

MA MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

The Connected Transient:
The Effect of Network Communication Technologies on Global Flows, Home and Belonging

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Table of Contents

Introduction	2
My Edinburgh 'Connected Transient Study'	7
Background: Why This Now?	12
Transience in the 'Global Cosmopolitan City'	17
Toward a New Conceptualization of Social Networks	30
Network Communication Technology's Role in 'Co-Presence'	35
How the Internet and Mobile Phones Affect the Notion of Home	49
Conclusion	65
Appendix	70
Bibliography	72

Introduction

The 'networking of cultural practices and experiences across the world' (Tomlinson 1999: 71) may not create a McLuhanesque global village, but the transition to imagined cultural collectivities and discourses attracts and pleases people, especially computer-literate young people who generally construct the most complex and technologically sophisticated supercultures

James Lull 2001, 137

I'm sitting here in China thinking that if I sent an email to Ashley in Edinburgh, Judi in Toronto, and Ardith and Lloyd in Mexico, we would almost have the four corners of the world connected instantaneously!!! (well, the Northern hemisphere anyway) Pretty cool, eh? (I'm speaking Canadian, eh, just in case that you are homesick)

Excerpt from an email to a Canadian living in Edinburgh

Since its conception, cultural theorists have charted the rise of virtual culture and the differences between computer-mediated communication (CMC) and face-to-face (F2F) interaction. Cybercommunication throws into discord traditional notions of space, place, locality, local culture and social interaction. Internet study reveals new webs of meaning as network technologies affect our behaviour and our way of thinking. It is now widely believed among theorists that new communication technologies can alter social interactions and social structure.

As this phenomenon unfolds, the trend of travel among First World, middle class youth is being remoulded. While youth travel is hardly new, I argue – based on my

research and on my own experience travelling and as a member of a community of transients in Edinburgh, Scotland – that there is more incentive for youth to travel now for a number of reasons. For one, globalization has brought the intrigue of other cultures into our homes via new communication technologies. Cable and satellite television not only bring us travel programs but also offer up international programs that allow us to escape the constraints of a provincial existence. It is my belief that the increased exposure to other cultures and their cultural products – music, television, films, and cuisine – has whet our appetite for seeking out new cultural experiences first hand. Moreover, once youth are away from home, these technologies allow them to easily access various cultural products from home, making them feel less removed from their familiar setting.

Secondly, over the past ten years the cost of travel within Europe has significantly decreased with the emergence of discount air carriers. It is also relatively easy for citizens of former British colonies to obtain UK holiday worker visas. This has resulted in the establishment of communities of travellers who set up temporary, but long-term residence in popular UK cities. Living in either hostels or rental flats, they establish what I believe are unique ad hoc communities with other young travellers. It is this new social group that I am interested in exploring. Is this group a phenomenon unique to our time? And, more importantly, what influence – if any – do new network communication technologies (NCTs) have on the new transient youth culture? It is my hypothesis that NCTs have had a significant influence over youth travel and temporary settlement (transience) abroad. The NCTs that I focus on in my research are the mobile phone and the internet.

The changing face of communication demands that we rethink social ordering and use a new language to describe this phenomenon. Urry claims that social life is now 'networked' – networked life “involves specific co-present encounters within certain times and places” (Urry 2003, 156). Co-presence perfectly describes the ability for young transients to remain connected to their distant communities while establishing new networks – it allows them to be 'technological nomads.' In addition, co-presence imposes new articulations of home and belonging. The notion of home being the house in which one was raised is brought under interrogation when it is so easy to keep contact with one's social circle from a distance. Sometimes movement from the 'home' is necessary in the discovery of what 'home' really is. The concept of home, however, remains a complicated issue, which I will draw out in my research.

Travel – a term which I use to reference the movement from 'home' – is sometimes necessary for social life; it allows complex connections to be made. Diverse forms of travel now exist, Urry attests, and social life consists of multiple and extended connections across long distances, ordered through hubs within which social life is created and recreated. Castles (2002) draws this out in relation to migration, which is similar in its nature to transience because it sometimes involves temporary residence in a foreign country:

New developments in information and transport technology increase the volume of temporary, repeated and circulatory migration. Increasing numbers of migrants orient their lives to two or more societies and develop transnational communities and consciousness. Such trends are linked to the increasing strength of informal networks as a mode of communication and organization which transcends national borders.

This leads to the third connection between transience and communication technologies.

I believe that links exist between increased movement of young people and communication tools. The internet and mobile phones have accomplished a feat in reducing the feeling of disconnection experienced when living in a new country. Communication technologies produce a wider sense of *shared presence* across geographical space and internet cafés are now a common part of the urban scenery in global cosmopolitan cities. Easily accessible, they are a haven for transients who can keep in touch via email, instant messaging, personal web pages, chat rooms and send photos online. My local internet café in Edinburgh employed two Canadians and an Aussie and a mix of accents always filled my ears when I would pop in to email (or chat online with) my Canadian community. The internet cafés in Edinburgh are an international experience in themselves with the presence of a wide range of nationalities.

I realize that youth transience is not a new phenomenon. However, I provide evidence to show that transience is changing. I believe that young transients today form a culture unique to our time because this social group is able to stay away from home for much longer without losing touch with those they left behind. Perhaps what has changed is the need, or perceived need, to stay in touch. With these technologies embedded in the daily activities of Westerners it is perhaps logical that NCTs are such prolific tools for those away from home. Whether or not this is the case, I have found that the mobile phone has certainly had an affect on the socialization of process of transients setting up new communities. While living away from home transients can more easily establish new social groups with greater ease by incorporating network technologies into their temporary lives. I am not arguing that letters, postcards, and intermittent, expensive phone calls home – the common forms of communication for transient youth pre-network

technologies – are not viable forms of keeping in touch. However, one cannot argue that these forms of communication contributed to close connectivity to the degree that new network technologies have.

While a definitive link cannot be drawn between youth transience and the rise in NCTs, my data shows that it is certainly a factor. Craven and Morelli use the term nomadism to describe a voluntary lifestyle choice; one made more easily as mainstream society is now more comfortable with the internet as a channel for information transfer (Craven and Morelli 2003). They claim, without defining the term, ‘technological nomadism’ has led to a reorganization of social life. As the two stress,

While nomadism is usually an unstable and weak condition, connectedness, on the other hand, generates a sense of stability. Wherever people travel, their team will always be available as long as they remain connected. (Craven and Morelli 2003)

I prefer to use the term ‘transient’ over nomad, for it better encapsulates the group of people I refer to in Edinburgh. I define *technological transience* as: the ability to travel freely and settle into new communities while maintaining a sense of connectedness with virtual communities, as afforded by network communication technologies. Young Western transients are a part of this category, as using network technologies to stay connected is an integral part of their experience abroad. Thus, my study set out to answer the following:

General Research Questions:

- What effect have NCTs had on the maintenance of virtual – home – communities and the establishment of new – physical – communities?
- Why do transients settle in ‘global cosmopolitan cities’?¹

Specific Research Questions:

¹ I define ‘global cosmopolitan cities’ as those with a population of at least 475,000; with an abundance of cultural activities; with a significant non-national population; and with prolific access to NCTs.

- How are the internet and mobile phones affecting the notion of home?
- Do the internet and mobile phones afford young transients the security they desire to maintain a sense of community and belonging while they are uprooted and exploring themselves in 'global cosmopolitan cities'?

My Edinburgh 'Connected Transient' Study

First off, I must say that none of the sources I located in my literature dealt specifically with my research questions. While some recent theorists have explored connectivity and how social habits have reformed with the onset of NCTs, not a single study has acknowledged the nuances of transients' relationship with the internet and mobile phones, let alone actually spoken to this group about their communication activity. Because the level of interaction via NCTs is so high, and the population of young transients living in cosmopolitan cities like Edinburgh is so significant,² I had every reason to explore how this group produces meaning with the communication tools they use. As Allon (2004) confirms:

In this world completely rewired by mobility, there has been a corresponding transition from visiting cultures to traveling cultures (Clifford, 1997; Veijola, 2002). The multiplying connections between places, including between geographically dispersed places, and the sheer number of tourists, migrants, and nonlocals both dwelling in localities and passing through them make it difficult to confidently declare who is a tourist and who is a local. Indeed, through this, the whole concept of a local community is thrown into question (Allon, 53)

Allon makes a valid point in stating the ambiguity between tourist and local. Similarly, in my study I grappled for a long time with the difference between traveler and transient.

² It is impossible to calculate the exact population of foreign transients in Edinburgh. By 'common sense' standards, however, the number is significant. If one were to ask anyone living or working in Edinburgh if there is a sizeable population of foreigners living in Edinburgh you would get one of two answers (I guarantee it): 'absolutely' or 'there are more foreigners in Edinburgh than Scots.'

Most transients in my study were either travelers to begin with and *became* transients (naturally or by design) or move fluidly between the roles of traveler and transient. I define a *traveler* as one who currently does not reside in one location and is on the move. *Transience*, on the other hand, and youth transience in particular, I define as a position where one is living, working and/or studying in a foreign country.³ Youth transience is intriguing because it has so much to say about how temporary communities are formed. I do not think that the link between transient community formation and NCTs can be ignored, for studying the form that youth transience is taking today is revealing of how new technologies have become imbedded in our everyday life. It was my belief when I began this study that we have become so comfortable with mobile phones and the internet that they have provided us with the added confidence to strike off into the world on our own because we can maintain strong connections.

Recently, some theorists have touched upon pockets of youth around the world who have articulated meaning in NCTs. After speaking to Norwegian teens, Ling and Yttri (2002) were surprised at how intensely the mobile telephone had been integrated into the lives of the youngsters. It is not just a security device, they found, nor is it used only to spontaneously coordinate daily activities. Rather, the mobile serves many purposes for interaction. Indeed, by “May 2001 as many as 94% of the oldest teens have a mobile telephone” (Ling & Yttri, 139). In addition, the teens’ use of this technology is unique to their generation. A quote from a member of their focus group also mirrors

³ Many transients I spoke to would refer to themselves as ‘travelers’ – evidence of the ambiguity of such terminology. When reading transient’s responses in my data it should be noted that when one refers to ‘travel’ or to himself or herself as a ‘traveler’ they are really referring to *transience* and their *transient* status, they have just not considered this terminology in labeling themselves.

some responses from my Edinburgh transients regarding the ubiquitous nature of the mobile phone:

I have a friend [without a mobile telephone] who lives an hour and a half away, so you cannot get in touch with her either at home or at work you know. If you want to get a message to her then its is a big problem. It is the same with me if I don't have a telephone with me" (Ling & Yttri, 151).

Research shows that those who use network technologies also meet more in-person (Wellman 2004). New technologies allow for multiple forms of communication to take place when one is away from home. I have often said that my relationship with my mother and sister is much stronger when I am away from home – somehow the distance brings us closer together when we are able to communicate frequently and with ease via the internet. Moreover, they also allow for new communities to form more easily, as I quickly discovered when I finally bought a mobile phone while living in Edinburgh – a whole new social world opened up to me, where I could easily text and make arrangements with new friends. I had resisted purchasing a phone because, as an outsider observing those on their mobiles, I thought that this mode of communication limited people from living in the moment and enjoying their surroundings. What I did not realize until I had my own was how much I was *missing out* on when I was not connected to my friends!

In addressing my research questions, I took an interpretive, subjective and evaluative approach. The specific research questions, on the other hand, I approached in two phases – 1) Assessed the literature as it related to these questions; 2) Interviewed members of transient communities in Edinburgh. My analysis was purely interpretive, based on participant observation.

Observation Research & Participant Observational Research

I employed observational research in analysing the answers to the questions I asked of transients in Edinburgh and participant observational research in analysing my own relationship with NCTs. I used the two methods to describe and classify transients as a unique sociological group, in short, my research falls somewhere in between these two disciplines. Because of the nature of my research questions, I could not have come to conclusions by using statistical procedures; mine is research about people's lives, stories, behaviour, organizational functioning, social movements and interactional relationships. In this sense, I wanted to discover how transients socially construct meaning in their organization and social activities. I teased out the dominant themes and issues that come to the fore in questioning them. The way they organize their communities is of paramount importance as it relates directly to my research questions: 'What effect have the internet and mobile phones had on the maintenance of virtual – home – communities and the establishment of new – physical – communities?' I looked specifically at how these groups organize and function with regard to their relationships with people and technology. I should note that my role as a participant observer in this study generated more comprehensive conclusions but also left me quite astute in my integrity as an interviewer.

