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'Half of Myself Belongs to this Town': Conditional Belongings of Temporary Migrants in Regional Australia

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Abstract. *A growing number of temporary visa holders reside in regional Australia, from skilled temporary visa holders to international students at regional university campuses and Working Holiday visa holders. Many of these residents spend prolonged periods of time in regional locations, often alongside groups with other migration and refugee backgrounds, and many hold permanent residency aspirations. This paper contributes to recent scholarship on affective citizenship and place-based belonging through an investigation of the social, cultural and legal dimensions of temporary migrants' sense of belonging in regional communities. Our analysis of qualitative interviews with regional residents on different temporary visas and local employers and service providers shows that many temporary residents in regional locations develop a feeling of place-based belonging grounded in social relations and shared cultural affiliations as well as the efforts of local stakeholders who are keen to retain migrants in the location. Yet the rights restrictions associated with temporary visas tend to diminish such feelings of belonging and further exacerbate feelings of tenuous belonging for those migrants who are lacking place-based social or cultural connections. We conclude that the multidimensional nature of belonging deserves more attention in the current context of policies that are on the one hand promoting the regional settlement of temporary migrants, whilst on the other hand excluding these migrants from most social rights granted to other taxpayers.*

Introduction

Temporary migration is often described as a relatively recent phenomenon in countries that have traditionally encouraged permanent settlement like Australia yet it has long existed in certain industries and areas such as agricultural work in regional locations. Recent research on temporary migrant workers in regional Australia has primarily focused on the farm work experiences of Working Holiday Makers and participants in the Seasonal Worker Scheme (Collins et al 2016; Underhill and Rimmer 2015; Tan et al 2009), revealing experiences of exploitation at work, intertwined with precarious migrant status (Tham et al 2016). Less attention has been paid to the social and cultural

connections of temporary migrants and their significance for feelings of place-based belonging, although these migrants often spend prolonged periods of time in one regional community. This population includes not only Working Holiday Makers but also international students and temporary skilled (s457) visa holders who may work across a range of industries including food processing, aged care and hospital nursing, as well as their partners who often struggle to access adequate paid work. The visa status of these temporary residents affects not only their job search and employment experiences but also their and their families' sense of belonging to the regional community in which they are settled. This in turn can affect retention of migrants in regional locations (De Hoyos and Green 2011; Kilpatrick et al 2011) and perceptions of regional settlement both among migrants themselves but also in the wider regional community, who may be disappointed if efforts in supporting new arrivals in settling in are not seen to culminate in their ongoing residency.

This paper will analyse the multi-dimensional nature of feelings of belonging for temporary migrant workers and their families in regional Australia. Drawing on empirical data from a completed research project on regional settlement, we will discuss the case of overseas nationals on a range of temporary visas who have made a regional location in Australia their – temporary - home. The paper starts by reviewing scholarship on regional and temporary migration in Australia, and the notion of belonging, in particular place-based belonging and affective citizenship. After a description of the research aims and methods, the paper will discuss temporary migrants' feelings of belonging and the ways these are shaped by different place-based factors. While many regionally settled temporary residents enjoy social connections and participation in faith- or ethnicity-based communities, they feel restricted by their temporary visa conditions.

In conclusion, we argue that the constraints to temporary migrants' legal belonging produce a feeling of 'conditional belonging' that highlight the tension between the two government agendas which shape the regional residencies of temporary visa holders. One is aimed at promoting population growth and economic sustainability through migrant settlement in regional Australia, and the other treats migrants as temporary labour with limited social rights and in the case of skilled visa holders also limited opportunities for job mobility. Our findings indicate that the restrictions of temporary migrants' rights and the resulting sense of conditional belonging has implications for the objective of migrant attraction to regional Australia that unites these government agendas, and the broader policy objectives of population retention in regional locations, sustainable community relations and successful integration of new residents. Beyond its implications for the governance of migration, the multidimensional nature of belonging is key to understanding the experiences of migrants and their families in regional Australia, many of whom are permanent residents or citizens-in waiting.

