through the diaspora infrastructure of
web sites, a newspaper, particular pubs and sporting venues (Wilson et al., 2009,
p.167).

Therefore, many migrants experience the banalities of day-to-day life within an
expatriate bubble, although this is fluid, and constantly reshaped by the practices of
individual migrants rather than being fixed. Individual migrants differently experience the
bubbles over the course of their sojourns, with individuals moving consciously, or drifting
semi-consciously, in or out of them. Moreover, some migrants consciously shun such
‘bubbles’, instead seeking cultural difference and ‘authenticity’. They want to ‘meet the
locals, forget home’ (Clarke, 2005, p.312). Allon (2008, p.85) writes of there being an
interface between itinerancy and rootedness, but it is a mobile interface. Over time,
individuals may move towards the edge of, or out of, the expatriate bubble, perhaps in
consequence of increased self-confidence, rejection of what they have come to see as
over-narrow cultural circles, or simply through serendipity, such as meeting a partner or
finding a job. In short, there is a need to understand how migrant experiences are highly
place specific, but also to deconstruct those experiences in terms of the overlapping
domains of family, workplace and community

Finally, and a particular focus of this paper is that NZ-UK migration this is mostly circular
as opposed to permanent, determined in part by the two year limitation of the working
holiday visa. However, given that there are a number of ways in which migrants can
extend their stays, high levels of return indicate expectations or intentions that the
sojourns will be temporary. Of particular interest for this study, and still little researched,
are how their experiences on return are mediated by the place of return. The place of return – again understood in terms of the triple domains of family, workplace and community - significantly influence the extent to which they can access localised pre-migration social networks. Do they move back to live with their families, in the same neighbourhoods, and take up their previous jobs? Or do they relocate to different places, with significant changes in all three domains. This is very much a question of the strength of their network capital, or the ‘capacity to engender and sustain social relations with those people who are not necessarily proximate’ (Urry, 2007, 197).

Whether they move back to the same locales or to new ones, the social relations that constitute these places will have changed to a lesser or greater degree since they migrated. If we understand places as the folding together of localised and distanciated relationships (Massey, 1994; Amin, 2002), then migration experiences (as just one force for change) itself will necessarily have changed these places, not least in terms of transnationalism. Migrants return with different social networks, whether in terms of transformed prior relations or newly acquired, UK-originated networks, segments of which may also relocate to New Zealand. Moreover, what were once proximity-based relationships in the UK may become relationships at a distance, although some may wither with time.

Migration is therefore a catalyst with potentially lasting impacts on the lives of even relatively short term migrants, including those whose migration experiences were mediated by expatriate ‘bubbles’, let alone longer term migrants and, or those who lived outside of such enclaves. In other words, the accounts of migration and return presented in this paper can be understood in terms of the concept of ‘enfolded mobilities’ (Williams, 2009) This emphasizes that mobilities are enfolded, both through the life cycle of the
individual, or with the mobilities of others. Starting from the notion that networks ‘.. produce complex and enduring connections across space and through time between people and things’ (Urry, 2000, p.34), enfolded mobility emphasizes that mobility is both contingent and collective. Most NZ returnees have engaged in what may be termed ‘discovery mobility’, which opens up possibilities of future mobility, whether as labour migrants or short-term business or social visits. Their migrations are also folded together with those of other migrants in the form of ‘accompanying mobility’ (planned and unplanned relocations of parts of their networks), and ‘visiting friends and relatives mobility’; these refresh social networks, while generating mobility in the lives of connected others.

**METHODOLOGY**

Ideally a longitudinal study is required to analyse migrants’ changing local and distanciated relations, and experiences of place, over the course of the migration cycle. Such a resource intensive study lies beyond the scope of this project, and instead we interviewed migrants after their return. We acknowledge that, of course, migrants will have imperfect recall of some of their earlier experiences but most are within a few months or years of returning, and very few had returned much earlier. Their accounts may also be subject to post rationalization. Nevertheless, the interviews provide insights into the migrants’ experiences both abroad and after their return.

In the absence of reliable lists of returned migrants, 24 interviewees were selected via purposive sampling, aiming to broadly reflect the range of known characteristics of returnees, as recorded in secondary data (based on arrival cards completed by returning
New Zealand citizens). Our sample included slightly more women (14) than men (10) and most were relatively young. One half (12) were still aged 20-30, and most of the others (9) were aged 30-40 when interviewed although some of these had returned when younger than 30. There were, however, three interviewees who were at least 40 years old when interviewed, of whom one had emigrated and returned while in her fifties. Reflecting the known profile of returnees, they were well educated and just over one half had university degree or postgraduate qualifications, while six had tertiary non-degree qualifications, and four had school certificates. Most interviewees (22) had been born in New Zealand, with two having arrived as children. All – by definition – were New Zealand citizens, but four were also dual citizens of either the UK or the Netherlands.

Given the small and purposive nature of our sample, it is not possible to make generalizations about either the New Zealand-born population in London (particularly because we excluded permanent migrants) or returnees. Instead, we focus on the different experiences of returned migrants within this sample.