Data Collection

Outside the literature review, I conducted an ethnographic study of Edinburgh's transient community. This study took on two phases: First, I interviewed the remaining

members of my old transient community in Edinburgh. Because I lived among this group, I drew upon past participant observation, a role I re-adopted with my new community when I returned to Edinburgh 5.5 months ago. Secondly, I returned to Edinburgh on 06 August 2004, and established myself among a new transient community. The Edinburgh International Festival and Fringe Festival draw more people to the city than any other festivals worldwide. Many young transients are drawn to Edinburgh during festival season (1 August to mid September) as well. I was savvy in balancing my role as observer and group member, without hiding my intentions from other members.

I initially planned to conduct focus groups but with experience found it easier to interview people individually when convenient. The responses I got from subjects on a one-to-one basis had a more defined focus and richness. My subjects conformed to the following criteria: English speaking; between the ages of 18-28; male and female; not primary UK citizens; had been living in Edinburgh for at least one month or had been living in Edinburgh for at least two weeks and planned to stay for at least one month more.ⁱ My respondents gave me permission to use their names and nationality in the presentation of my data, and the majority of my data was tape recorded and then transcribed by myself, with some data taken by notes during interviews. In addition, two of the quotes were extracted from one email that a transient received and one that I received. My literature review follows, giving some insight as to why young Westerners are choosing to live abroad in the first place.

Background: Why This Now?

In the current climate of individualization and consumption, the popularization of global goods has also led to the desire for and consumption of cultural symbols – goods that are representative (in an essentialized manner) of the cultures from which they are extracted. On a recent episode of *Oprah*, she triumphantly referred to her favorite chic mall as “a cultural extravaganza!” I believe that the phenomena of choice and consumer culture get played out in travel in the transient’s desire to seek out the ‘commodified Other’. In residing abroad we are, in effect, consuming cultural symbols. Theorists such as Straw (2002) have identified the fetishization of cultural symbols in a Canadian context. Drawing upon notions of a struggling Canadian national identity, he grapples with the reasoning behind our propensity to international cultural goods.

Williams (1983) articulates the implications of deterritorialization, drawing upon the ambiguous nature of contemporary national identity. He draws attention to our close contact with foreign cars, electronics, entertainment, and food. The proliferation of cultural products from around the world into our everyday lives, insists Williams, is representative of our loss of cultural certainty. In this condition, we revert to our homes to find meaning. He believes that the home sets up a spatial distinction between the outer world and the inner world of intimacy and subjectivity (Tomlinson 1999). In effect it becomes a place where we can block out the problems of the world, while we introduce cultural products into our private lives (Lull 2001). Communication technologies such as satellite TV, telephones, and the Internet, beckon the privileged class from within their homes to form their identities along lines of hybridity, consumption and cosmopolitanism (Morley, 98-99).

While some theorists hail globalization for nurturing cosmopolitanism and a 'global soul,' Bauman (1998) warns against this discourse for its exclusion of underprivileged people. He states that such discourse simply sets up a nomad universalism, romanticizing the notion of freedom of mobility. It should be recognized that mobility means different things to different groups of people. The 'hybrid identity,' warns Bauman, is a privileged position. While I respect the need to recognize that there is a massive divide in contemporary mobility, I think that ignoring either group leaves holes in this area of study. I have explored the position of the privileged Western middle class because it is the group I am most familiar with and have unique access to as I have lived and continue to live within this community.

For the privileged classes of the Western world, I believe that the freedom of mobility is a factor in youth transience. MacCannell (1988) claimed that the tourist was a model for 'modern-man-in-general' – middle class, and searching the globe for experience (Graburn 2001: 149). Graburn expands upon MacCannell's theories, reducing the tourist to those who are not old and/or sick, not at work, or school, and not poor. This leaves tourists as a group of people who can truly escape their lives at home. As Graburn says:

The tourists are not just looking for an authenticity missing at home, but they are looking for a whole range of moral and recreational complements to their constrained roles at home and at work. Cultural and national authenticity might well be the grail of their 'sacred journey', but so might freedom to stay in bed, to get drunk, to overeat, to get a suntan, experiment with the lives of others... (Graburn, 150).

This description of the tourist is easily comparable to the Edinburgh transients of my own study because both groups experience hybridity, as I will expand upon later. Graburn

suggests that once the definition of tourist is well established, we find that an important element of their activities away from home is the sheer escapism of travel. The freedom to define oneself based on living a hedonistic lifestyle, he believes, is a valid dimension of the experience of travel. Identity comes into play here in that this privileged tourist is identifying her- or himself by having the freedom to step out of regular society, relinquish her/his responsibilities (social, personal, occupational) and settle completely into a lifestyle of hedonistic pleasure.

In agreement, Lull says that in locating identity we use human reference points; we seek out those who share similar experiences to nurture feelings of security and belongingness. We synthesize the familiar with the exotic, material with the symbolic to feel safe, contented and intrigued with life (Lull, 158). Lull cites Lash and Urry's (1994) notion of 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism': "the desire for people to explore new cultural vistas for personal reasons" (Lull, 253). The statements I received from almost all of the transients in my Edinburgh study confirm Lull's acutely accurate observations and essentially form the heart of my research. *Do the internet and mobile phones afford young transients the security they desire to maintain a sense of community and belonging while they are uprooted and exploring themselves in 'global cosmopolitan cities'?* My own research and that which precedes mine confirms that this is indeed the case.

Lull asserts that we create meaning of cultural space by reconfiguring life experience to fit cosmopolitanism (Lull 2001). Our patterning of cultural styles is more intensive than ever before because of the global explosion of symbolic forms. This leads us to construct impermanent parallel lives. Lull is on the right track here – I asked transients if they considered themselves to be leading impermanent parallel lives and the

responses were almost unanimously in favour of such a description of their experience (I will draw upon their responses later).

Lull coins the term ‘superculture’ to describe this phenomenon – a lifestyle (a repertoire of styles and tastes) driven by global forces and consumerist mentality (Lull, 133). Such additions to our lives as cable TV allow for customization of media experiences to cater to personal tastes. People are creators of cultural experience; we are cultural programmers, not simply audience members or consumers. We have active roles in what we consume and how we consume it – and shape our identities based along these lines. Cultural programming can be referenced in transience, where individuals in this group feel liberated through their intense interaction with new cultures. Allon references this phenomenon as it relates specifically to movement from where one is from and the distinction between travelers (cultural programmers) and tourists:

This demarcation between travelers and tourists is strongly maintained within backpacker communities and involves an extensive and sophisticated repertoire of signs, discourses, languages, and codes. This distinction between tourists and travelers is based on a further related distinction between inauthentic and authentic travel experiences. As Tony Wheeler’s quote suggests, travel is assumed to involve an unmediated, authentic connection to the culture of the place being visited (“the traveller wants to see the country at ground level, to breathe it, experience it— live it”), whereas tourism is seen as something that is highly controlled, managed, and artificial, in other words, a totally packaged and insulated ersatz experience (“tourists stay in Hiltons”) (Allon, 57).

As cultural programmers, travelers immerse themselves in alternate cultures. Transients, for that matter, enter a world of fluid relationships that cater to a flexible collection of identities.

Lull points out that the discursive presence of the ‘universal cultural themes’ is important in the construction of the superculture. The superculture, he insists, “is based

on the premise that the hybrid – human, material and discursive features of the cultural ‘in between’ (Bhaba 1996) – is the essence of contemporary cultural identity” (Lull, 157). Cultural hybrids are created through communication exchange and rearticulation of forms and images, yielding a ‘multiplicity of self.’ This concept fascinated me, for I had always been aware while living in Edinburgh that I was keeping a flame alive for my life in Canada. This was possible through frequent internet contact. The other side of the multiplicity coin was immersing myself into life here in Edinburgh – a significant cultural shift but a comfortable one, for the social codes are not dramatically different in Canada and the UK. While Edinburgh is not a trying city for a Westerner to adapt to, its exotic nature to the newcomer is still noteworthy. Huntington states that in contemporary society “the most important distinctions among peoples are not ideological, political or economic. They are cultural” (Lull, 146). Cultural difference was cited among some transients in my study as a reason for branching off into the world. Moreover, Bunting (2005) states:

Collective identities are unravelling, from political party to class and religion. Their hold is loosening or becoming redundant. Complex, hybrid identities are facilitated by patterns of migration never experienced before - easy air travel and communications ensure that few have to cut the ties. National citizenship can be decoupled from a sense of belonging. Home can be in more than one country. (Bunting, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/comment/story/0,3604,1436832,00.html>)

Transients are on the cusp of this generation of hybridity. They are ideal test subjects for studying the phenomenon of ‘multiplicity of self’ for those that are using a range of NCTs are living proof that a range of absent presences are possible. I hypothesized that one of the reasons young Westerners wanted to explore new terrain was because of a cultural curiosity and my data confirms this, as I demonstrate in the next section. In addition, I have drawn ties to the proliferation of global flows, transience and NCTs.

Transience in the ‘Global Cosmopolitan City’

Throughout history people have been moved to leave their familiar surroundings and strike off into the world of mystery and intrigue. While travel – movement from one’s familiar surroundings – contains different meanings for different people, I believe the wandering instinct of the historical pilgrim still exists in the postmodern subject, who finds fulfilment in travel. An avid traveler myself, with a bit of a wandering soul, I have found myself increasingly questioning what drives middle class youth like myself to leave their countries. In this personal quest to locate my innermost desires to live in, not just travel to, Edinburgh and adopt a transient role I have been enlightened by travel writing and theory, communication theories of connectivity, and cultural theorist’s notions of home and belonging. One of the issues I have looked at is why young people have chosen Edinburgh over other cities and how this ties into my theory that cities are becoming more global than local in nature.

My research and experience has led me to question whether living in another country brings transients to explore the concept of home – when people are mobile do we question whether home and ‘homeland’ are necessarily connected? I have also questioned whether it is possible to be ‘rooted’ in two places – leading ‘impermanent parallel lives’ – and if NCTs make this phenomenon easier to achieve. In addressing these issues I have used my own experience and the accounts of ‘technological transients’ – those who travel freely and settle into new communities while maintaining a sense of

connectedness with virtual communities, as afforded by network communication technologies.

To begin, I think it is important to understand how travel, or movement from where one resides, and identity are historically linked.⁴ Bauman (1996) provides an excellent theoretical introduction to the subject in addition to setting up a comparison to the pilgrim and traveler. Pilgrims, states Bauman, historically sought out truth elsewhere – “for the pilgrim, only the streets make sense, not the houses – houses tempt one to rest and relax, to forget about the destination” (Bauman, 20).⁵ Judeo-Christian culture, Bauman states, holds experiences of spiritual dislocation and homelessness at its very roots; faith emerged at odds with place. The pilgrim’s destination in his journey was the desert: the land of self-creation where he was free of commitments to reflect and progress towards finding inspired meanings in life. Bauman notes: “their pilgrimage to God was an exercise in self-construction” (Bauman, 21).

In contemporary society, the world is inhospitable to pilgrims, he insists, where building identity is less an issue than *preserving* it. In today’s world of mass consumption and disposable products, Bauman states, “identities can be adopted and discarded like a change of costume” (Bauman, 23). Our consumptive dispositions leave us too restless to remain fixed in one place. Yet, the traveler has security in knowing that he/she can always return home:

‘The home’ is the place to take off the armour and to unpack – the place where nothing needs to be proved and defended as everything is just there, obvious and familiar. It is the placidity of home that sends the tourist to seek new adventures, but it is the selfsame placidity which renders the search of adventures an

⁴ For the purpose of this paper, ‘travel’ will refer to movement from one’s native land to distant destinations, as opposed to the common linkage of travel and tourism.

⁵ Bauman falls short in his lack of recognition of what home symbolizes for one in a new country – an area that I explore later.

unclouded pleasurable pastime: whatever has happened to my face here, in the tourist land, or whichever mask I put on it, my 'real face' is in safe keeping, immune, stain-resistant, unsullied... (Bauman, 30)

Bauman eloquently describes the drive to reinvent the self as appropriated into contemporary society – a drive to go where no one knows you to test identities.

Drawing on Bauman's contemporary pilgrim – which he refers to as a tourist – I believe that a deep desire to define the self away from home, in pilgrim fashion, is a part of the young transient's experience. The pilgrim is described as an identity builder; when one goes where no one knows you one can choose to seize the opportunity to reinvent the self (Bauman, 24). Bauman describes the 'tourist' as one who is a seeker of experience in their purposeful attempt to find difference and novelty (Bauman, 29). Allon (2004) arrives at similar interpretations of the traveler's psyche:

Evidence suggests that there is an increased interest in diverse cultural activities, attractions, and travel locations, and it stems from the fact that many tourists are motivated by the search for new and different cultural experiences (World Tourism Organization, 2001). The picture that is emerging from these trends is one of a worldwide community of global citizens consumed by the pursuit of experiences (Allon, 56).