Temporary Migrants and Feelings of Belonging in Regional Australia

The group of temporary migrants in regional Australia that has received most public and scholarly attention in recent years is that of farm workers. Sev-

eral studies have focused on particular groups such as Working Holiday visa holders (Reilly 2015; Underhill and Rimmer 2015) and other seasonal workers (Hanson and Bell 2007), analysing their trajectories and/ or employment experiences. Following a highly publicised piece of investigative journalism on backpackers' exploitation in the fresh food industry (SBS 2015), the Australian government commissioned an inquiry into the Working Holiday visa in 2015, which highlighted the critical role this visa played in supplying a seasonal labour force (FWO 2016).

These accounts have been critical in revealing the scope and extent of exploitation experienced by many temporary migrants in regional labour markets. However, with very few exceptions (McDonald, Mayes and Pini 2012) other dimensions of temporary migrants' lives in regional Australia and other groups of temporary migrants beyond farmworkers have received much less attention. This is surprising given that there have been increasing government efforts in directing temporary migrants to regional Australia (Hugo 2008) and growing scholarly interest in regional settlement experiences of international migrants more broadly (see f.ex. Galligan, Boese and Phillips 2014; Jordan, Krivokapic & Collins 2009, 2010). This body of scholarship has highlighted not only the role of employers and workplaces in the integration of international migrants (Boese 2015; Kilpatrick et al 2015) but identified the significance of interpersonal relations and interactions *beyond* the workplace (Wise 2005, 2009) in facilitating a sense of belonging in regional communities. Yet little attention has been paid to the questions, if the experiences of regional residency are different for temporary visa holders and to which extent this particular group of residents develop a sense of belonging. A notable exception to this gap in Australian scholarship is McDonald, Mayes and Pini's (2012) research on the dependants of temporary skilled visa holders in mining locations.

The notion of migrants' belonging is often not clearly defined and remains under-theorised (Antonsich 2010, Skrbiš, Baldassar, and Poynting 2007, Yuval-Davis et al 2005). There is a certain ambiguity in treating belonging as a synonym of – national or ethnic - identity or as a synonym or accessory of the notion of citizenship (McNevin 2006; Lynn-Ee Ho 2006). A common analytical distinction between different dimensions of belonging has been between belonging as a personal feeling of being 'at home' in a place (place-based belonging) that emerges from everyday practice (Fenster 2005; Yuval-Davis 2006; Wise 2009), and that of membership in a formal structure such as the nation-state, which is conditioned by government regulations (Bauböck 2005). The factors that contribute to feelings of place-based belonging have been further differentiated as auto-biographical, relational, cultural, economic, and legal (Antonsich 2010).

Australian scholarship on migrants' belonging has focused on the social and cultural dimensions of belonging for other newcomers such as refugees (Correa-Velez, Gifford, and Barnett 2010, Fozdar and Hartley 2014, Wille 2011) and in particular on place-based belonging for migrants and refugees (Harris 2016, Lobo 2010, Williamson 2016, Wise 2005). Research on tempo-

rary migrants has in contrast mostly focused on the impacts of (partial) legal or formal belonging through visa regulations. This has involved analyses of the impacts of insecure pathways to permanent residency (Mares 2016; Bose and MacDonald 2016; Robertson and Runganaikaloo 2014), precarious employment experiences (Boese, et al 2013; Velayutham 2013) and limited access to social welfare provisions (O'Brien and Phillips 2015). One of the few studies of place-based belonging of temporary migrants in Australia has investigated how the use of public and private spaces in central Melbourne affected international students' sense of belonging (Fincher and Shaw 2011). This paper addresses the gap in the literature on place-based belonging in regional Australia, and adds a further dimension of affective citizenship.