**EXPERIENCES WHILE IN THE UK**

Most interviewees (21) had intended to go the UK for three years or less, with two years – reflecting the maximum length of the working holiday visa – being common. Only one had intended to migrate permanently, and one other had been uncertain. Just over one half had stayed for the intended duration, returning when their visas expired, while two had returned earlier than originally planned, and seven had stayed longer – usually by between six months and two years longer. Therefore, their visits to the UK were relatively short, with 15 spending two years or less in the country, and none having
stayed for longer than 7 years. In summary, they mostly conform to the classic model of temporary or circular migration between NZ and the UK.

Despite broad uniformity in the temporality of their migrations, their social relations were shaped within particular places. Most had spent some time in London, and three quarters had lived only in the capital. The remaining seven had lived in London and another part of the UK, or only outside of London, in places as diverse as Maidstone, Shrewsbury and Edinburgh. The places that they lived in within London were also diverse, ranging from well-established NZ nuclei, such as Acton or Clapham, to outer suburbs where there were relatively few migrants, let alone New Zealanders. The three domains of family, work and community also differentiated individual experiences of these places.

Families: from localised to distanciated support

Finch (1989) argues that there is no simple set of moral rules by which kinship relationships operate, so that notions of obligation do not necessarily follow consistent and predictable pathways. It is therefore difficult to predict how physical distance influences the five types of support we noted earlier. Three of the five types depend on physical proximity – personal care and nursing, sharing accommodation, and providing practical support and child care – but economic support is not distance related, while emotional/ moral support can be provided at a distance (via a web link or telephone call), although it may lack the same emotive content as face to face contacts. The provision of such support is influenced by the enfolded mobility practices of individuals and other family members.
Both because of the history of family migration from the UK, as well as the relatively high level of mobility amongst contemporary New Zealanders – that is the existence of reverse and emergent diasporas (Wilson et al, 2009) - almost one third of the sample (7) had family in the UK. This influenced their destination selection, as well as mediating social relations. High levels of mobility meant that this was a dynamic picture; NZ family members could be copresent in the UK, for varying lengths of time. Additionally, most migrants were in relatively regular contact with family in NZ, with telephone and web based communications being supplemented by return visits in several cases. Migration therefore was both shaped by and shaped transnationalised familial relationships. And, as Urry (2007, p47) notes, ‘Presence is thus intermittent, achieved, performed and always interdependent with other processes of connection and communication’.

Family connections – seeking co-presence with their immediate family, often siblings, or a desire to meet more distant relatives – influenced the migration decision of a minority (5). For example, Pete had felt a strong connection with London because ‘My grandfather who I was extremely close to grew up in London, and so I think I probably have more of a connection to Britain than a lot of other Kiwis’. Others were attracted by the presence of members of their immediate families, who had already migrated to the UK. Sometimes the goal of co-presence was to refresh affective relationships. Graham’s brother lived in the UK, and ‘ … before I moved over there I would have only seen him twice in the last 8 years so I wanted to get to know him again’. For others, co-presence meant the availability of practical assistance: Nina, for example, had received letters and emails from a sister living in Slough, which had conveyed strong place impressions that had helped her to imagine a successful migration experience. As Simmel (1997, p171) contends, the notion of separation only has meaning if e can connect places ‘in our practical thoughts, in our needs and in our fantasy’.
Family members provided two forms of support, practical assistance (mostly knowledge) and home sharing (usually for a temporary period). Graham’s brother collected him at the airport, and ‘… we stayed with him for a while and then I stayed with one of my uncles for a while so there was actually quite a bit of support there. So it wasn’t just like being on the other side of the world away from everything I know’. Family connections and support channeled newly arrived migrants to particular places. Olivia, for example, initially stayed with cousins in Surrey, shaping both where she lived and her social relations in the UK.

In contrast, family in New Zealand were more likely to be viewed as having required their emotional support rather than being sources of support. This was sometimes expressed negatively in terms of what they had lost. Carol lost her job after a few weeks, and this was especially difficult ‘… because I had spent my whole life living with my parents and friends in Wellington and to have that support completely taken away from you was really difficult’. However, most interviewees saw their family in New Zealand as having been more in need of emotional support from them, particularly when there were significant events such as deaths, weddings or landmark birthdays.

During their sojourns, contacts with family and friends were maintained by diverse means. The earliest migrant we interviewed, who had arrived in 1977, and had written every two weeks or every month to her family, supplemented by an occasional phone call (the latter were still very expensive at this time). By the late 1990s and early 2000s, phone calls had become more frequent as costs fell, and email also became increasingly important (Larsen et al., 2006). By the mid 2000s, new web based software such as
Facebook and Skype, and web cams, allowed more frequent contacts at relatively low costs.

Corporeal mobility also linked family members within this transnational space. Most interviewees were either visited by family or friends at some point during their sojourns, or they themselves returned to New Zealand on one or more occasions, typically for Christmas, significant birthdays, or weddings; Larsen et al (2006) refer to this as ‘guilt trips’ rooted in family obligations. These were opportunities for providing emotional support, while restating the importance of family relationships. Corporeal mobility could flow in both directions. Her mother, father and sister, for example, visited Irene, while she also returned twice to NZ. Kylie returned twice in five and a half years, including attending her brother’s wedding. In general, therefore, our findings accord with Conradson & Latham’s (2007, p.245) conclusions that migration was not accompanied by ‘… dramatic curtailment of relational contact’.