MacCannell also holds the opinion that the tourist is a model for 'modern-man-in-general' – middle class, searching the globe for experience and questing for authenticity that is lacking in their modern, industrialized, urban world (Graburn 2001: 149). He articulates that the privileged traveler goes through life "collecting sights and experiences, searching for truth outside his or her home milieu, making his or her home a museum of the lived self" (Graburn, 153).

Chambers (1994) explores the human desire to locate difference and uniqueness not only in us but also in others. He quotes novelist Islas:

It is perhaps in the dialogue that is installed between ourselves and this sense of 'otherness' that our particular selves are most sharply revealed... To live 'elsewhere' means to continually find yourself involved in a conversation in which different identities are recognised, exchanged and mixed, but do not vanish. Here differences function not necessarily as barriers but rather as signals of complexity (Chambers, 18).

In meeting strangers, says Chambers, we are forced to recognize the stranger in ourselves. I think that we become whom we are by going where we want to go; exercising our freedom, finding our niche in the world and discovering our boundaries. Sometimes one has to escape one's physical boundaries to map out one's mental and spiritual space. Chambers agrees, stressing that identity is formed on the move; it is an open, incomplete journey, a continual invention (Chambers, 25). His belief is that we can never shed our old identities; only remould ourselves when confronted with alternatives.

The alternatives may seem more enthralling because we have become disillusioned with our common surroundings – the people, places and events that make up a daily routine. In his book 'The Art of Travel,' de Botton reminds us that memory is often reduced to simplification and selection (de Botton 2002: 15). I have found this to be true in my own research as well, where some of my subjects have claimed to be closer to relatives while away from them. It would appear that memory of 'home' can be rose-coloured when away, which invariably makes homecoming more of an event. de Botton also says:

It is not necessarily at home that we best encounter our true selves. The furniture insists that we cannot change because it does not; the domestic setting keeps us tethered to the person we are in ordinary life, but who may not be who we essentially are (de Botton, 59).

When we are away from home we can escape habits of the mind.

Flaubert, a writer of the mid-19th century, experienced acute boredom in France and longed to explore exotic locales. Applying Flaubert's emotional disposition to a microscope, de Botton intelligently cites anticipation as an element worthy of analysis in the process of leaving home. He quotes Flaubert, "Oh! To be riding now on the back of a camel! Ahead of you, a red sky and brown sands, on the burning horizon, the undulating landscape stretches out into infinity..." (de Botton, 74). Imagination plays a significant role in transients' and travellers' daily lives as well. The process takes hold both before one leaves their secure surroundings and during their stay in a new place, as my own research shows from transients' use of internet domains where users exchange information about Edinburgh. de Botton expresses this acute imagination process in his own desire to live in Amsterdam:

In one street lined with uniform apartment buildings, I stopped by a red front door and felt an intense longing to spend the rest of my life there... I wanted the life that this space implied. I wanted a bicycle. I wanted to put my key through the red front door every evening. I wanted to stand by the curtainless window at dusk looking through at an identical apartment opposite and snack my way through an *erwentsoep met roggebrood en spek* before retiring to read in bed in a white room with white sheets" (de Botton, 76).

The difference between the longing felt by de Botton and the lives of transients lies in the fact that transients follow that inner longing and actively construct a life for themselves in the cities that grab their interest. Adler comes to the same conclusion:

The occupational community of resort workers offers a glimpse into the global postmodern workforce: individuals who relocate around the world, impelled by their career aspirations or their search for the intense experience of the beauty, exotic nature, and extreme recreation in various international destinations. These people have abandoned the conventional lifestyle anchored in security, continuity, and tradition and embarked upon a lifestyle of transience (Adler, 31).

It can certainly be argued that transients seek change and difference, however, unlike Adler, I believed that security still played a significant role in the transient lifestyle.

However, I maintain that a desire for uncharted territory is a motivation for moving abroad. As de Botton also testifies:

We may value foreign elements not only because they are new, but because they seem to accord more faithfully with our identity and commitments than anything our homeland could provide. My enthusiasms in Amsterdam were connected to my dissatisfactions with my own country... What we find exotic abroad may be what we hunger for in vain at home (de Botton, 78).

Some of my respondents also expressed boredom and a desire for novelty as a reason for branching off into the unknown. Moreover, some Canadians sought exoticism in other countries because of Canada's unsatisfying history and architecture. I do not believe, however, that boredom is a culturally specific condition of travel. My own data reflects de Botton's position in tandem with the individualism and hedonism of Lash and Urry's 'aesthetic cosmopolitanism'. Some of the answers to my question 'why did you decide to live abroad?' include: Ashley, Canadian: "to escape the boredom and monotony of my life in Toronto;" Jade, Australian: "Why? – it was time. I had to broaden my horizons. I needed to expose myself to a greater range of alternate universes;" Randy, American: "I needed to experience excitement and wonder. Edinburgh is where I established friends *I wanted to pick*, doing things *I wanted to do with who I chose!* Its where the grass is greener, where I have been freed in a different society and culture;" Megan, American: "I needed a change and now that I'm here I don't really want to be back in Georgia... being around the same kind of people – who look, act, dress and talk the same. My hometown is too 'burb-ish'. I wanted something exotic;" Victoria, Canadian: "I found life in Canada boring; felt it was stunting my growth mentally and worldly. I was eager to get out and experience fun things in life." Each of these quotes

reflects de Botton's and my own sentiment that a deep desire for alterity is embedded in the movement from one's familiar surroundings.

I think it cannot be ignored that the internet and mobile phones afford young Westerners the freedom to experience intriguing global cities while at the same time allowing them the opportunity to *belong* to multiple places. The sentiment of 'belonging elsewhere' is also echoed by Flaubert, suggesting that the desire for alterity is not a contemporary phenomenon (it is just easier to achieve today):

I'm disgusted to be back in this damned country where you see the sun in the sky about as often as a diamond in a pig's arse. I don't give a shit for Normandy and la belle France... I think I must have been transplanted by the winds to this land of mud; surely I was born elsewhere – I've always had what seem like memories or intuitions of perfumed shores and blue seas" (de Botton, 98-99).

The only hostility I encountered in my own research, which compares to that of Flaubert's for his motherland has come from Canadians who bemoan the lack of uniqueness in the country:

Rebekka, Canadian: Edinburgh and Jordan have qualities I like – big cities but a small city feel, they're beautiful, and they have deep cultural roots and history. This is missing in Canada... Canada struggles with its own national identity – what does it mean to be a Canadian? *To be nice to others?! I am attracted to places with complicated issues and histories because they have roots that I don't have. I suppose that's why I seek those places out.*

While the element of Canadians leaving their homeland to seek out alterity is a fascinating area, as I have mentioned before, I would rather not examine this national phenomenon but instead explore how new network technologies are a major element of transience today. However, such sentiments from my respondents only strengthened my belief that NCTs are changing our notion of home and belonging because they allow us to more easily *live where we want to live without cutting ties*.

Travel infers a desire for uprootedness, randomness, surprise, mystery, and intrigue. Transience, on the other hand, infers a desire for spontaneity, romance and the exotic *mixed with* rootedness and a feeling of home and security. *What are the reasons, then, for transients settling in 'global cosmopolitan cities' like Edinburgh?* This is important to my study because it bears great relevance of 'global community.' First off, young transients find other transients when they enter Edinburgh; the city is laden with them. It is a city loaded with non-nationals and this is part of its appeal. Moreover, it is a cosmopolitan city – a huge selling point among transients. Allon's study of backpackers in Australia (2004) comes to the conclusion that young travellers seek out cosmopolitan cities for the cultural experience they provide:

Although traveling throughout Australia is the goal for many backpackers, Sydney in particular is one of the favored destinations and is promoted as a cosmopolitan global city with a highly developed tourism infrastructure, as well as the setting for a range of unique and culturally distinctive experiences, places, and lifestyles (Allon, 4).

The desire to explore new territory seems to bring young transients to lively, culturally diverse cities, where novel endeavours and vibrant personalities abound.

Sassen (2000) discusses global spatialities and temporalities, insisting that contemporary social actors are likely to live in overlapping domains of the national and the global (Sassen, 221). She refers to the 'unbundling of national territory' and a transnational urban system that links NY, London, Tokyo, Paris, Frankfurt, Zurich, Amsterdam, and LA. In this system, London and NY are more local than London and Exeter. In my study, I attempt to argue that this is indeed the case and that part of the reason 'global cosmopolitan cities' attract transients is because they bear similar qualities and make it easier for the savvy young transient to slip into new communities within

these cities' borders. Sassen highlights a disruption of conventional hierarchies of scale where proximity is deterritorialized. In this context it is necessary to rethink spatial hierarchies that look like this: local <national<global.

Sheller (2004) locates this reconfiguration within 'networked urbanism' where mobile activities are increasingly played out in cities, insisting that we need new ways of thinking about social connectivity within the networked city and how these changes are fostering and straining the "coming together of private citizens as a public (Habermas 1989)" (Sheller, 39). I believe that one of the reasons young transients feel so at home in Edinburgh is because of its 'global cosmopolitan city' appeal. Castles (2002) expands upon this shift:

Globalization is closely linked to changes in social structures and relationships, and to shifts in cultural values concerned with place, mobility and belonging. This is likely to have important consequences, which we are only just beginning to understand (Bauman, 1998; Castells, 1996; Held et al., 1999). It is possible that transnational affiliations and consciousness will become the predominant form of migrant belonging in the future (Castles, 1157).

All of the transients I interviewed are white Westerners or Australians and while I did not handpick this group their make-up is significant to how 'at home' they felt in Edinburgh. A couple of transients mentioned that they feel like foreigners in Edinburgh only at work where they are hassled about their accent. However, for foreigners who 'look foreign' the experience in a different country can vary dramatically from that of my subjects.

Morley (2000) quotes a Tunisian who, upon returning to his native land,

felt safe, free from the gaze of... people unlike himself, Westerners. He could walk freely in the streets with a feeling both of anonymity and presence. He could be himself, among people like himself without getting strange looks from anyone (Morley, 48).

This Tunisian's confidence in being in his homeland is contrasted to the sentiment of Stuart, one of my American volunteers who clearly indicated his comfort in carrying his cultural identity to Edinburgh: "I still feel like I want to retain my American-ness. I want to be recognised as American – I'm proud to be American and I don't want to be recognised as one of the tourists I spot here." Other responses to my question, do you feel like a foreigner in Edinburgh gleaned interesting answers: Georgina, Australian: "it makes a difference having a large group of Aussies over here – its like a security group... we can talk about familiar things and people... it's a comfort zone thing;"

Ivan, Spanish: Not really. My appearance helped a lot cause I don't *look* Spanish at all. First impressions count for a lot; quite a few Spaniards don't behave well here, cause I don't look Spanish they didn't form negative first opinions about me.

Megan, American: I'm happy to be part of the international community – people that are out of their own countries... like here where half the people are not *from* Edinburgh and there are plenty of states of mind. I would never want to be an American who doesn't leave the States. Living in the international community is a better environment for the self. People can take a lot for granted before they learn to share. I didn't realize I was opposed to insular thinking before I left Georgia... there's an American state of mind and it doesn't change until you leave.

Megan's insight into life in the 'international community' is a rare internalization of the attraction of transients to Edinburgh.

There is also certain quality to Edinburgh that seems to hold people captive, as the transients in my study best articulated through such simple statements as, "Edinburgh is homey because you always bump into people you know in the street," to diverse musings:

Jess, Australian: I found that the references and testimonials I had received of Edinburgh were all accurate. Before I came here I never heard a bad review about Edinburgh. Not one – except for whinging Poms [Englishman] about the weather.

I do think its very conducive to making new connections with like-minded people (possibly because of all the travelers).

Victoria, Canadian: You can *feel* the history! The old streets; the *vibe*; the cosmopolitan-nature; the fact that the city centre has such character. Edinburgh is very laid back; it felt very comfortable to come here.

Anikka, Polish: Edinburgh is a beautiful city and I have good friends I don't want to leave here. Its too much fun! There's just not same entertainment value back home and my friends at home have all dispersed... they're living in other cities.

Victoria, Canadian: You can *feel* the history! The old streets; the *vibe*; the cosmopolitan-nature; the fact that the city centre has such character. Edinburgh is very laid back; it felt very comfortable to come here.

Mark, German: I thought I'd like Glasgow better at first, but Edinburgh is a safe place... its polished. Edinburgh rubs off on everyone. And it's a very young city between travelers and students.