To gain a better understanding of the role of government and policy in shaping affective and place-based belonging on behalf of temporary visa holders, it is useful to turn to recent theorisations of 'affective citizenship' (Fortier 2010, 2016; de Wilde and Duyvendak 2016). 'Affective citizens' are affective subjects - understood as subjects with desires and needs, when their 'membership to the "community"' is contingent on personal feelings and acts that extend beyond the individual self as well as beyond the "private" realm of family and kin, but which are also directed towards the community' (Fortier 2010, 23). This notion of affective citizenship is grounded in the recognition that

Citizenship is always bound up within government or corporate disciplinary power relations and place-based politics, be they local, regional, national or transnational. Affective citizenship focuses on one aspect of how citizenship 'takes place' by emphasising how it is affective – how it involves emotions, feelings, bodies (Fortier 2016, 1040).

Beyond highlighting the 'place-based' and embodied nature of affective citizenship, Fortier (2016, 1042) also identifies the need for more research that recognises, how

all actors are variously affected by a state policy – as well as other forms of disciplinary prescriptions such as those decreed by private corporations – variously experience, interpret, enact and feel those policies.

Affective citizenship as a governmental strategy 'organized around an economy of feelings' (Fortier 2010, 19) has however limitations, not least through de-politicizing citizenship (de Wilde and Duyvendak 2016, 989).

Building on the combined insights from recent scholarship on temporary migrants' belonging and recent theorisations of affective citizenship, this paper considers belonging as feelings which are formed in relation to a specific place and shaped by government, corporate power relations and place-based politics at different levels (Fortier 2016). Whilst viewing the different dimensions of belonging as analytically separate we are interested in their interrelationship in the particular case of temporary visa holders. Through a focus on temporary migrants

in regional Australia, this article seeks to advance the analysis of the multi-dimensional nature of feelings of belonging for one of the largest groups of migrants in Australia in locations, where government policies increasingly direct them and which remain neglected in much research on temporary migration.

The research: Aims and Methods

This paper draws on research that was conducted as part of a larger project on the regional settlement of recently arrived migrants and refugees, which aimed to analyse the regional settlement experiences of recent arrivals in different bureaucratic categories (residents with refugee backgrounds, skilled and family migrants) and the policies and policy coordination that guided and shaped such settlement.¹ The research design incorporated a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods, including a national online survey of stakeholders involved in the regional settlement of international migrants and refugees; 14 focus groups with local stakeholders across 8 research sites; qualitative face-to-face interviews with 86 recent arrivals which covered different dimensions of their settlement experience from their pre-arrival experience and migration to their employment experience and sense of belonging; and expert interviews with stakeholders from government, business and community sectors.

In this paper we are drawing mainly on interviews with the migrants who had previously been or still were on temporary visas at the time of the interview, including 7 on s457 visas, 13 on international student visas, and 1 on a Working Holiday visas. This data is complemented by interviews and focus group discussion with employers of temporary visa holders and stakeholders from government and the community sector whose work is related to temporary migrants. All data elicited from the interviews, focus groups and the survey were coded and analysed thematically facilitated by the analytical software NVivo.

The eight research sites included six regional and two metropolitan sites. The sites included a range of locations to represent different histories of, and experiences with, migration and settlement including sites with long-standing migration and those with more recent experiences of international migrants. The sites also varied in size and employment profiles, from small locations with a prevalence of agricultural and food processing-related jobs to regional cities with a wide range of jobs across different occupations and sectors. Of the six regional research sites, two had regional university campuses, whilst some of the others had private colleges that also attracted international students. Two of the sites had skilled migration initiatives at Local Government level in place, which were aimed at attracting skilled migrants to the location. The variance across regional sites, and comparison with metropolitan sites, allowed for insights into place-based belonging that are detailed next.

¹ The research was led by Prof Brian Galligan and the late Dr Millsom Henry-Waring at the University of Melbourne and funded through an Australian Research Council Linkage grant (ARC LP 0883896) and supported by the Office for Multicultural Affairs and the Municipal Association Victoria.