**Workplaces: critical meeting grounds**

All but one interviewee had paid work during most of their sojourns in the UK. Career advancement had not been the main objective of most migrants, but a few were motivated by obtaining employment experiences not available in NZ (see also Conradson & Latham, 2005b, 293). Instead, most interviewees had viewed employment as instrumental in paying for their sojourns. Their relatively short stays—sometimes punctuated by job changes when they left for extended trips around Europe—added to their short term and instrumental views of work. Nevertheless, workplaces were important potential ‘meeting grounds’ in developing social relations.
Many interviewees had similar jobs in the UK, in terms of sector and/or occupation, as in NZ. Richard, for example, had worked for Telecom NZ before migrating, and worked for British Telecom in the UK. There were exceptions, of course, such as the teacher who worked as a live in carer because it offered flexibility (frequent changes of care charges and places to live in) and reduced housing costs. Their instrumentalist views also meant that they had taken relatively low paid and less skilled jobs than they had in New Zealand, at least initially.

There were three main means of findings jobs: through agencies, either contacted in advance or in the UK; self-reliance, which usually meant checking newspapers, web sites, and notice boards; and – of particular importance here – via social networks. Sometimes, jobs were found directly through friends: ‘Just through a friend, a couple of Kiwi guys were already working for them and they needed some labourers’ (David, inner London flat). At other times, the links were indirect: Mike, who mostly had lived outside London, had found his first job in the capital through ‘… a friend of a friend. They’ve got a strong support network there’.

There were relatively mixed opinions of the resulting face-to-face relationships in these jobs, depending on the particular organization, the individuals they worked closely with, and the length of time they worked there. Sometimes a job required more distanced than localised relationships. Helen (London suburb) worked for an academic publisher, and, although this was office- rather than home-based, had felt ‘… quite isolated and there wasn’t a great team environment’. However, proximity did not necessarily lead to close workplace friendships. Several interviewees commented on the unfriendliness of fellow workers, and the difficulties of socialising with British workers, even of similar ages. Graham (inner London flat) explained that ‘… it does take quite a bit to actually
get someone to be your friend, to see you outside of work. You have to really push it or else they are quite happy just doing their thing’. There were similar complaints about other migrants, especially if they were outside the ‘Antipodean’ orbit, which was variously interpreted as including South Africans as well as Australians and New Zealanders. In contrast, there were examples of ‘Antipodeans’ forming tightly knit groups at work. Frank (suburban London) was one of a team constituted entirely of five Australians and New Zealanders within a planning department. And Jeff (inner London, flat) was ‘ … working with Kiwis and Aussies just down the road, in a company vehicle, and work was just a laugh the whole time’.

It was even more difficult to carry workplace friendships into the non-work domain. While this was often ascribed to ill-defined cultural differences, or to British aloofness, the specificities of place were recognized. Frank (London suburb) explained that fellow workers ‘ … just had a different lifestyle, it was too hard for them to meet up early and come into town. … Occasionally after work you’d have a few drinks with them but if it was meeting up the next night in central London it was like, uh no, too much effort’. This sharply contrasted with the accessible New Zealand and Australian communities that existed, at different scales, within inner London (see next section).

Particularly amongst those working outside London, a few individuals did have strong friendships with British workers. Carol, who moved from London to Shrewsbury, found that the latter was ‘ … a much smaller town, really cute, like Wellington, very small and the person I worked for kind of became my second mum, she was just so accepting and she really took me under her wing’. Such friendships were particularly important to her: ‘If you don’t meet friends through work, how do you meet people?’ Vicky, who worked as a live-in housekeeper, made a telling contrast between when her employer was in
London as opposed to his country home: ‘London no community at all, only the local Indian halal shop keeper, but in the country there was a community really just working for him …... and they were all incredibly friendly’.

There were, of course, also individuals who lived and worked in inner London who had strong friendships spilling over from workplaces. Vicky, for example, who had been an administrator in a legal practice, before becoming a housekeeper, had: ‘… started working with a group of people who were my age. They were a lot of fun and I used to go out with them and I made some really good friends’. There were also migrants lived outside of London, whose strongest friendships were with other New Zealanders met at work: ‘… we met another New Zealand couple through [husband’s] work actually. And we did a lot of weekend stuff with them because we were living not far away from each other’ (Olivia, small city near London). However, although work was important as a meeting ground for extra-work friendships, there were sharp differences between the experiences of those living in inner London and elsewhere, in terms both of making any friends, and non-NZ friends at work. This is partly explained by their wider social networks, as discussed below.

Community: mobile and transnational worlds

New Zealand migrants to the UK, particularly London, encounter a well developed diasporic infrastructure, constituted of network of formal, and above all informal, networks and contact points which made emigration to, and settling into the UK, relatively easy: ‘There are a lot of NZ organisations over there that are set up. They have a magazine called the T & T which is set up for Australians and New Zealanders. How to set up bank accounts, how to set up flats, where to find flats? There’s a newspaper,
there’s events, there’s no shortage of people to talk to and places to go’ (Tara, inner London flat).