Shane, Irish: I went to Aviemore first, then Glasgow and was miserable in both cities. I had a strong feeling that things would work out in Edinburgh before I decided finally to move here; they have and I've never looked back since. I'm a history buff and walking along certain streets in Edinburgh the history oozes from the cobblestone. The eclectic mix of architecture draws me in as well.

Di, Australian: I never feel alone in Edinburgh... I always have the sense that I'm being followed. The well-known lore of this city being haunted by spirits doesn't frighten me but it almost provides a sense of history. This city has experienced so much.

Mia, Slovakian: Edinburgh gives me an inner calm because of its situation on the ocean and the fact that the city centre is surrounded by Arthur's Seat, Calton Hill and the Castle. These reference points ground me and give me a sense of security and confidence.

Naomh, Irish: This city has a mystical feeling – the Royal Mile [High Street in Medieval part of the city] is *hiving with energy!*

Rebekka, Canadian: I feel attached to Edinburgh because of its culture, its beauty, and an inner feeling I have when I'm there. Its one of the only places I've been and I feel ok I could live here; I could have a home here.

Transient's reasons for coming to Edinburgh are ranging – the history, the culture, the cosmopolitan-nature, an inner feeling, testimonials, and/or the people (transient

communities) that reside here. Many responses, however, point to Edinburgh as a city that offers a sense of *security and rootedness*.

In addition, one cannot gloss over the fact that transients themselves draw other transients to Edinburgh – an argument for the existence of and the ‘global cosmopolitan city’. Mark, a German respondent noted this: “Edinburgh is such a transient city – there is a constant regeneration of young people coming and going,” while an Australian respondent, Luke, commented, “one of the reasons I’m drawn to Edinburgh is the continual new blood. It’s refreshing to be introduced to fresh people with new ideas.” Naoimh from Ireland also insisted: “a lot of Edinburgh’s charm is a result of the amazing people – people draw people here. I met so many folks that said Edinburgh was great; there’s real word of mouth in the traveling community. Energy attracts energy!”

Edinburgh is not only a ‘transient community’ destination in the minds of young transients but a place to find work, as Ivan from Spain commented:

Ivan, Spanish: Edinburgh offered a security that Spain lacked. Even though my job in Edinburgh is not exactly what I want to be doing it’s still a foot in the door in my field and I’m getting more pay working in IT consultancy than I would be doing a higher level job in Spain. There is a huge network of Spaniards here, and a new wave of Italians and Polish too because of the higher number of jobs in Scotland, better pay and more stable currency.

Jade, an Australian transient also noted a utilitarian trend for coming to Edinburgh:

There’s too much to do here! I found that I spent my money on a good time. Short-term gratification over long-term travel satisfaction. That’s a weakness that I don’t think is peculiar to me. It’s really a good time town. Sensation seekers can easily find themselves trapped in working to have a good time to go back to work to get money to have a good time. Cost is a factor here and I think that type of job has a big impact on this. Travelers generally start in hospitality which is good social life but shit pay so there’s not much else they can do. But these fiduciary restrictions do inter a certain creativity when it comes to social interactions; the social norms that are most commonly used to establish new connections, ie drinking and other consciousness-altering pursuits are undertaken

with remarkable, rigorous, and often ingenious creativity and planning in aid of this.

Jade's comment could not be more observant. Sassen (1991) noted the high numbers of low-paid service sector workers (made up of immigrants and travelers) needed to support global cities. Moreover, I am also in agreement with Allon (2004) that budget travelers form a major part of the transient service-oriented workforce that is often employed in un-taxed, cash-in-hand jobs:

Budget travelers and backpackers are then not only consumers of services in the global city, but they also frequently work in the service sector, often existing in a temporary state of voluntary relative poverty. The "army of low-wage workers," which Sassen describes as a central feature of global cities, is not only composed of immigrants but also young travelers and backpackers (Allon, 60).

As Allon points out, there is certainly a prominence of young transients in cities such as Sydney just as there is a prominence of this social group in Edinburgh. I do not claim that Edinburgh is unique, but that it is part of a web of global cosmopolitan cities that attract young transients for various reasons. The transients I spoke to are a testament to this, coming to Edinburgh because of word of mouth testimonies in the transient community; because of Edinburgh's cosmopolitan quality; because of work opportunities; and because of the transient community already in existence in the city. I think that if I carried my study out in Amsterdam, Berlin, Vancouver, or Melbourne I would find much the same results.

Toward a New Conceptualization of Social Networks

This section is devoted to providing insight into the impact that the internet and mobile phones are having on community. I believe that NCTs have such a dramatic effect on community that we must rethink the ways in which we consider social networks. The literature review that follows is a window into this alternative conceptualization of how global flows and NCTs are changing social structures.

Deterritorialization is changing temporal and spatial structures of daily life. As Marjorie Ferguson notes, while technologies have established new definitions of time, space and community, they have not replaced traditional “understandings of distance and duration... it is rather a question of how physical and symbolic networks become entwined around each other” (Morley, 176). It is widely agreed among certain theorists that because of these global shifts in flow, a reconceptualization of social networking is necessary. Meyrowitz refers to “psychological neighbourhoods”, stressing that we must conceive of *community* in terms of networks of social relationships that are nuanced across levels of distance, mediated or F2F, which create a “personal community” (Morley, 178). Morley stresses that we cannot claim that F2F interaction is a pure realm and other mediated relations are inauthentic; indeed, transients negotiate along the lines of both forms of communication.

For the privileged members of wealthy countries, there exists today a more fluid transfer from place to place and relationship to relationship. Hess has attempted to reconfigure our understanding of network sociality. He theorized that globalization is “a process of transnational (and thereby translocal) network building or embedding, creating and maintaining personal relationships of trust at various, interrelated geographical scales” (Hess 2004:176). Using the rhizome metaphor to conceptualize the

nature of networks and the idea of embeddedness, he describes the rhizome as a subterranean stem that produces shoots above and roots below and possesses buds, nodes and tubers. The rhizome metaphor stresses heterogeneous networks as spaces of fluidity and flux, applying the principals of connection and heterogeneity, multiplicity, asignifying rupture, and cartography.

The rhizome gives us a new way of imagining the world – one that recognizes it as a “network of multiple and branching roots with no central axis, no unified point of origin, and no given direction of growth” (Hess, 180). Network embeddedness within this metaphor stresses the connected space of networks, where distance and proximity result from relations between actors without regard for region. Moreover, societal embeddedness revolves around relationships in “fluid spaces, defined by liquid continuity and formed by mutable mobiles” (Hess, 81). This rupture in how we conceive of community makes it clear that NCTs, while they may not be responsible *for* this shift, are certainly a related to it, for the internet and mobile phones at the very least add to Westerners’ repertoire of communication tools.

Sheller takes Hess’s theory a step further by offering a unique perspective in the reconceptualization of the ‘technosocialities’ of mobility. She points to increasing hybridization of technologies and infrastructures of communication and transportation – a point not to be ignored in the study of NCTs role in restructuring communities. The hybridization of communication and transportation has led to a reconfiguration and respatialization of public life, where “publics are now deeply embedded in social and machinic complexes involving the mobilities of people, objects, and information” (Sheller 2004:39). She suggests that the geographical understanding of public and

private spheres as *spaces* and *networks* narrows our view of the dynamics of public formation. Her intention is to divert discussion from the overused metaphor of the network and focus instead on fluid dynamics.

Using sociologist White's notion of 'messy social spaces', she considers how mobile communication technologies have enabled new kinds of mobile publics that were previously incomprehensible. Mobile publics allow for momentary 'gelling' of public identities and actions across vast social spaces and scales (Sheller, 41). Technological optimists' have a vision of telepresence as leading to higher local social activity and cohesion, which cannot be totally disregarded. Finland, for example, is a world leader in the development and use of mobile phones with 90.06 mobiles/100 people in 2003 (International Telecommunication Union, 2004). Strikingly, poverty-stricken countries have adopted the technology too; "in Haiti, the number of mobile subscribers grew 150% from 1998-99" (Sheller, 42). Telepresence, as an outcome of NCTs, has certainly contributed to the maintenance and establishment of communities.

Sheller's major contribution to the reconfiguration of the notion of social networks is her phenomenology of coupling, decoupling, and contingent gels. Rather than envisioning relationships as networks, we must think of them in more messy terms as being disorganized and complex like the rhizome. To demonstrate her point, Sheller reintroduces Castells' 'space of flows' and Urry's 'global fluids' – different in their own right but both theories demand a new articulation of community. Her clever integration of these ideas addresses the softer and more blurred boundaries of social life and challenges our notions of scale and boundary in relation to NCTs.

Continuing along these lines, White describes ‘coupling’ as the strings of ties that make up various networks and ‘decoupling’ as the loosening of these ties. With a theory that is suggestive of fluidity, he believes that contemporary publics are unique social spaces in which we ‘switch’ between communicative contexts and slip as social actors in and out of social spaces and social times. Fluidity is certainly more easily attained with the internet and mobile phones – it is with incredible ease that I witnessed transients switch from conversing with me to text messaging a distant presence on their mobile. White believes that within these social roles, however, lie ambiguity, uncertainty and instability that create a built-in tendency toward switching from one set of relations to another (Sheller 48). In short, he thinks that people are formed on the basis of identities (kept alive through frames that reduce ambiguity), but are also products of socialization held together by storylines.

Mobile communications allow for us to float through space and retrieve our selves at our destination points by virtually linking up with our social networks. Mobile phones, for example, enable people to “pick up various ‘story lines’ through which their identities are stabilized” (Sheller, 48). The maintenance of ‘story lines’ is very much a part of transience, a condition which renders people distant from their virtual support groups. Freedom, in White’s view, is thus built into NCT because they allow for people to navigate more openly between social spaces. To be sure, Sheller echoes my feeling that carrying a mobile is like virtually carrying all of my contacts on any journey:

When someone has a telephone always available, he or she is holding in abeyance a wide range of ‘absent presences’, with whom a conversational coupling might easily be established... there is a constant flickering of conversation... Mediated conversation with distant others is now something one can slip in and out of (Sheller, 49).

In effect, people now form flexible constellations of identities while on the move.

Whether people believe the internet and mobile phones offer them more freedom or not, the fact remains that these tools have irrevocably transformed the nature, formation and maintenance of social groups. Rather than easily defined networks, increased mobility has altered sociality to resemble flows of global fluids that move along the lines of fluidity and flux. The storylines that people now slip in and out of allow them to experience absent presences and a constant flickering of conversation. If we change the way we conceptualize social relationships to include metaphors of the rhizome and embeddedness then we will be more apt to better understand how the hybridization of NCTs are affecting the blurred boundaries of social life. I take this understanding in reconceptualizing social relationships in contemporary youth transience.

Network Communication Technology's Role in 'Co-Presence'

In the past, those youth who fled from their communities did so with the knowledge that they would be significantly cut off from family and friends. It takes a certain type of person to embark on this type of independent journey. However, those who would have been wary of such alienation in the past no longer face such blatant detachment. I believe that the advancements in technology serve as an incentive for more youth to travel and travel longer than traditionally. Those with intense wanderlust who would have left home with little regard for keeping the lines of communication open in the past can still do so today and choose not to engage in network communication. The difference is that those who long for close ties with family and friends can now achieve

this from a distance, which I believe has broadened the pool of people who would even imagine fleeing the nest. Urry (2003) supports this belief, pointing out:

Physical travel continues to increase as these communication devices have become more widespread. Indeed those societies rich in travel resources are also rich in communication resources. Why all this travel then in societies also increasingly 'networked'? I show that for significant numbers of people social life is formed and reformed through intermittent *meetings* engendered through physical travel. Such travel results in co-presence that is as significant to a networked society as are the extraordinary transformations of communications engendered by the internet galaxy (Urry, 158).

Urry's notion of 'co-presence' is exemplary of our unique ability today to be in multiple places simultaneously.

Co-presence through technology bears huge significance to youth transience – it allows transients to be very present in their new communities with mobile phones and virtually present in the lives of their distant communities with the internet and mobile phones. This offers an unprecedented sense of belonging, for travel is no longer a matter of trading one community for another (in terms of staying well-connected). While physical presence is not awarded to both communities, co-presence still allows for relationships to remain intact while travellers are living in new countries, which adds to transients' sense of security. Moreover, the ease and relative inexpensiveness of mobility back and forth between old and new communities (especially between Canada and Scotland on low fare airlines) makes intermittent physical meetings between overseas and home communities more of a reality. Co-presence is indeed a rich socialization process.