Findings on Feelings of Belonging of Temporary Visa Holders in Regional Locations

All research participants were asked if they felt they belonged to the local community, as well as about their social relations locally and trans-locally, their settlement experience including their employment and their legal status. The temporary visa holders' answers on their sense of belonging referred to social dimensions such as their relations to other local residents; cultural dimensions such as their participation in a faith-based community; and legal dimensions such as their exclusion from certain rights and entitlements and the limitation of their residency right.

Social Dimensions of Feelings of Belonging

The *social* dimensions of belonging were mostly described in terms of the interpersonal relations participants had established with members of the local community, including Australian-born local residents as well as residents with migrant backgrounds. The participants who stated that they felt like they belonged to the local community, emphasized the friendliness and openness of local residents. Here feelings of belonging were sometimes enhanced in the economic realm by a sense of contributing economically to the community (see also Antonsich 2010, 648), whether through paid work or acts of volunteering.

A group of international students from India, who had found work in a farm after completing their horticultural certificate in a private college in a small rural town, spoke particularly highly of their first employer who had become a port of call for them whenever they needed help or advice. None of the students had lived abroad before coming to Australia and three of them had moved directly from their hometown in India to the rural town in Victoria. Their experience with that particular employer and the helpful attitudes of other locals made the former students soon feel at home in the small town. One of these students, Sameer suggested "people are a lot helpful here, you know, compared to other big cities".

Beside their appreciation of support granted by different community members and their affinity with country town lifestyle, these students' sense of belonging to the local community originated largely from their good relations with other community members from a range of cultural backgrounds. Their sense of belonging to the place was hence not grounded in notions of shared identity or ethnicity but everyday encounters with residents from different cultural backgrounds, which has been referred to as 'multicultural conviviality' in scholarship on culturally diverse urban locations (Fincher 2003; Wise and Velayutham 2009, 2014).

Everybody know us, you know, all the sponsors, you know all the work place guys and everybody here. They hang out together, you know, we hang out together ... and all the peoples are nice. And there is the Tonga people there too, they are really good and they are nice,

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so Tonga, Australian, Ireland, everybody, you know, just fantastic. It's good here. So there's not any racial attacks here!

Sameer's comment about racial attacks was a reference to a series of attacks on Indian students in Melbourne around the time of the research, which served to highlight the difference between communal life in a rural town and the city as a site of racial tension. Many of Sameer's contacts were forged through workplace relations in different farms that had begun during the course of his studies:

When I come I didn't know the Australian people. I firstly stayed for one month in Melbourne and I don't feel good there and was going to come in [this town] firstly, then I had to stay just for one month there, and when I come here I felt better here, very quiet here and very comfortable. Then I met [my future employer] through them, and then I made the contacts with the colleagues and some other friends, friends here, and now I have contacts on a farm, like in nursery, and on the other farms, we know lot of people, and I done jobs on different places, I know all that people, really good contacts here.

Serge, a Graduate Skilled visa holder from Zimbabwe, who resided in a larger regional town, also commented on the positive role of his social relations with local community members developed through his work in planning, which gave him a sense of belonging to the local community. Rather than describing the regional town-context with its majority white Anglo population as a challenge for feeling accepted as a newcomer, Serge observed that his visibility piqued people's interest in him and helped him to forge relations with locals.

(B)ecause with the nature of my job and being one of the African guys working [there], ... people begin to know me and you know, so, I meet some of them in the streets, you know, they greet me, , so I'm part of this community and I feel very comfortable, [...] so yeah, in smaller cities you are much more noticeable, you know, and people recognize you and they want to know who you are and what you do and in that way you make friends and you network.

Serge's experience stands in contrast to the commonly discussed negative impacts of visibility on a sense of belonging caused by politics of belonging grounded in sameness (Forrest and Dunn 2012; Antonsich 2010, 650). Whilst such negative experiences of racialization also emerged in our research, it is important to note the wide range of responses to newcomers in regional communities.