New Zealanders’ social networks while in the UK are characterized by high levels of mobility (Conradson & Latham, 2005b, p.287). This was particularly true of younger migrants, the classic Big OE generation. 10 of the 24 interviewees explained that the presence of friends in the UK was both a motivation for and facilitated their migration. Mike (various locations) had felt that he had more friends in the UK than in NZ, and several interviewees had travelled out with one or more friends.

Although the transfers of social networks are largely based on individual decisions, which means they are staggered over time, many interviewees commented that, at some stage, a significant share of their New Zealand friends had been in the UK. Pete (inner London flat) explained the complex nature of such relocations: ‘Some of them we knew from NZ before we went over there, some of them we knew from school, they’d gone over straight after high school or straight after university, Some of them we met through them once we got over there, and some of them we met who were New Zealanders who were friends of the people we knew from back here’;

Friends, as with family, provided two main types of support: accommodation sharing, and practical assistance, Many migrants relied on friends for somewhere to live initially, for help in obtaining jobs and their own accommodation, as well as for understanding UK practices in areas such as taxation and health services, or banks and telephone companies. For example, Kylie first lived with two of her best friends from school, and they helped her establish new social networks.
Their experiences were also shaped by where they lived, and the type of accommodation they rented or, occasionally, owned. Almost two thirds (15) shared a flat or house in London, usually with a mixture of their friends and, or other migrants, mostly young ‘Antipodeans’ or Europeans. Irene shared with other NZ and Australian teachers, of a similar age. Their social networks focused on particular nodes within the New Zealand community living in London – their flat, a club or pub. There was a ‘snowballing’ element in the way these social networks developed: ‘... you end up going out with people and because they’re New Zealanders, they’re in the same position, they know New Zealanders, and those New Zealanders know New Zealanders, so you end up knowing a whole lot of New Zealanders!’ (Pete, inner London flat).

Some lived in, what one interviewee described as, ‘party flats’, that is sharing with large numbers of individuals who led active and late night social lives. Edward (inner London), for example, had shared a four bedroom flat with between four and 10 other people, and with very high turnover rates, or ‘churning’. And David ‘... just ended up staying with some friends, with about six to seven people in the flat.....If you wanted to go out every night of the week even if it wasn’t to get smashed, to go out and meet friends, there was always somewhere that was happening. I suppose one of those clichés where you just hang out with Kiwis, Aussies and South Africans, but because they are all over there on holiday, there is a buzz about everybody’. In a few instances, couples lived on their own, whether in inner London, or elsewhere, but rarely did anyone report having shared with young British people.

Given there is a large New Zealand community in London, that many migrants had family and friends already living in the UK, and that workplace friendships sometimes involved other New Zealanders, it is unsurprising that their closest social contacts were
often with fellow nationals. The inverse of this was having relatively few British friends, which reflected the spaces of flows (Massey, 1994) they inhabited. Several interviewees commented on how the places they inhabited in inner London were characterised by high rates of immigration and were strongly multi-cultural, with relatively few British residents. The high rates of mobility and churn in the occupancy of flats also reinforced the NZ focus of their networks, as Sally (inner London flat) explained:

*I moved in with a couple of friends who had a flat over there and their sister was living with them at the time but she had a major car crash …. So I took over her room and I was there for about a month and then a friend came over [from NZ] and we shared a room for six months. That friend went back to NZ and another friend came over and we shared a room and we slept on a mattress on the floor for about five months. Then I stayed in Chiswick but we moved into a new flat. It was in the same complex but I moved into a new place and I ended up with a French roommate and we had another couple from NZ from New Plymouth.*

Some interviewees accepted geographical and social concentration in their social relations as inevitable, and some as desirable: ‘… because we are so similar in our expectations and mindset. You sort of gravitate towards likeminded people’ (Edward inner London flat). However, others were disappointed to have made relatively few British friends, and Sally (inner London flat) criticised what she saw as a prevalent negative discourses amongst New Zealanders in London: ‘I used to find it really frustrating. When I was over there you used to meet a lot of Kiwis who didn’t have any time for English people and they talked about how they hated them and blah blah and I just couldn’t figure out why they were there’. And while Joan (inner London flat) had tried
the ‘party flat’ setting, she ultimately wanted to live in a different type of place: ‘I couldn’t do it forever. You didn’t feel like you were really grounded’.

In contrast, there was a small group – usually couples and usually staying for longer periods - who had sole occupancy of a flat or house, and typically lived outside of inner London. They were more likely to have made British friends. Carol was still regularly in contact with her workmates in Shrewsbury. Prior to this she had lived in outer London, and contrasted her experiences to those of ‘… my friends now they live in Clapham and they work in Clapham and all their friends from NZ live in Clapham and they go out in Clapham. So everything they do is within that little part. So it’s almost like they’ve picked up Wellington and put it in London….. But for us there was nothing like that because we lived in Wimbledon …. and there was no common thread’. Similarly, Nina, who had a sister living in suburban London had found that they were ‘… quite isolated from Kiwis…. it was part of the adventure, it was living like an English person, when in Rome and all that jazz’.