Computer networks are social networks. They connect people in very different ways and are used for wide-ranging purposes. Wellman (2004) eloquently pays homage to the internet's massive role in shifting community:

As the Internet has been incorporated into everyday life, it has fostered subtle changes in community. In the old days, before the 1990s, places were largely connected – by telephone, cars, planes and railroads. Now with the Internet (and mobile phones), people are connected. Where before each household had a telephone number, now each person has a unique Internet address. Many have several, in order to keep different parts of their lives separate online. This change from place-based community to person-based community had started before the Internet, but the developing personalization, portability, and ubiquitous connectivity of the Internet are facilitating the change (Wellman, 6).

Indeed, communities are kept alive, and as such a sense of belonging, when transients are able to access the internet. Wellman and Hogan (2004) agree that the shift in ubiquitous, personalized, wireless world fosters personal social networks that supply sociability, support, information, and a sense of belonging” (Wellman & Hogan, 6). New network technologies have made staying connected easier than ever before. In addition, the use of the internet does not, as some have hypothesized, reduce face-to-face communication.

The two have found:

A 2001 National Geographic survey reports that North Americans who use email to discuss important matters do so an average of 41 times per month, in addition to 84 face-to-face discussions and 58 phone discussions. Those who do not use email to discuss important matters have about the same number of monthly face-to-face discussions, 83, but only 36 phone discussions. Adding these numbers up, those who use email report 183 discussions per month, 54% more than the 119 discussions for those who do not use email. The result is that the more email, the more overall communication (Wellman, “ Connecting Community: On- and Off-line.” 2005. <http://www.chass.utoronto.ca/~wellman/publications/>).

Wellman and Hogan’s research shows that people probably maintain more long-distance ties with friends and workmates than ever before. My research certainly supports this, which I will draw out later. The two web researchers also claim: “internet users are supplanting contact with people with whom they share characteristics (kinship, same ethnic group, same neighbourhood) with increased contact with people with whom they

share common interests” (Wellman & Hogan 2004: 9). This leads back to the discussion on community, testifying that the internet is a player in the reformation of social networking. Castles (2002) teases this idea out nicely:

Increasing mobility; growth of temporary, cyclical and recurring migrations; cheap and easy travel; constant communication through new information technologies: all question the idea of the person who belongs to just one nation-state or at most migrates from one state to just one other (whether temporarily or permanently). These changes have led to debates on the significance of transnationalism and transnational communities as new modes of migrant belonging. Transnational communities are groups whose identity is not primarily based on attachment to a specific territory. They therefore present a powerful challenge to traditional ideas of nation-state belonging (Castles, 1156).

This statement draws a definitive link between mobility, NCTs and belonging.

NCTs are allowing transients to create a very diverse network. Lull (2001) has noted:

Mass media, information technologies, and the internet dramatically enrich such processes of ‘self-formation’ because they encourage people to ‘actively negotiate’ and participate in creating the kinds of mediated experiences they want (Lull, 158).

We are no longer simply ‘audience members’ and ‘consumers’ stresses Lull but we are now ‘cultural programmers’ (Lull, 136). Today’s Western youth have become expert cultural programmers. I believe that transients’ experience with the internet in everyday life before they even leave their countries is a testament to transients’ reliance upon connectedness. Matei (2004) expands upon this:

Email and other types of electronic communication are ideal tools for preserving an ‘always on’ bubble of sociability. Networked communication makes private, close professional or functional social circles portable. Individuals can carry with them, and have immediately accessible, the channels of communication needed to keep in touch with individuals that are vital for maintaining a sense of stability and social anchoring (Matei, 25).

In my own experience I could not have felt so at home in Scotland when I first lived here if I had not been able to stay so connected to my friends and family in Canada.

Morley expresses this feeling of connectivity in quoting Robins and Webster:

this is a world where the principal motivating desire is that to 'achieve immersive, multisensory telepresence... to *make contact* across the world' and where the principal values are those of 'immediate communication, *connectivity* and being in touch" (Morley, 188).

This sense of security is important for fresh transients who have been stripped from their comfort zones. Lull (2001) attests:

The symbolic content that technology carries and the 'mediated co-presence' it facilitates (Thompson 1995) interact intimately with human emotions and the human body. Creating cultural experiences, relationships and communities through mediated interaction, including the Internet, has become commonplace, even 'natural.' Technologically mediated information is brought close to the emotions and the body by stimulating the imagination. Communications media don't just 'get between' humans; rather they connect people to each other in ways that often overcome the (cultural) barriers imposed by physical distance (Lull, 159).

While working at Scottish Widows Insurance in Edinburgh when I first moved to Scotland I would get my work done as quickly as possible every day so that I could maintain close contact with family and friends from Canada. Knowing that they were clued into my life and, conversely, being able to read their news daily gave me a sense of 'co-presence,' to borrow Urry's term, and certainly made me feel more secure in my new surroundings. My support group in Canada was always easily accessible and this security allowed me to exercise my freedom from a distance. Emails that I sent and saved while away serve as a virtual diary. Similarly, Berg, Taylor, and Harper (2003) quote one respondent in their study of teenage use of mobile phones who contemplates that the mobile is also "like a box of stuff that reminds me of certain people... It's like a diary

isn't it?" (Berg et al, 434). To get back to young transient's experience with the internet, Victoria, one of my Canadian respondents asked: "doesn't it make you so happy to find a message from home in your inbox?" – which suggests the happiness connected with this NCT as well.

Through my research I have come to believe that a unique transient community exists. For those transients who settle in Edinburgh for a short time – 5 months or less – association with other transients is a very significant part of their life abroad. Those who are in Edinburgh for an extended period, however, are markedly more involved in local Edinburgh community events and groups and have a more utilitarian approach to setting up camp as it were. Some of the remarks I will address later are evidence of this. Castles (2002) makes some interesting observations of transnational communities which I think fit quite nicely into the conceptualization of young transient communities:

Transnational identities are complex and contradictory. They can take on a variety of forms, which may either complement existing modes of immigrant incorporation or work against these. If the primary loyalty of transnational communities is not to one nation-state or territory, what does it relate to? Here we come to an inherent tension in transnational theory. Transmigrants are sometimes portrayed as cosmopolitans capable of crossing cultural boundaries and building multiple or hybrid identities. But other theorists argue that transnational consciousness is based overwhelmingly on common ethnicity... We lack the empirical evidence for clear statements. There probably are highly cosmopolitan groups who feel at home everywhere (Castles, 1160).

The Australian transient community in Edinburgh – a massive group which encompasses Aussies who, almost by default, either know each other from Australia or know Aussies from home in common – serve as an example of transnational consciousness based on common ethnicity. They are quite aware of their community status and some claim that their membership is based upon lines of security.

Similar trends are notable among the Spanish and Polish transient community, however, Canadians and Americans that I spoke to all seem to be more independent in their affiliations abroad, gravitating toward mixed nationality transient communities. Canadian and American transients in Edinburgh are more representative of cosmopolitans capable of crossing cultural boundaries and building multiple or hybrid identities. Regardless, it is certainly the case that new transients in Edinburgh seek out other transients. This changes over time, however, and I have noticed that the longer I am here, the less I ask someone where they are from, or how long they have been here, because I simply do not care; I am not looking to extend my community by bringing in ‘fresh transients.’

Once a transient is settled in Edinburgh I have noticed that their community becomes more prolific and is no longer centered on the security of the transient community. On that note, transient communities are in fact quite fragile, because members are constantly moving. It could therefore be said (of less solid communities than the Australian, Spanish and Polish) that transient communities only offer temporary security. Those who are looking to settle in Edinburgh for longer periods thus gravitate toward secure connections with other people – transient or not – who are rooted in Edinburgh. Once I was in this camp, I noticed a very clear distinction between the two types of transients when I would meet ‘fresh transients’ at parties and was completely turned off by their conversation style. This is because I was no longer looking to pad my address book with names and numbers of more transients. I just wanted to ‘be’ – a state that I was only able to achieve when I was mentally and spiritually connected to Edinburgh and my solid community here.

The transient community's use of NCTs is certainly prolific. All of my twenty respondents used the internet: 41% used it at school, 30% had the internet at home, 17.5% used it at work and 11.5% used the internet at the library. Those who had the internet at home only accessed it at home, however those who were using the internet in other locations did not restrict themselves to use in one place. All of them have used internet cafes at least once in Edinburgh and none were impressed with this location, as Ashley, a blunt Canadian summed up: "Having the internet at home is more convenient and comfortable – I can make my own coffee and I don't have to sit beside some skank person bubbling into my space. And I was in the poor house going to cafes – I send insanely long emails." Jade from Australia also recollected his internet café escapades:

My desire for the internet when I first arrived put me in a certain situation repeatedly that I hadn't been in before leaving Oz, which was internet cafes. The first time you ever use one you don't know 'do I pay now and get a set amount of time or at the end?' which sometimes would affect the amount I would tell people in an email with the clock ticking down.

The internet café's impersonal surroundings lead transients to access the net in other places. Those who chose to use the internet at home are paying between 12 – 23.50 pounds a month for broadband; and all users barring one are using a broadband, no matter where the connection. 41.6% use the internet 5 days a week, another 41.6 use it 7 days, and the remaining 16.8 use the internet 3 days a week. A couple of respondents stay online constantly while at work, while the rest range across the board in duration of time online from half an hour to an extreme of 4 hours with the average at 2 hours.

74% used MSN Messenger for instant messaging and 84.2% claimed email and MSN were their primary uses of the internet. MSN is favoured for providing direct and instant communication. There is no waiting for responses and it is less expensive than

phoning people far away. Ailie from Australia was fond of how MSN allowed her to “stay in the gossip loop” because she did not like “being in the dark.” Shane from Ireland also hailed MSN as being “the *best* way to communicate – better than email... sentences flow from one to another... it’s proper and cheap communication!” Rebekka from Canada mentioned that:

MSN has been amazing – all my friends from Singapore are on MSN so I can talk to friends in different parts of world at the same time. Even my Grandparents and Aunt have it – I get news every night from either my Aunt or Grandparents from home. I can’t imagine life over here without it.

This program is clearly a rich communication tool for transients. One of my flatmates commented to me before Christmas: “I find it amazing that I can be chatting to [a close friend from Toronto] on MSN about my “festive bush” [mini Christmas tree] and 5 minutes later be sending her a photo of it online!”

In other internet related data, 5% of my respondents had a webcam, and 16% had live online journals (‘blogs’). The blog was unfamiliar territory to me and I was intrigued to speak to transients who used this forum for frequent distant communication. Ivan from Spain said:

I try to update my journal everyday and everybody has access to it so they know what I’m up to here on a daily basis. Only those really attached to me read it... when I go back to Spain they know *everything* about my life here – but I don’t know about the readers’. It bothers me that I don’t know what they’re up to cause I’m a person who makes a really big effort to keep in contact and I have to say it doesn’t work in the other direction.

This is perhaps notable of transient’s need for constant communication as opposed to their distant friend’s and relative’s need to communicate to such a degree. I have also recently been introduced to ‘Skype’, a chat program like MSN that also enables free

online audio conversations without the complications of MSN. Aurelie from France commented:

I use Skype at the university to talk to friends in France at local rates – its great! But my parents won't try it because they say 'no, we prefer to use the landline.' They aren't willing to learn a new technology; it's a generation gap I think and its just frustrating cause its so easy and cheap to use!

In the future this generation gap among Westerners will very likely be eradicated with more and more young people adopting these new NCTs into their everyday lives.

Online file sharing was also noted among transients as a use of the internet. In relation to keeping in touch with distant others through transfer of files, 47.4% sent photos via email. Ashley from Canada commented on being able to send photos to her family: "it makes a difference – they have a face to put with a name... Or I can show them [a landmark] and they know what it looks like and can picture where you are." Victoria from Canada said: "I send pictures online but rarely receive them. Still, I have a desire to show them a world that I've created for myself... only downer is that there's no return but I'm happy I can show them what I see, which is still amazing to me." While the internet is a rich communication tool for transients, it serves more for keeping old contacts alive. The mobile phone, however, also helps keep new friendships alive.

There used to be a time when I resisted mobile phones, observing those caught up in the cell swell as weak individuals who lived in a world of future plans rather than seizing the moment and observing their current surroundings. In addition, I did not want to be so easily traceable. However, once I sold my soul to the cell phone I realized the social existence I had in fact been missing out on without this portable little device.

In his article on the evolution toward obsessive connectivity, Gleick (2001) observes:

At its best, browsing the Internet on a Web-enabled phone feels like looking through the wrong end of a telescope. No wonder some people assert almost religiously that they will never use a cell phone or a hand-held computer or a stereoscopic 3-D optical headset with optional immersion visor. But five years ago some of the same people felt no need for e-mail or call waiting (Gleick, 112).

What is it about the mobile phone that offers people a sense of security? I argue that this communication technology is an extension of the human desire for a sense of community and belonging.