Those recent arrivals who had not (yet) developed a sense of belonging to the local community, referred to lacking opportunities to meet other local residents or to the social barrier of having insufficient English language skills. The latter applied in particular to the secondary applicants on skilled temporary visas who often struggled to find employment. A lack of opportunity for

social mingling applied interestingly to both, some people in work and some without work. Participants on s457 visas who fell into this group noted for example that they lacked the time for much socialising outside of work or in the workplace. One regional employer identified language barriers as a critical issue and called on the support of a Chinese-speaking worker based in a metropolitan site to assist with translation in case of any emergencies. Noting that “pastoral care is really important”, the employer described how this worker visited on a regular basis to check-in on staff and expressed gratitude that this worker could help deal with such matters based on his cultural background. Nina, a registered nurse from India, ended up working in the small hospital of a rural town because it was the first position she could secure in a long search for jobs after having her qualifications accredited. When she had a few days off work, she usually visited her best friend who lives in Melbourne, a five hour train ride from where she lives.

If I consider the demerits of living here, the major thing I found is the transportation, if I have to go, I'm confined to a particular place... if I have to visit my friends, I got a friend in [a town 80kms away], we all we work, we studied together for five years, so we are good friend so, ... I thought (I) visit them when I got off duty, so I thought I don't have a vehicle, so I have to rely on the public transport,. So I just went to the (train station) here and I asked if I can go to [that town] and they told me, 'we don't have transport facilities', I was so upset.

As has been described in this section, feelings of place-based social belonging can be either enhanced or challenged in regional locations based on different attributes of these locations. On the positive side, feelings of belonging were enabled by the relative ease of social contacts and the higher chance of repeated encounters especially if a temporary migrant met other community members through their work or had access to people who facilitated social relations such as a helpful employer. However, a sense of social isolation followed in some cases from the sense of being ‘stuck’ in a remote regional town with less opportunity for maintaining existing trans-local relations, away from a critical mass of other newcomers and a lack of opportunities to socialise locally. Such feelings of isolation were sometimes further exacerbated by a feeling of lacking cultural belonging in a place.

Cultural Dimensions of Feelings of Belonging

Some participants expressed their feelings of belonging in cultural terms, by referring to their participation in faith- or ethnicity-based communities, their English language skills or cultural familiarity. The most significant of these sources of belonging was participation in an ethnic or religious community, partly in the regional location they resided in, partly beyond that location. Nina, the already mentioned nurse from India, first answered in the negative when asked if she belonged to the local community because she did not par-

ticipate in any community programs. Shortly after she described herself however as active participant in the local church where she felt very welcomed by the local Australian priest.

I usually go to mass on Sunday, ... the priest, the minister there is .. an Australian, he is a very good man, he welcomes all the culture, like, he usually, there are around ten families from my place, so we usually go to the Church on Sundays and after the mass we just stay there and we just chit chat together. [...] I usually request off on Sunday and also my colleagues, they just telling me, like, "Nina, you need to church, that's the only thing you are doing here!". They tell like that. So I take part in the community aspect [...] So they are really friendly to me. Other than that I won't take part in any, I don't take part in any other culture or community programs here.

Many of the families Nina met through the church came from the same region in India and worked in the same hospital but it was only through the local church that she came to know them. Belonging in the remote town relies in Nina's case on her participation in a faith-based community of co-nationals, and she suggested that it might feel easier to belong to a place like Melbourne where there is a larger presence of migrants from many different backgrounds. Ping, a s457 visa holder from China, who worked in the local abattoir, also reported a similar sense of belonging through attending church and having fortnightly visits from a church member to his house.

In one of the regional research sites, service providers expressed frustration at the slow pace of change in creating spaces that catered for the cultural needs for new arrivals. One service provider explained, it took eighteen months and meetings with local government officials to locate a suitable prayer room. Her account illustrates the government agenda of attracting migrants to live and work in the regional location:

I've had meetings with the previous Mayor and the CEO and all those people (are) saying that [this town] needs migrants, ... needs migrants to survive; if you don't have migrants you're not going to have anybody working down at [the local employer] and if [they] go broke goodness knows what's going to happen to this town!