While several interviewees commented on the difficulties of making friends, they were matched by at least as many who had made good friends in the UK, especially if they lived outside the inner London places of multi-occupied and strongly networked flats. Friendships outside the New Zealand community were triggered by particular events or social situations. While the absence of children truncated one of the more obvious sources of wider friendships for most migrants, Olivia, who had a daughter (and lived in a small southern city), commented that this meant they had made friends ‘despite ourselves’. And Graham (inner London flat) had found making British friends difficult until he joined a martial arts club, where training sessions usually ended up at the pub.
The interviews also explored whether individuals had felt that they belonged to their neighbourhood in the UK. Although there were different understandings of ‘belonging’, approximately equal numbers felt strongly that they definitely either belonged (6) or did not belong (7). Participating in sport locally, or going regularly to the same pub or shop, could generate a sense of belonging. Alison (inner London flat) felt that ‘.. we fitted quite well into our neighbourhood. The woman next door and the Irish couple on the other side both were quite chatty. The lady next door would always laugh at [her husband] when he would go out in winter in just his sandals as he wouldn't put his work boots on until he got to the work site’. Kylie, who had lived in six flats in London, considered that belonging depended not only on the place, but also on length of residence.

The comments of those who did not feel that they had belonged to their neighbourhoods were quite diverse. Given the relatively short and working-holiday nature of their sojourns, and frequent residential changes in some cases, a few interviewees did not want to belong to their neighbourhood. Some also considered that high rates of population turnover in areas of multi-occupation militated against a sense of belonging or community involvement. However, Graham (inner London flat) felt he had belonged precisely because it was an immigrant area: ‘there were not actually a lot of Brits in that area so I felt very at home’.

Those who lived outside London were more likely to have met a broader range of British people, and generally found it easier to ‘belong’ to their neighbourhoods. However, this was not invariably the case. While Carol had felt far more at home in Shrewsbury than London, Sally had found Surrey to be ‘very English [so that she] felt different’, unlike when she lived in multicultural Chiswick in London. This contrasted with a prevalent
narrative, mainly amongst those who had only lived in London, about a more friendly and cohesive rural England, that only existed beyond the metropolis. Pete (inner London flat) had ‘... great memories of going on day trips down to places like Kent and those areas, and go cycling and into country pubs, it was wonderful. That’s where you get to meet the real British people and really enjoy their company’.

Finally, throughout this period most migrants were also in regular contact with friends in New Zealand, many of whom were about to migrate to, or had just returned from, the UK. Emails and other forms of web-based communication were the main forms of contact in these social relations. Therefore many of their friends had at some time been in the UK, often overlapping with part of their own sojourns. To this was also added, the churning of friends who came on shorter (holiday) visits, so that social relations were maintained through shifting mixes of intermittently localized and distanciated relationships (Urry, 2007, p.47).

Individual migrations, and in this case social relations in the domains of the family, workplace and community, are shaped not only by individual sojourns but by complex combinations of mobilities, including the enfolded corporeal mobilities of friends and family. These are not necessarily independent domains, and there are spillovers with, for example, workplace friendships extending outside of working hours. Place is a significant thread in any attempt to unravel these shifting relationships. Our analysis does indicate some consistent and sharp differences between those living in inner London and elsewhere and, for example, some places in inner London do constitute expatriate bubbles. Places are also bound together through a series of interlocking social networks that provide a variety of environments ranging from the party flat to the career household, intersecting at particular junctions or events within the NZ community in London. But at the same time, these are transnational, with virtual and enfolded
corporeal mobilities refreshing and sometimes creating new relationships at a distance with those in NZ.

**EXPERIENCES AFTER RETURNING TO NEW ZEALAND**

Most interviewees considered they had returned permanently due to family or career reasons, other than for short sojourns abroad for business or holiday purposes. This accords with most migrants understanding of the Big OE as a rite of passage rather than a departure point for long term or permanent migration. The key to understanding migrants’ social relations after returning is that these are shaped by the interplay between their own mobility and that of their social networks. Within this overall context, family, workplace and community structure their experiences of their places of return, and the ways in which local and distanciated relations are re-folded into each other.

*Family support*

Family considerations were often important in the decision to return, or at least its timing, as most interviewees had always intended to return after 2-3 years. The break up of a relationship with a partner in the UK, either one they had travelled out with, or had met in the UK – could trigger return. In Mike’s case (various locations, UK), ‘to be honest leaving was a massive relief as I had broken up with my girlfriend’. Alternatively, return might be spurred by a desire to move a relationship onto a new stage, for example, to buy a house or have children. Another motivation was providing emotional support for increasingly frail relatives. For Richard (inner London) the spur was his father dying while Sally (inner London) had several motives: ‘Particularly at the age group I’m at
now, a lot of people are doing things like having babies and getting married and I didn’t really want to miss out. And things like grandparents getting older and things like that, and it just seemed such a long way’.