Morley (2000) attests to this in his studies of how people have become at home with the media. The mobile phone, he believes, is a powerful form of security and solace; one can be at home anywhere on the planet with the phone in tow. The answering machine makes disappearing unacceptable and the voice mail allows us to “avoid gaps in the flow of information, to always be reachable” (Morley, 98). He cites Manceron’s findings that the mobile is “a key component of the group’s identity, symbolizing their connectedness” (Morley, 99). The mobile is used to keep track of other’s plans so that they can insure involvement in activities, and is thus a tool for the building of intensive communal lifestyles. “Manceron describes this group’s almost constant use of the phone as bulimic. The calls are frequent and of a very short duration and often consist of little more than information on where someone is now and where they will be later” (Morley 99). This is demonstrative of a need for constant affirmation of group membership, furthering the notion that communication is integral in community construction. Berg, Taylor, and Harper (2003) investigated the role the mobile phone plays in the lives of English teenagers, supporting claims that NCTs are reforming social relations. They found that,

Text messaging, or 'texting' as it is colloquially known, provided the teenagers with a means to make the offer of something special or personal, to receive that offer in mutual show of solidarity, and to reciprocate, completing the unspoken contract that establishes the bond between giver and receiver (Berg et al, 434).

Moreover, the three argue that the ritual ceremony of texting suggests a mutual and shared understanding. In the UK, mobile phones are certainly restructuring the way young people communicate.

The mobile phone is an integral tool today in the formation of new communities. Morley (2000) accesses studies that show that mobile phones are also used to keep contact with those living in close geographic proximity. He found that the mobile is "a key component of the group's identity, symbolizing their connectedness" (Morley, 98-99). I can say from experience that after I purchased a mobile phone while living Edinburgh, a whole new social world opened up to me. Some of my respondents commented on similar experiences of exclusion, as Megan from the US mentioned: "a girl I work with didn't have a mobile for a few months when she first moved here and no one ever saw her. Then she picked one up and suddenly she was part of the social circle;" Shane from Ireland said: "When I first moved here I didn't have a mobile or a landline and I felt totally cut off from the world. I was so depressed. I would sometimes go weeks only carrying conversations with old ladies in the checkout line at the shops. It was the loneliest time of my life."

In my own experience, I only became entrenched in the community I was slowly penetrating once I became a part of the world of text messaging, or 'texting' – the preferred method of mobile communication in the UK at only 10 p per text on most network providers. Not only did making plans with my new friends become easier but

also the nature of our relationship changed when I was able to keep closer contact with them. I certainly felt much more a part of the group and my social circle expanded as I could more easily access new contacts and vice versa. As Shane expressed, “the mobile is part of evolution!” – an evolution in co-presence and the establishment of new – physical – communities.

In my case and that of some of those I spoke to, transients who come to Edinburgh without a mobile must evolve to adopt the mobile phone or else they are good as extinct in social circles. Transients in the UK rarely telephone on a landline, the only people I ever receive phone calls from are those whose business pays for the call. Texting is the norm and it can only be achieved with a mobile. The popularity of texting was clear in my data: all of the transients I spoke to spent more money on ‘topping up’ their mobiles with credit a month than they spent on the internet (except 2 people whose work covered both expenses). Transients spent between 20 and 50 pounds a month on their mobiles, with over 50% spending over 25 pounds. Victoria from Canada commented that texts were the most convenient form of communication because they are “like sending a thought – don’t have to receive phone call, don’t have to respond immediately, and the point of communication is always with you.” Not everyone prefers texting, however, as Luke from Australia pointed out:

The mobile also limits relationships cause interaction is reduced to texts. When you call someone they’re shocked, its like we’ve forgotten how to speak to each other over the phone. We live through texts and I miss quality conversation. Last night I called a good mate of mine over here and it felt so nice just to chat rather than send emotionless texts.

What needs to be evidenced here, is the fact that although transients are attracted to using mobiles, 50% also had landlines. Of those with landlines, their monthly spending ranged

from 11 – 60 pounds, with the majority spending under 25 pounds a month. Landlines, however, are predominately used by transients only for calling their distance communities because it is less expensive than calling long distance on a mobile.

It is important to remember that communities are bound by communication, and the more prolific the communication tools, the greater the potential for a more closely knit group to form. My experience is exemplary of how easily one is excluded from a community without adopting a communication technology that is practically standardized in everyday life. Without a mobile I was, in effect, separating myself from the group. Morley (2000) relates this communication technology as indicative of always being reachable. He insists: you can always be at home with a mobile phone (Morley, 98).

Moreover, inherent in keeping in touch with others is the act of being on constant high alert as communicational agents. Tomlinson refers to the telephone both a blessing and a curse: “the ubiquitous (indispensable?) tool of social convenience, and the alien presence always ready to summon us, imposing its won implacable priority over our chosen activities of the moment” (Tomlinson 1999: 116). The mobile is a symbol of imminent connectedness and presence at a distance. A recent phone call I had with my grandmother in Canada was exemplary of multiple layers of NCTs in use simultaneously – during the call over our landlines I received a text message on my mobile, and then ‘Googled’ the name of a flower my Grandmother mentioned had pleased my sick Grandfather so that I could see what it looked like. Mediated co-presence at work!

In relation to my own research, a large portion of those I interviewed noted the attachment they experienced to their mobile phones. When asked whether having a

mobile affected how 'at home' they felt in Edinburgh, one of my respondents commented:

Yeah, its an extension of my arm; I can't even imagine not having one. It would be an end of the world scenario not being in touch with people. I just decided 5 minutes ago by texting while speaking to you to meet someone!

Other responses ranged from: "I feel more connected;" "I feel part of a group;" "I have a gang;" "all the names in my address book are a collection of friends;" "my mobile provided me with a grounding. I couldn't live without it." Di, one of my Aussie respondents said:

At first I used [my mobile] for semi regular communication [with people in Australia] when I got here. It doesn't matter where your connections are just that you are connected. It just as much keeps me feeling at home over here cause it keeps me connected with those here. [My mobile] established and maintained a network. The more established the network over here, the less regularly I've used the mobile for communication back home.

This quote is indicative of a sentiment revealed by those transients who had been in Edinburgh for a longer period of time. They often spoke of two uses of the internet and/or mobiles – habits they adopted when they first moved over and their current habits. There was a marked decline in transients' reliance on NCTs after a certain period, which points directly to the strong link between NCTs and security. These tools are integral for many transients in maintaining a sense of community and belonging when they are first uprooted.

How the Internet and Mobile Phones Affect the Notion of Home

One of the main purposes for my undertaking of this subject is my belief that NCTs have changed and continue to alter traditional notions of home. The notion of home is complicated and a nuanced approach to its meaning is not easy, but I attempted a

better understanding of it in my research. 'Home' is obviously something that means different things to different people. It has been associated with privacy, security, family, intimacy, comfort, and control. The notion of home is of particular interest to me because I never felt attached my hometown. In fact, I am quite open in stating that I spent a good part of my life first wishing that I lived somewhere else and, when I had the freedom to do so, seeking out a place that *felt like home*. I have since found my 'home away from home' and have come to realize that home for me is a two-tiered concept – part spatial and part spiritual. One of my reasons for exploring the notion of home among my peers was because it became quite apparent to me that I would not be able to create a home away from home without NCTs.

In discussing the issue of home and the *creation of home* with my two foreign flatmates I have come to some very interesting conclusions. Our flat did not feel like home until after a break-in period in which we filled the space with material extensions of our identities – we needed to mark our territory. However, even purchasing household items was initially an existential dilemma; with every purchase we became more firmly rooted in our Edinburgh home but part of us resisted this because our term here was unknown. One of my flatmates commented that, not only did she “long for home in Canada because that is where [her] personal belongings are kept” but she “did not want to buy things because it meant more to take home.” For her, purchasing household and decorative items was seen as a form of surrender, of admitting that she had become attached to her new space – an ambiguous concept to grapple with when your abode is temporary. Moreover, once my flatmates and I started *caring* more for our flat (simply cleaning it more often), we started to take a vested interest in our settlement. To a certain

extent, material items are associated with attachment and material attachment can be connected with home.

What is most enlightening, however, is that my flatmates and I felt even more connected to our new flat once we had internet access at home – it meant that we could stay in touch with the added bonus of all the comforts of our familiar surroundings. It made our flat a home because it became a *hub of connectivity*, also making it foreseeable to stay in Edinburgh for longer than we had intended. The more connected to our homes in Canada through NCTs, the less acutely homesickness was experienced.

‘Homesickness’ has been an interesting phenomenon for me; while I do not long for Canada while I am in Scotland anymore (I did when I first moved here), I do get pangs of homesickness from time to time (a sickness I have come to realize is laced with a half-truths and a glowing impression of my ‘other life’ across the ocean).

We need distinguish between homesick *searching* and nostalgic yearning. Homesickness, states Schwartz (1989) is in the future perfect tense. “‘It is an urge to feel at home, to recognize one’s surroundings and belong there.’ Homesickness means a dream of *belonging*; to be, for once, *of* the place, not merely *in*” (Bauman, 30). In addition, Canclini (no date) states:

Just as nostalgia need not be seen as an entirely regressive phenomenon, we can also regard the search for some sense of home more positively as a ‘future-oriented project of constructing a sense of belonging in a context of change and displacement (Morley, 43).

The saying goes that ‘home is where the heart is’ – but can a heart be divided and exist in two places? Castles (2002) would confirm that this can be achieved. He says: “The notion of primary loyalty to one place is therefore misleading: it was an icon of old-style nationalism that has little relevance for migrants in a mobile world” (Castles, 1154). A

German friend of mine who is living in Barcelona now recently wrote in an email to me: “I do miss my parents... its funny how much more you appreciate your family when you don't have them around. Especially on public holidays, when you are used to being together.” Jade from Australia mused:

They say absence makes the heart grow fonder. However, to self-analyze the mechanisms involved I find that this is true in a general sense but there's more going on than appears in the statement. Absence, for me, gives time for my mind to reflect on what my heart already knew.

Many theorists have grappled with the notion of home. Heller identifies place and ‘rootedness’ with what she refers to as ‘geographical monogamy’ and travel with ‘geographical promiscuity’ (Morley, 16). Descombes stresses that home is less a geographical territory than a space where one feels “at ease in the rhetoric of the people with whom he shares life” (Morley, 17). And Heller states: “‘going home’ should mean: returning to that firm position which we know, to which we are accustomed, where we feel safe and where our emotional relationships are the most intense” (Morley, 24). If home is associated with feelings of familiarity, solidarity and unity than I have two homes. A friend of mine once said that you never *really* feel at home when you are a guest. ‘Home’ in Edinburgh was only possible when the following elements came together: the establishment of a new community; a shared flat with friends (a place to call my own); a love of Edinburgh; and a connectedness to my Canadian community – which was only fully realized through NCTs. When these elements came together I was no longer a guest or a tourist. However, I was also more than a temporary resident, I was a potential migrant. This begs the question – at what point do people shed their transient status and start to become more deeply rooted in their host countries? This period is

different for everyone and I cannot answer the question based on my data. However, as noted before, there seems to be a trend among transients to become less reliant upon connections to distant 'homes' once their focus shifts to community life in Edinburgh.

Morley (2000) draws an intricate picture of how NCTs have influenced the transformation of home. He introduces the German terminology *heimat* and *fremde*. *Heimat* denotes an imagined community. For transients *heimat* is less a national construction than a social construct informed and moulded by NCTs. The opposite of the belonging and security associated with *heimat*, *fremde* means isolation. I believe that we have moved beyond a consideration of these emotionally tied terms as related to homeland. Now the terms bear more significance in relation to relationships, social groups and an ease and comfort in one's immediate surroundings. I explored how the internet and mobile phones are contributing to this shift in definition.

In Rouse's (1991) analysis of the ideas of habituation and belonging in the shifting geography of postmodernism, he comes to the conclusion that we can no longer define our identities along lines of place-based belonging. We are not lost and nomadic, but seek "raw materials for a new cartography... in the details of people's daily lives" (Morley, 43). Morley adds: "cultures belong primarily to networks of social relationships and 'only indirectly and without logical necessity, do they belong to places'" (Morley, 53). This is directly correlated to the rise in NCTs. As Morley notes from Carey (1989), modern technologies "give rise to communities... not in place, but in space, mobile, connected across vast distances by appropriate symbols, forms and interests" (Morley 2000: 149). Morley testifies that NCTs allow for the nurturing of relationships between 'absent others'. Indeed, the "concept of nation, home and family all operate to provide

their inhabitants with different modalities of feelings of familiarity, security, unity and solidarity...” (Morley, 32). These feelings are directly related to, and thus affected by, the internet and mobile phone use. The proverbial global village is taking form through the activity of young transients who settle into a ‘global community.’ Allon (2004) strengthens this position:

Within this globalized world, people radically different from one another in background, worldview, and power are increasingly being uprooted, juxtaposed, and connected in diverse ways: through media images, through face-to-face contact in particular localities, and through technologies such as the Internet that transcend and redefine presence and distance (Ang, 2001; Castells, 1996; Morley, 2000). Through these transformations, the presumed certainties of cultural identity (firmly located in particular places, with stable and cohesive communities of shared traditions and heritage), as well as the relations between places (home/work, public/private, tourist/resident), are increasingly destabilized and displaced (Allon, 53).