In another location, the church ran playgroups for the children of new arrivals. Other community activities aimed at fostering a sense of cultural belonging, which took place in most of the research locations, included Harmony Day festivals, providing one-off opportunities for encounters between newly arrived migrants and the wider community. These initiatives illustrate the government agenda of promoting social cohesion in culturally diverse populations (see Moran and Mallman 2016) through affective citizenship.

Some participants explained their lack of a sense of belonging with their

self-perception as culturally different from the white Anglo majority community, which had in some cases emanated from experiences of ‘Othering’ in everyday settings. Charles, a skilled visa holder from China who resided in a larger regional town, described his sense of belonging as ‘half-half’, limited by his scarce contact with local residents which he also explained by his lacking labour market integration. This example illustrates the close intertwining of social, cultural and economic influences on feelings of belonging.

I just can say I’m a, half of myself is [of this town]. [...] I know where to find this place to go to and I know where to ask but ... [...] I still don’t understand too much for the locals, the local people. How to communicate with them, ... what they don’t like so we still need to learn more, yeah so I just can say half of myself is belong to [this town].

Charles went on to reflect that having a job and belonging to a church-based community would assist him in learning English and gaining cultural familiarity, implying that these would entail a stronger sense of belonging.

(B)ecause I didn’t have any religion so if I have religion maybe I will go to the church. That’s a good way to talk with the local but I didn’t have so I can’t let me, let myself to do that, so. (i)f we can have any chance to talk with them and work with [local people], ... I think I can quickly to understand them and to learn more about the [town].

At the time of the interview, Charles’ contact with ‘locals’ understood here as Australian-born people, was limited to the Australian husband of another Chinese friend.

Both examples illustrate the diversity of experiences at the level of cultural belonging in regional locations and their intersection with feelings of belonging grounded in interpersonal relations. We will now turn to a source of belonging that appears largely structural rather than interpersonal yet also plays out in place-based relations (see Fortier 2016).

Legal Influences on Feelings of Belonging

Restricted social entitlements, such as lacking access to public healthcare or employment services, resulted in a sense of limited belonging among several interview participants some of whom had gone on to obtain permanent residency (PR). The high cost of private healthcare constituted an additional financial burden that the temporary migrant taxpayers perceived as unfair. For most temporary visa holders, gaining a PR was an important goal for this reason amongst others. The aspiration for PR emerged in particular among the s457 visa holders in the sample but also among some of the international students.

Nikeasha was a Nigerian national who had come to Australia on a s457 visa with her husband, who was the primary visa holder. She has since gained

a PR, but remembers the time spent on the temporary skilled visa as financially stressful. Having fallen pregnant after arriving in Australia and lacking access to healthcare, she had to pay for all tests and doctor visits out of her own purse. Her husband's employer eventually sponsored him for permanent residency, but up to that point the couple struggled to make ends meet, since Nikeasha herself had not been able to find work despite her tertiary education levels. For her, gaining PR was the starting point to feeling more connected as well as finding work:

(F)or almost six months of pregnancy I couldn't even access the hospital or the medical, you know? ... My husband was worried and he was like, 'no, we cannot access Medicare or anything because we are on temporary visa' and there's nothing we can do. [...]. (O)ne day just about six months into my pregnancy I went to Medicare office and I told them I want to be covered. And they said 'well we're sorry, there's nothing we can do for you.' I say 'what you mean there's nothing you can do for me? How can I come to your country on four years temporary visa and you expect me not to even access medical services within those four years of coming here? What if I am sick or anything?' [...] But once we got the Medicare [after gaining a PR], things were a little bit better so we were more relieved that we don't have to pay all the bills anymore. And so we started moving in and then started making friends.