Given the mobility in family networks, return did not inevitably mean re-integration of internationally fragmented families. In some instances when kin remained in the UK, it also spatially fragmented family relationships. This was particularly hard for individuals who had originally migrated in order to strengthen affective relationships with family members living in the UK, as in the case of Graham and his brother. Vicky (housekeeper, London and rural south) left behind her son, and his young family, that she had come to Britain to provide support to. In both cases they were concerned that distanced relationship would weaken bonds that had been nurtured during their sojourns.

Family can provide several types of support (Finch, 1989) for returnees: practical, accommodation sharing, emotional and childcare. Interviewees did not specifically refer to family as having been sources of economic support, although arguably this overlaps with accommodation sharing. Provision of support was of course place specific, that is, where returnees lived in relation to their families. In turn, that was related to whether they returned to new places (unfamiliar), or places they had previously lived (familiar).

Nina (suburban London, NZ familiar) expressed the thoughts of many about returning to a familiar place, in this case Christchurch: ‘ … it was a relief, fantastic, just coming off the plane and going home, and knowing that we’ve got a place to live … knowing exactly where it is’. Many interviewees also compared their experiences when first arriving in the UK, to those on their return, and emphasised the support provided by existing networks
of family and friends. Graham (inner London, NZ familiar), for example, explained that ‘When I first arrived in the UK I was a bit intimidated, scared, quite anxious, not really sure what was going to happen. Whereas when I arrived here I flew into Wellington airport, my parents were there, my two best friends came to meet me’. For some the practical and emotional support provided by family was immediate and short term, such as Pete (inner London, NZ familiar) who spent Christmas with family in Christchurch and Invercargill, before moving to Auckland. Whether directly, or after a short transition period, however, most interviewees moved into their own accommodation, and family relationships became more distanciated, although this could vary from living around the corner to living at different ends of NZ, that is, involving different levels of intermittent proximity.

Old and renewed workplace friendships

Jobs not only determine where many migrants returned to, but also tell us about their social networks. Some returnees started work almost immediately, but some first had a period of rest. When ready to work, most found it relatively easy to secure jobs. One interviewee, Helen (suburban London, unfamiliar NZ), had returned to NZ specifically to take up a job opportunity: ‘Part of the reason I came back here is that I was looking to move on. And one of the opportunities I got was back here’. Others, such as Graham (inner London flat, NZ familiar), had felt that their careers were on hold while they were in the UK, and they needed to return in order to progress these.

For those who did not already have jobs waiting for them, social networks were important in securing these. Carol (outside London, NZ unfamiliar) and Graham (inner London, NZ familiar) found jobs through people they knew, and Carla (outside London,
NZ familiar) ran a small hotel for friends. Returning to the same job usually reactivated an earlier or surviving workplace-centred social network. Vicky (London and rural South, NZ familiar) epitomised this: ‘I had family to come back to which was nice and my job so all my work colleagues and family were back here’. This was not always seen as advantageous, however, seeming to devalue the importance of their ‘migration years’. Joan (inner London, NZ familiar) had had to find a new job ‘.. and I’m actually pleased I didn’t go back to where I worked beforehand because you’d almost feel, and I’ve heard others say that you feel, like you’ve never actually left’.

For Andrea (outside London, NZ familiar) her mother was the key contact: ‘She came home and said there’s a job, get off your bum and go look. So I went in and I didn’t even know if my CV was ready or anything and he just gave me the job on the spot’. Nina (outer London, NZ familiar), however, provided the most explicit evidence of the importance of workplace-centred social networks; she went to her old employer to say ‘I’m home give me a job’ because in Christchurch ‘… it’s about who you know, especially in hospitality’.

Returning did not necessarily mean severance of UK workplace relations. These were sometimes transformed into distanciated relations. Sometimes these connections were instrumental to their new jobs. Larry (outside London, NZ unfamiliar) had found it useful ‘… to keep track of what’s been happening over there’. For others, it was emotional rather than economic support which was important. Andrea (outside London, NZ familiar) had been very friendly with her UK boss, and continued to email her ‘every probably fortnight and she still sends me postcards on every trip she takes’.
These networks were sometimes refreshed by corporeal mobility, usually short return visits to or from the UK. Helen (suburban London, NZ unfamiliar) returned to the UK at Christmas, and ‘I did pop into work while I was over there’. In contrast, while Jeff (inner London, NZ familiar) stayed in touch with several former workmates – including several New Zealanders – their only face-to-face encounter had been when he traveled to meet a friend who was visiting Australia. Both the visit to Melbourne, and contacts with New Zealand friends in the UK, emphasize the mobility of networks, a theme we return to later. However, given that many interviewees had found it difficult to make workplace friendships in the UK, especially with non-‘Antipodeans’, then not surprisingly, like Frank (suburban London, NZ unfamiliar) they ‘… gave up on them because it was …. too much effort.’