Wellman (2005) has conducted a breadth of research into internet communication technology and community. Through his nuanced studies, he has reached very specific conclusions about internet use and while they border on technological utopianism, they are undisputedly integral to any NCT research. He finds:

When we talk to people about what they do on the Internet, we find out that the great majority of the people they email are those they know already. They are keeping in touch between visits, often by exchanging jokes, sharing gossip, or arranging to get together. If they email someone they have not already met in person, they are frequently arranging a face-to-face meeting. Telephone calls also get intermixed with emails, because phone chats better convey nuances, provide more intrinsic enjoyment during the conversation, and handle complex discussions (Wellman, 4).

While most of Wellman’s work focuses on the internet, this statement is revealing of how the internet *and* the telephone are important elements in community. These technologies

work in unison to redraw the borders of community and the notion of home along lines that are not necessarily bound in place.

As anthropologist Douglas (1991) noted, home is not necessarily fixed in space (Morley 2000: 16). Home has not historically been bound by sentimentality and it is not necessarily now either as is shown in my data with transients' swift adoption of cultural habits. We must be careful not to universalize the trend of middle class youth mobility; individuals have different motivations for moving. Morley says: "home is wherever you have a job" (Morley, 44), however, I have not found that to be the case in my research. On a personal level, I have not worked in Edinburgh since the first period I lived here and it is without a doubt my home. I have now been living here for eight consecutive months (15 in total) and consider this city my home for a number of reasons. It makes a big difference that I live with two close friends (one of whom I've known for 20 years). The fact that I can talk with them about my family and my past and they know who I am speaking of provides a level of comfort and security. Edinburgh is also home for simple reasons like passing people I know or familiar faces/dogs/buildings in the street. I would not be able to call it home, however, if I could not easily access my virtual community.

My respondent's answers to 'what is home to you' were enlightening, and quite individualized. Home does carry different meanings for different people:

Rebekka, Canadian⁶: Wherever my mom is at the time – she moves every two years. I moved from Canada when I was 10 and both sides of my family are all across Canada. I have scattered roots having lived all over Canada. I don't have a home in Canada and don't think I ever did. I have no attachment to Canada, no desire to live there.

⁶ Rebekka's situation is unique – she has spent her formative years living in ex-patriot communities all over the world, living the longest in Dubai (one year) and Singapore (two years).

Rebekka's responses throughout our interview pointed to a deep searching for a place to call home. Her scattered roots left me with the impression that she was quite vulnerable and seeking out places that 'fit'. To her, the places that fit the bill had solid histories – something lacking throughout her own life. Some transients, like Georgina from Australia, had much more spiritual takes on the notion of home:

Home – it can be anywhere. It definitely changes. It's more of a state of mind than it is a location. But it definitely has elements of needing to have a network, needing to be constantly stimulated. It's almost a question of mental acuity because anywhere that you stay for an extended period of time you can get into habits and grooves to make things easier but that's not necessarily home; it's just a comfort zone. I prefer home to be the state of mind where you are constantly stimulated, healthy connections to your established networks serviced regularly and always establishing new connections. I think that's what home is to me. I probably shouldn't leave out that there's a family connection too. There has to be contact. Family is definitely one of those established networks that you need to remain connected with to feel at home.

For Georgina, home is fluid and more spiritual, yet it this portable notion of home would not be possible without established networks of connectedness with family. Others, have settled quite securely into their consideration of Edinburgh as home, as Ivan from Spain expressed:

Ivan, Spain: It's a place where I was part of but not anymore. I left home at 18 and I'm very attached to the people there but whenever I go home it's very much just a visit. I don't have my room anymore, my books... its all in a box in the garage. It's a nice place to go on holiday but I'm not part of it anymore. Home at the moment is Edinburgh, when I come back from Spain I feel I'm coming back home.

Victoria, Canadian: Home is somewhere where I'm grounded and know I'm going to be stable for a while. Home is where my heart is now, I know that it won't be forever but it will be for a while. My gut instinct that it won't be forever, cause I know myself and what I do want at some point, I don't want to make this my home now, my opinion may change in five years.

This respondent contradicts herself, which I think is telling of how complicated the concept of home can be when one is transient, as is evidenced in the next response from Megan as well:

I don't know right now – I'm in a weird position where I don't have a permanent flat but I will get a home here. I consider the States my home but I don't have a home there either. I don't feel 'temporary' here but I know I won't stay here forever. I'll go back to the US; the States is who I am, I'm an American. Going back to the States involves me settling and I'm not sure I want to do that now but I will in the future.

This response points particularly to the ambiguous quality of 'fixed notions of home'.

Others commented: David, Australian: "This is where my gear is, but Oz is home;" Di, Australian: "home is where my parents are;" Tristan, Australian: "I don't own any property, so home for now is temporary;" Randy, American: "Edinburgh is my home. I have made a life for myself here. I'm not a foreigner. I'm a traveler, as all people should be. I never identified myself by where my parents *spawned me*."

So, if home is spatial for some and spiritual for others, what impact have NCTs had on the notion of home? I gauged this through my questions, 'do you think having a mobile has helped you feel at home in Edinburgh?' and 'how has the internet affected your experience away from home?' Randy, from the US, shared my sentiment of becoming closer to his family once he left them: "My parents and I are actually closer since I've settled in Edinburgh and the internet certainly plays a role in that." Ivan from Spain made it clear that a multitude of NCTs have been responsible for making him feel at home:

Before I had a landline at home I used my mobile not very often so email was the main mode for keeping in touch with family but now I talk more on the landline than writing emails. With friends I keep in touch with email and we have a shared website which helps to know what they're up to.

A couple of respondents noted how their reliance on the internet tapered off as they became more secure in Edinburgh:

Jade, Australian: In the beginning the internet helped me feel connected but now I am quite settled in the UK. I should note that without the internet I wouldn't have a job because the technology is inherent in the industry I work in – not just for communication but the actual technology I sell is built on the existence of the internet. Without it I'd have nothing to sell.

Megan, American: "I know that the internet has made me feel more at home because I was using it less and less the more settled I got in Edinburgh. At first the internet was essential... now I feel like I live here now; I have a ground here now." These comments mirror my own sentiment that perhaps co-presence becomes less important over time. Megan and Jade's positions also throw out the ambiguous question of when a transient becomes a resident? These are questions that my data cannot answer that might be attempted in future research.

The transients in my study responded positively to the mobile affecting how at home they felt in Edinburgh – Ivan from Spain said that his mobile "definitely" had an affect:

I still remember the moment when I got a job in a university. I called my parents on my mobile so that I could share the joy with them! When it's really good or bad news I still call to feel close to them... Three to four months after I got my UK SIM card it stopped working and I was so upset, I felt isolated – it was a Friday which meant no party, no way to get in touch. I'm kind of hooked on it. Somehow we become really reliant on it. If I don't have a mobile I don't have plans.

Mia, a Slovakian transient, echoed a similar experience to my own decision to adopt the mobile culture in Edinburgh:

Growing up in Slovakia was so dramatically different then life over here. There was no need for a mobile because you saw the same people everyday waiting for the same bus, in the same shops. When I worked for a host family when I first went to London I felt at home just knowing that I knew the next-door neighbor's garden. Moving up to Edinburgh took a little longer to feel at home because there's such a lack of neighborliness. Having a mobile has opened up the opportunity for new friendships which wouldn't have emerged without a mobile. I had to adapt to different social conventions here than I've grown up with in Slovakia. If I didn't have a mobile it would be impossible to get close to people. I would never make a date to meet someone again whom I've had a good connection with – you just don't do that, it would be strange. But I would ask for their number and give them a text after a few days. It's comfortable and appropriate.

Tristan, from Australia agreed but attacked my question from another angle:

Having a mobile has definitely affected it. It's almost too... I don't think that the question assesses the relationship between my mobile phone and my developing connections here because it's so normal to have a mobile phone, something that we take for granted. Having a mobile is too engrained in our nature, is too useful in everyday communication to simply be classed as having an affect *on* communications. It's an essential tool.

This statement forms the crux of my research question: 'are the internet and mobile phones affecting the notion of home?' Tristan's remark is evidence that the prolific nature of NCTs is indeed so commonplace that they are 'engrained in our nature' as 'essential tools.' To return to Shane's comment, it would appear that these technologies have indeed 'evolved' to become a part of transience.

Mid-way through my research it dawned on me that those who were claiming that NCTs had little effect on how at home they felt in their new surroundings might not be revealing the whole story because they simply had not thought about the significance of these tools in their lives to the extent I had, however, I was always very careful not to impose my own experience on others in my questions. It did become clear to me that my own interest in NCT's role in transience and security is not an issue that all transients had considered. As Sam, one of my Australian respondents articulated: "you don't tend to get

home and verbosely self-analyse and unless you state something out loud, honestly, out loud, it's just a thought. It doesn't have form, form as opposed to substance here."

To better gage the importance of the internet for transients, I asked a few transients in my final interviews: 'what would you do if you didn't have the internet in Edinburgh?' Ashley, one of my Canadian respondents stated without hesitation:

I would find a way to get it! I wouldn't even have left home if it wasn't an option over here. I couldn't be here without the regular, instant communication I get with email and MSN. There are too many people back home I couldn't have been cut-off from. I probably wouldn't have come over if the only form of communication was letter writing and landline conversations. Why? Laziness. I can't even stand it when I know someone's written me an email and for some reason I don't get it. It drives me nuts.

The desperation that transients would experience if suddenly they were *without* what some of them had shrugged off as 'just a tool' is telling of how important the internet is the everyday experiences of transients. Because I did not have the foresight to ask this question of all my respondents, however, I cannot state with integrity that solid evidence exists that the internet or mobile phones is a prerequisite for transients to move abroad.

Wise (2000) believes that home involves the establishment of a space of comfort. Home, he asserts, "is not an originary place from which identity arises. It is a place we *are*. Home and territory: territory and identity" (Wise, 297). With this understanding, home is something mobile, something portable. Home can lie within. Wise introduces the notion of 'milieu-effects', which come about because of connections to other places. The self searches for a link between collectives of our world experiences by holding on to tokens of our past. Home is always in motion; it is the place of the in-between, which is

why I believe NCTs help one rearticulate the strictures of place-based home. Wise explains:

A large component of identity of this place called home derived precisely from the fact that it had always in one way or another been open; constructed out of movement, communication, social relations which always stretched beyond it (Wise, 305).

Zalis (2003) says: “the real power of Home is often defined more in our heads than by buildings, countries or landscapes... So, Home can frequently be found more in imagination than in reality” (Zalis, 86). In conjunction with this view, Descombes (1995) believes we establish a “rhetorical country” – a place “where a person *feels at home* – in the sense that they are able, by virtue of a shared rhetoric, to make themselves (relatively) easily understood and to understand others” (Morley, 175). New communications technologies make the ‘rhetorical country’ more possible than ever. Telecommunications and network technologies have allowed for co-existence and imminent connectedness. When I was back in Canada I kept my home in Scotland alive by tuning into BBC radio online, watching BBC world news on TV, reading Scottish newspapers online, and keeping close contact with my Edinburgh community via email and instant messaging. Even such a small task as checking the weather in Edinburgh online quelled a sense of detachment. Imagining what the sky looked like over my favorite park in Edinburgh somehow made my bond to Scotland stronger. The computer screen was a window to my ‘rhetorical country.’ Now that I am back in Edinburgh the computer screen serves as a window to my ‘rhetorical home’ in Canada.

While I held the belief that the prominence of the internet and mobile phones was partly responsible for the exodus of young transients to global cosmopolitan cities, only a

small portion of my respondents claimed that the prevalence of NCTs affected their decision to travel:

Aurelie, French: If you think that you'll be closer through technologies it's not so hard to leave home. It definately had an influence... from the very first day away you can chat through MSN so you're not so lonely. We take it for granted but if we didn't have the internet I don't believe people would leave home so readily.

Victoria, Canadian: "maybe it helped... I always know I have a fast and convenient way of communication."