Li from China, another secondary s457 visa holder at the time of the interview, contacted Centrelink², soon after arriving in the hope of receiving support in finding employment but was advised that she was not entitled to the service as a temporary skilled visa holder. She decided to pay for English classes to increase her employability but found that the only available lessons were geared towards the largely illiterate humanitarian (refugee) entrants who were entitled to free classes under settlement services. Li offered the following comment on Australia's temporary worker policies:

Because if ... I get a PR I am relieved and I come here without worries because I get benefit but if I am a Temporary resident we should wait for about two years, our visa is to wait for two years (before) can get benefit from government. So it's not good for us.

Hassan, an international student from Iran, also reported on the financial burden of medical costs when his wife became pregnant. Whilst he managed to continue studying, one of his friends who was an international student had to quit her studies because they needed to earn more money to make ends meet. As he described it:

¹ Centrelink is an Australian government program that manages services and payments to the unemployed amongst other groups.

The government don't predict this kind of situation... Sometimes some politicians say 'okay international student come here they have to just study here, no work'. But we are human yes. We are human and human have some cost of living, living in a developed country. ... I had a friend here ... she was a student here living with her husband, her husband just working sometimes here but they got, they have a new baby. Very tough situation, they have a tough situation for living. They don't they didn't predict to have a baby they just predict to higher study and, last semester lady just resigned from education. [...]. They couldn't continue to education. And it's finish for them.

The lack of government support for temporary migrants, especially during times of medical emergency or greater need such as pregnancy, placed acute stress on individuals and families and heightened their feelings of not-belonging due to lack of social rights. In some instances service providers would step in to bridge the gap, helping temporary migrants who may not be part of their remit with bits of advice, but this did not extend to medical care. One local government Regional Skilled Migration Coordinator expressed frustration at not being able to assist those who may be most disadvantaged due to their lack of social rights.

Such regulatory constraints of service provision to temporary migrants are not limited to regional residents but apply regardless of location. They undermine however what some regional stakeholders described as the exercise of "building the trust with those people in [the] community so that they can, they know who they can come to, or that we are going to be here to help support them". These legal constraints to civic belonging hence play also out locally. Furthermore, they stand in contrast to the broader objective of attracting long-term residents, which underpin regional skilled migration policies. A Regional Skilled Migration Coordinator, whose role it was to assist employers in the recruitment of skilled migrants, characterised temporary visas as a 'try before you buy' option and encouraged employers to sponsor their workers on temporary visas for a PR to ensure their retention in the business. Their recommendation was that

If you value that person if that person is important to your business, offer them permanent residency. It's the right thing to do, helps you retain the skill in the region.

This highlights how local stakeholders often shared the frustrations that temporary migrants faced in light of restrictions on social entitlements, albeit based on their interest in retaining new arrivals. This frustration also highlights the tension between the opposing government agendas of promoting the regional settlement and employment of migrants in regional locations through employer-sponsored visas whilst constraining the same migrants' sense of civic belonging by restricting their social rights. Addressing this tension in the policy domain would benefit not only individual migrants and their families but also employers and regional communities.

Conclusion: Conditional Belongings and Contradictory Government Agendas

This paper has analysed the sources and constraints of temporary migrants' complex feelings of belonging in the context of regional communities, drawing on interviews with different temporary visa holders (skilled temporary visas, international students, Graduate Skilled and working holiday visa) who reside in regional Australia. The prevalent sources of belonging for the research participants were place-based interpersonal relations with other residents, whether Australian-born or other migrants, and participation in cultural practices such as attendance of religious services and related social functions. Participants who expressed a lacking or limited sense of belonging referred equally to the realm of social relations and either the lack of opportunity for social interactions with local residents or language barriers. One source of non-belonging that cut across feelings of social and cultural belonging was the temporary migrant status and thus the legal position of temporary visa holders, in particular their lacking access to employment or health service provisions. The formal constraints on civic belonging materialised locally for example in interactions between temporary migrants and service providers.