On returning to NZ, new friendships were made in workplaces but – as in London – seemed less important than non-workplace based friendships. Not surprisingly, workplace based friendships were important among those who had returned to unfamiliar places in NZ where they had relatively weak previous localised social networks. For example, Carol (outside London, NZ unfamiliar) had made many friends at work: ‘… the boundaries between personal and work are blurred because it is such a fun place to work and you do a lot of socializing with people at work’. Kylie (inner London, NZ unfamiliar) had also made good friends at work, partly through shared experiences of mobility: ‘There’s quite a few people at work who had been to the UK as well. We actually have quite a large amount of British people at my work who have returned [sic] from the UK … we can reminisce’. However, workplace friendships were not always the answer to initially weak local social networks. Helen (outer London, NZ unfamiliar) had few friends in the unfamiliar area of Wellington she returned to: not ‘knowing people that well at work [meant] it has actually been hard’.
In summary, UK workplace-centred social networks were sometimes transformed from localized into distanciated relationships by return migration. But these were as likely to involve former New Zealander as opposed to British workmates. There was also evidence that intermittent mobility refreshed social relations within these networks. For most returnees, workplace based friendships did not seem to be especially significant, but they were more important amongst interviewees who had returned to unfamiliar places.

Community: familiar and unfamiliar places

Most returnees commented on the changed pace of the banalities of every day life, whether traveling to work, or the range of leisure and cultural activities they engaged in. For Frank (outer London, NZ unfamiliar) ‘It was quite difficult believe it or not. Because you’d been used to the fast and frantic lifestyle and the busy nature of every night being out doing something or meeting friends in central London’. Short trips to continental Europe, in the company of friends, were also sorely missed. However, the impact of return on their social networks of friends was complex, not least because of their mobility. As a result, there were contrasting ways in which local and distanciated relationships were unfolded and refolded after returning to NZ.

Similarly to how networks of friends had partly relocated from NZ to the UK, in a largely unplanned and rolling process, return was also accompanied by network relocation. Individual experiences were shaped by the temporality and spatiality of these networks. Dave (inner London, NZ familiar) was typical of early returners within a group: ‘… all my
friends were still over there. I was one of the first to come back’, but as with Richard 
(inner London, NZ familiar) he expected that most New Zealand friends would eventually 
return: ‘some have come home recently but we’re expecting more to come back in the 
next few years’. Meanwhile, anticipated renewal of face-to-face relationships with these 
friends strengthened their commitment to them at a distance.

Mobilities were not always closely synchronised, and ‘early returners’ were especially 
likely to experience feeling of loss, rather than anticipated renewal of face-to-face social 
relations. Carol (outside London, NZ unfamiliar) explained that: ‘last year the people I 
was really good friends with at work have left in that second phase that people are going 
over. Most of my friends from university are all there at the moment.’

It was not only proximate relationships with New Zealand friends – both those made 
before and during migration – that had been severed by return. So too were friendships 
with British and migrants of other nationalities. Carol (outside London, NZ familiar) had 
found it ‘really upsetting leaving those people’. The extent to which localized 
relationships were transformed into distanciated ones varied, as indeed did the means of 
maintaining relationships at a distance. However, those who had lived outside the close-
knit social networks grounded in multi-occupancy inner London were now more likely to 
have relatively strong distanciated contacts with non New Zealanders in the UK.

At the time we interviewed them – which ranged from months to decades after returning 
– many still had contact with some of the friends made in the UK. But, generally, there 
were relatively few such contacts, except for postcards or emails, and an occasional 
holiday visit. Pete’s (inner London; NZ familiar) contacts are illustrative of the 
experiences of many interviewees: ‘Yes, we talked on the phone to a couple of them,
and we’ve had numerous emails from our neighbours, the Irish girl we met, but obviously it’s hard to ring the UK you’ll never know what time to ring and all that sort of stuff. We have not had a huge amount of contact but we have had some’.

While friendships made in the UK with non New Zealanders often weakened or withered away once they became distanciated, close relations with new NZ friends were more likely to be sustained, not least because of actual or potential shared return mobility. Edward (inner London, NZ unfamiliar) kept in touch with ‘… people all over the place in Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland and even in Invercargill’. Sometimes there were closer bonds with other returned migrants (first met in the UK) than with their previous non-migrant friends. For Andrea (outside London, NZ familiar) it was ‘… good to share things with people you’d been away and gone through similar experiences with’.

Individuals were more likely to seek out or to value contacts with other returnees when they found that previous localized relationships had significantly weakened. Tara (inner London, NZ familiar) ‘… found it hard to relate to my friends. They just seemed to be on a different level or just at different stages in their lives’. Joan (inner London, NZ familiar) explained how migration could dislocate social relations even when individuals moved back to the same places: ‘… you sort of feel a wee bit left out at times. Its weird but their lives carried on while yours has been so completely different, and in a way you do expect it to be where it left off but its not like that’.

Inevitably, the experiences of those who moved back to unfamiliar versus familiar places were very different. Edward had previously lived in Invercargill but had returned to the larger city of Christchurch, where he had few friends. However, a change of place is not a requirement for disruption of prior social networks. They were also disrupted by life
cycle events, such as having children which results in different needs and obligations. Richard (inner London, NZ familiar) explained that his wife’s pregnancy meant ‘our circle of friends is changing a little bit because of the baby coming. Obviously we’re meeting and dealing with other people with young families more’.