A significant number, however, said that NCTs had nothing to do with their leaving:

David, Australian: It didn't effect my decision *to* leave in any way. I would have left even if letters sent by old style sailing ships with slaves in the gallies were the only form of communication (In no way, shape or form do I endorse or look favorably upon historical and current slave-based economies).

Convinced that there was another approach to this question, Lull's theory that we pattern cultural styles along the lines of impermanent parallel lives struck a chord with me, so I asked transients whether they agreed. Some responses included: Naoimh, Irish: "My phone is my line, my extention to my life back in Ireland. But it has also solidified a social circle here in Edinburgh. I definitely operate between parallel lives;" Shane, Irish: "I wouldn't be able to keep things going without these technologies;" Sam, Australian: "I can't imagine how I could live here and keep my life back home afloat without my mobile for texting people in both places;" Aurelie, French: "I definitely have one foot in Edinburgh and one foot in France because I am able to so easily communicate with people at home. I always know what's going on back home;" Luke, Australian: "If having parallel lives is like having a foot in two places then I have three legs with one foot in Australia, one in Ireland and one in Edinburgh... oh wait, I've got four – one each for Sydney and Melbourne!" Tristan, Australian: "I sometimes feel like I'm more in the loop with mates back in Oz than mates here because we text each other so frequently."

Jade, one of my Australian respondents took the question to a very philosophical level:

Do you think this is why some people become world-weary – because they leave a part of their spirit everywhere they go? By visiting or living in a place do you become familiar with it by taking on subconsciously not only the good experiences but the problems and discrepancies inherent in that area? In a way, facilitated through memory, there's a part of yourself that's left in that place dealing with those experiences (good and bad). I left Edinburgh a few months ago but part of me is still there in spirit. It's probably for a certain type of person that the above observation applies. I often link this type of person to their level of connection to a certain area. This is probably why it's so hard for some people to move and break the connections and why they stay in places longer or in extreme cases never leave home because their sense of identity is so closely linked with the place – the regularities and peculiarities that exist – that to break these and try and rebuild them elsewhere takes a lot out of them personally. And I think these are the people that these technologies we're talking about help to make that easier or possible.

An obvious assertion from Jade's comment is that NCTs must have an impact on home and connectivity in relation to the technology's easy access to remote communities and inherent sense of belonging. Yet, much more meaning can be mined from Jade's reflection. The process (or mere thought) of leaving oneself 'in spirit' in an old community can be wearing and indeed leave some 'world weary.' Broken connections are a disquieting thought for a portion of society and transients are not excluded from this emotionally trying experience. Jade's deep musing gets to the core of my belief that NCTs are a factor in young people setting off into the unknown. While I cannot base a conclusion on a single transient's insight, I can say that the prominence of the internet and mobile phones do seem to effect the notion of home and connectivity.

Not all my respondents agreed – I would be remiss not to document the voices of dissent: as Mark from Germany said: "I don't use the internet often to communicate with people from Germany. In fact I don't speak that often with my friends from home

anymore. I live life to the fullest in the place I'm in while I'm there and pretty much cut off ties with those from afar;" Ashley, from Canada, was in agreement:

Impermanent parallel lives with the internet and mobiles? It's an obvious observation – we don't have to bust out fires and create smoke signals anymore. Of course these technologies make it *easier* to lead impermanent parallel lives but that doesn't mean that they're *responsible* for it.

Ivan, from Spain also did not agree with the concept, which surprised me based on his previous acclaim for how integral a role NCTs had played in his life:

Yes somehow, but obviously we have two parallel lives cause we will remain part of the life we came from while we still live physically in Edinburgh. Its not due to new communication technologies, its because we belong to the place where we're brought up; that stays alive because family and friends care about us. Its just friendships that keep a parallel life – I would still be keeping this parallel life without the internet and mobile phones. When I first moved to Edinburgh I wrote letters to my family and friends. I've still lost so much from home – I've lost my contacts to find jobs there, lost some acquaintances. But I keep in touch regardless of these technologies. I still could live this parallel without these technologies – I'm a person that's going to use every tool available for contact. At end of the day these technologies are still *just tools*.

I found the last comment refreshing after having encountered so much positive reinforcement for the validity of Lull's observation that we pattern cultural styles along the lines of impermanent parallel lives. I think it is grounding to remember that NCTs are not wholly responsible for the exodus of transients to Edinburgh, nor are they solely responsible for shifting notions of home. However refreshing Ivan's comment though, in another breath he said: "its kind of like I'm living a life in Spain while I'm in Edinburgh cause I write emails in Spanish all day or chat on MSN in Spanish for one hour. It's difficult to disconnect myself from my life in Spain while I'm over here." Evidence of an impermanent parallel life? I think so.

However, as some transients brought to my attention (articulated here by Ashley from Canada): “its hard to answer things I’ve never thought of, like nuclear physics. I could care less about this, I’ve never thought about it.” While I believe that if more transients *did* put more thought into these issues they would realize the incredible impact NCTs have on how easily they can maintain fluid, dynamic relationships, I realize that it is impossible to try to draw that link without evidence.⁷ I think all communication theorists would do well in first asking questions that leave room for open responses from subjects, *listening* to everything their subjects tell them (rather than simply extracting nuggets and sieving the rest) and *thinking* about the implications of all responses. Having said that, I also do not think we can deny the dramatic affect NCTs have had on the fluidity of home and the ease with which these tools allow for various storylines in peoples lives. The internet and mobile phones certainly hold a wide range of absent presences for transients, and my respondents gave me clear answers that this is certainly the case. My data provides evidence that these tools can indeed be linked to a sense of security necessary to maintain (and create) a sense of community and belonging when they are uprooted. The internet is keeping *heimat* – the imagined community – a computer screen away, while mobile phones help to alleviate *fremde* – isolation – allowing transients to settle into ‘global cosmopolitan cities’ like Edinburgh.

⁷ Of interest is a comment a Scottish friend of mine made (who happened to be a passive observer of a focus group I held) regarding her decision to leave *Edinburgh*: “I would not consider moving back to New Zealand if I didn’t know that video phone technology is advancing. I would also equip all my friends and family with web-cams before I left.”

Conclusion

Indeed, as Chambers (1994) states, “the modern metropolitan figure is the migrant: she and he are active formulators of metropolitan aesthetics and lifestyles, reinventing the languages and appropriating the streets of the master” (Chambers, 23). It should be noted that the only transients in my study who did not have a mobile when they arrived in Edinburgh were Canadians and Americans. Some had used a mobile in North America, but none had used text messaging as a form of communication on a regular basis. The fact that these Canadians and Americans frequently used text messaging in Edinburgh is evidence of their adoption of a technology in order to fit into the socio-cultural structure of communication in the UK.

Urry’s belief that in locating identity we use human reference points, seeking out those who share similar experiences to nurture feelings of *security* and *belongingness* is evidenced in transient activity in Edinburgh. Transients are synthesizing the familiar with the exotic and the material with the symbolic in their use of the internet and mobile phones to create community and a sense of belonging when they are uprooted to feel safe, contented and intrigued with life. NCTs certainly have a role in redrawing relationships to fit into fluid spaces. Moreover, transient activity in Edinburgh is reflective of networked urbanism with mobile publics that allow for various storylines to be picked up in different places. NCTs hold a range of absent presences, and my respondents are evidence that young transients form flexible constellations of identities while on the move. My findings are important because they open up the discipline of NCT to include the unique community of young, middle class, Western transients and their use of the internet and mobile phones. My data contributes to literature on global flows, NCT,

community, travel, transience, connectivity, and social networks. The conclusions I have reached based on my research are as follows:

What effect have NCTs had on the maintenance of virtual –home – communities and the establishment of new – physical – communities?

It was my belief when I began this study that we have become so comfortable with mobile phones and the internet that they have provided us with the added confidence to strike off into the world on our own because we can maintain strong connections. I have found that this is not always the case – young people have very individual reasons for living abroad and the availability of NCTs is not always a factor. With the testimonies provided from the transients I spoke to, however, it can be said that the internet is enabling the maintenance of virtual – home – communities and mobile phones are assisting in the establishment of new – physical – communities. Whether the availability of NCTs was a factor in transients' decision to move abroad, it has still played a major role in community building and maintenance. The internet and mobile phones certainly hold a wide range of absent presences for transients, and my respondents gave me clear answers that this is certainly the case.

Why do transients settle in 'global cosmopolitan cities'?

Transient's reasons for coming to Edinburgh are ranging – the history, the culture, the cosmopolitan-nature, an inner feeling, testimonials, and/or the people (transient communities) that reside here. Many responses, however, point to Edinburgh as a city

that offers a sense of *security and rootedness*. I think that if I carried my study out in Amsterdam, Berlin, Vancouver, or Melbourne I would find much the same results.

How are the internet and mobile phones affecting the notion of home?

NCTs are restructuring the notion of home and belonging because they allow young transients to move more easily and live where they want to live without cutting ties. In particular, they help to create an *easier transition* from a one life to another; NCTs aid in establishing a smoother shift from the familiar to the unfamiliar. For many transients, 'home' is a *hub of connectivity* and a *construction of a sense of belonging*. Moreover, the internet and mobile phones make home a more *portable* concept for some transients, enabling some to take on *hybrid identities*, interact along the lines of *co-presence* and lead *impermanent parallel lives*.

Do the internet and mobile phones afford young transients the security they desire to maintain a sense of community and belonging while they are uprooted and exploring themselves in 'global cosmopolitan cities'?

While 'security' means different things to different people, my research confirms that the internet and mobiles do afford young transients the security they desire to maintain a sense of community and belonging while they are uprooted and exploring themselves in 'global cosmopolitan cities.' There was a marked decline in transients' reliance on NCTs after a certain period, which points directly to the strong link between NCTs and security. These tools are integral for many transients in maintaining a sense of community and belonging when they are first uprooted. My data provides evidence that

the internet and mobile phones can indeed be linked to a sense of security necessary to maintain (and create) a sense of community and belonging when they are uprooted. The internet is keeping *heimat* – the imagined community – a computer screen away, while mobile phones help to alleviate *fremde* – isolation – allowing transients to settle into ‘global cosmopolitan cities’ like Edinburgh.

Limitations of the Research

If I have learned anything from this study it is that all members of a particular social group cannot be painted with the same brush. While trends can be noted in the activities of transients, there was rarely uniformity in opinion across the board. Transients remain individuals, thus, their experiences with NCTs are individualized. As I have stated before, a main limitation of my research was trying to engage with a group of people who have either never thought of the significance of NCTs in their lives or have just not put them into the context that I have. Also, I found when interviewing less mature transients in groups who clearly did not want to participate; the responses I got were so brief they were almost a waste of time. From one such experience, however, I learned the advantages of one-on-one interviews and less formal dialogues with transients. I also added some more searching questions so that transients could think about NCTs in a different light (ie, what would you do if you did not have access to the internet in Edinburgh?).

Future Research

As noted earlier, my study could lead to future research in answering the following questions: is co-presence, or a reliance on NCTs, less important over time for transients? When is the transition made from transient to resident? Can similar trends of transients' relationship with NCTs be found in other 'global cosmopolitan cities'? My research should serve as a solid base for the answering of these questions.

APPENDIX

- Do you have a mobile phone?
- If so, where was it purchased?
- Who do you phone/text/send pictures to?
- Who do you receive calls/texts/photos from?
- Where do you use the internet?
- What is the reason for choosing this location?
- How many times a week do you use the internet?
- What type of network connection is used?
- How long do you spend on the internet per visit?
- What is the primary use of the internet? Secondary? Tertiary?
- What is the favoured form of communication with virtual community?
- How much money do you spend on the internet, mobile and landline every month?
- What is the favoured form of communication with physical/nomadic community?
- How has the availability of network technologies effected your decision to travel?
- Why did you leave your home communities?
- What have you gained from travel?
- How long did you initially intend to be away from home for?
- What drew you to Edinburgh?
- How long have you been in Edinburgh?
- Have your travel plans altered since they arrived in Edinburgh?
- Did you plan on this?
- Why did you decide to settle in Edinburgh?
- Are you/have you used Edinburgh as a base to do save up funds for more travel?
- How did you form a new physical community in Edinburgh?
- What is home to you?

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- Do you feel like you live impermanent parallel lives as afforded by the internet and mobile phones?
 - Do you feel like a foreigner in Edinburgh?
 - Has this feeling changed over your stay? If so, how?
 - How has having a mobile affected how at home you feel in Edinburgh?
 - How has internet use affected your experience away from home?
 - Do all members of your home community use the internet regularly?
 - What effect have network technologies had on relationships with people from your virtual community?
 - Do you intend to keep in contact with your Edinburgh community when you leave?
 - If so, by what means?

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