To those research participants, who dealt with other residents through their paid work such as Serge, the Graduate Skilled visa holder from Zimbabwe, and Sameer, the former international student from India, the small size of regional towns afforded them better opportunities to become known and recognized by locals than a bigger city. They explicitly acknowledged the benefits of regional towns compared to cities. Furthermore, local government and local employers emerged as keen to attract temporary migrants as workers and local councils in 3 of the 6 regional sites had dedicated personnel who assisted the settlement of temporary skilled migrants. These stakeholders provided their assistance in the broader context of lacking federal government- support to temporary visa holders. The tension between different government agendas, of attracting temporary migrants to settle and remain in regional towns that need their labour, whilst limiting their social rights, emerged particularly clearly in relation to temporary skilled visa holders who were often hired with the promise to be sponsored for permanent residency in the future.

For many of these migrants the arrival in a regional community was hence the potential beginning of a long-term residency, with the downside of limited rights and an uncertain future. At one end, migrants' feelings of belonging were thus simultaneously strengthened by place-based interpersonal relations with local stakeholders and residents, which can partly be described in terms of affective citizenship, whilst being diminished by their limited social rights. At the other end of cases, feelings of belonging were already tenuous because of limited social interactions and further weakened because of limited social rights. The legal status of temporary migrants thus counteracted any feelings of belonging emerging from the positive effects of place-based interpersonal relations.

A sense of cultural belonging was clearly fostered by spaces for interaction and shared experiences, which confirms previous research on spaces

and enablers of conviviality (Wise 2005; Wise and Velayutham 2014) . This relates to both spaces that meet the social, cultural and religious needs of newly arrived communities, such as Muslim prayer rooms, and spaces that allow for interaction and engagement between new arrivals and other residents such as workplaces, schools, sporting facilities, shops or a welcoming church. Yet these spaces of conviviality do not make up for limited civic belonging based on restricted access to public healthcare or other services. This limitation is further exacerbated in cases where cultural and social belonging are already fragmented because of lacking English skills or limited opportunities for social interaction. The temporary migrant participants in our research were acutely aware of the restrictions on their formal belonging based on government policies, primarily related to social rights such as access to services and other welfare entitlements. There was a sense of inequity amongst these - tax-paying - temporary migrants, many of whom planned to go on to become permanent residents. This perception was shared to some extent by local stakeholders and employers who were overall keen to ensure regional growth and retain skilled workers respectively.

In conclusion, our findings suggest that legal restrictions to civic belonging counteract any generation of affective citizenship at the local level. While the former are created trans-locally, they also play out at a local level, as in the interactions between the unemployed spouse of a temporary skilled visa holder who is denied support from a regional employment service staff, because their visa status makes them ineligible for such support. Some employers and service providers demonstrated a civic responsibility towards temporary migrants in the absence of formal social rights by stepping in to fill the gap by assisting with settlement-related advice and support. This was partly in response to the recognition that many temporary migrants in regional communities harboured long-term settlement aspirations and, in the case of some employers, the hope that workers might stay if they felt a greater sense of belonging. The tension between feeling overall welcomed yet only conditionally belonging that emerged from the temporary migrants' accounts, was thus mirrored in the accounts of people who related to them at a professional level, highlighting the limitations of affective citizenship.

Our findings suggest that regulatory influences on temporary migrants' sense of belonging diminish the potential positive effect of social and cultural sources of feelings of belonging. Overall, the example of regionally settling temporary migrants highlights firstly, the contradictions between current policies in relation to temporary migrants at different government levels in Australia, and secondly, the far-reaching negative implications of temporary migrant status beyond the workplace and despite place-based stakeholders' efforts at fostering a feeling of belonging. In a context of population decline in regional Australia and government commitment to regional growth and social cohesion in diverse communities (Galligan et al 2014; Moran and Mallman 2015), temporary migration policies require significant adjustments to be compatible with the interests and needs of both regional communities and their new members from

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overseas. Increased welfare state entitlements and a secure pathway to PR for temporary migrants in regional locations would contribute to the attraction and retention of migrants as well as increased equity and social justice.

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