Finally, while the returnees had relatively mixed impressions of the positive and negative aspects of life back in New Zealand, they had relatively strong and positive impressions of belonging to their neighbourhoods. A majority (15) considered that they belonged to their neighbourhood, either strongly or moderately, while only four did not. This was a far more positive balance than in the UK, which was hardly surprising because some, such as Irene (inner London, NZ familiar), had moved back to places where they had grown up. Similarly Graham (inner London, NZ familiar) considered that ‘... I really belong to my neighbourhood. It’s very much home, I know the area, my little sister’s best friend lives across the road’. The place specific nature of the experiences of migration and return are further underlined by two of the four, who did not feel a sense of belonging, commenting that this was due to living in the same types of areas as in London: ‘I’m in quite a transient sort of area where I live, it doesn’t have much of a neighbourhood to it’ (Frank – outer London, NZ unfamiliar). Similarly, Helen (outer London, NZ unfamiliar) lived in an area of high rise housing in Wellington, and contrasted this with her experience of London: ‘... that’s quite crazy because in London it’s a huge city, there are all these villages crammed together so there is kind of a community feel still. Whereas here there are tall apartment blocks and you don’t feel like there is a community’.

CONCLUSIONS
Building on previous research on social networks, places and transnationalism of the middle, this paper has sought to make a threefold contribution. First, drawing on Voydanoff (2005), we have examined how social relations are shaped in the domains of family, work and community, both for migrants and returned migrants. As indicated by Voydanoff, these three domains – what he terms ‘microsystems’ – exert independent, mediating and interactive effects on each other – in other words there are overlaps and overspills in terms of how social relations are worked and reworked. The complementarities, gaps and overlaps amongst these domains in part define the range and nature of support that are provided by their social networks. As might be expected, given the socio-demographic characteristics of the migration cohort, and the nature of their migration, these are more likely to focus on emotional support, and in some cases practical support or shared accommodation, rather than on care or economic support.

Secondly, as Conradson and Latham (2005a, 2005b) have demonstrated, the migration experiences of the Big OE migrants has to be understood in context of the mobility of their networks. We have sought to advance on this by arguing that this form of ‘discovery mobility’ needs to be understood in terms of the concept of enfolded mobility (Williams 2009), involving both contingent and collective forms of mobility, ranging from linked migrations to short term visits to and from family and friends. In addition, we also explored how social relations are shaped by the reverse migration of such networks for returned migration. Moreover, shared mobility experiences shape the creation of new friendships abroad, their maintenance after return, and the resilience and refreshment of old friendships. Shared mobility experiences can also become the platform for creating new friendships amongst previously unconnected returned migrants.
Thirdly, experiences of migration and return can usefully be understood through the lens of relational places and how these are articulated in the ways that localised and distanciated relationships are folded together. Moreover, these are also folded and refolded during return migration, so that it is important to see how the relationality of places changes for individuals over the entire migration cycle. The migrants’ accounts also remind us that their trajectories shape, as well as being shaped by, places. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the areas of multi-occupancy in inner London, characterised by high levels of mobility and migration – although this is not a theme that we have pursued in this paper. More generally, this paper has sought to respond to Nagar et al’s (2002, p.270) call for understanding of ‘… the multiple ways in which globalization is lived, created, accommodated, and acted upon in different historical and geographic settings’ (see also Franklin et al, 2000).

Doreen Massey (2007, p.16), who has done so much to initiate the discussion about the relationality of places, writes that ‘The ‘global’ so often is imagined, implicitly, as somehow always out there, or even up there, but as always somewhere else in its origins. In fact it exists in very concrete forms in local places. And some places more than others are home-bases for the organization of the current form of globalization. London is such a place’. This was very much the experience of many of the NZ returnees that we interviewed. Their lives in particular places are lived out in terms of the changing ways in which localised and distanciated relationships are interwoven. At the same time, their experiences are not so much of migration to the UK, although the national is an important site of mediation of migrant experiences, as migration to London or to other specific places.
This is not to argue for place determinism, for individual experiences of the making and remaking of social relations vary considerably within as well as between particular places. However, as our analysis indicates, there are notable differences in social relationships (and experiences of migration) according to where individuals lived in the UK and in New Zealand. Not all migrants live in expatriate bubbles within multi-occupied inner London, peopled by ‘antipodeans’ and other migrants, and not all migrants return to familiar places in NZ. Instead, as Massey (2007, p.22) emphasises, any place is ‘.. a field of multiple actors, trajectories, stories with their own energies’. The emphasis on trajectories reminds us that it is important to look beyond particular moments or stages in migration to the entire migration cycle, and the way in which mobilities are enfolded not only within that, but before and after it. Amin (2004, p34) writing about relational places and spaces considered that the analytical challenge they posed was ‘... to make something of the tracings of varying length and duration of material, virtual and immanent relationships that work through a place’. That challenge requires far more than analysing the circular flows, and social relations, of one migrant group in London – but this study hopefully demonstrates how a focus on the migration cycle provides insights into significant aspects of the relational nature of places that are connected by such circulation.
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