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‘We’re Sending You Back’: Temporary Skilled Labour Migration, Social Networks and Local Community

Robyn Mayes

Abstract. *This paper contributes to the emergent literature on the temporal and dynamic constitution of temporary skilled migrant networks, foregrounding under-researched interrelations between migrant and non-migrant networks. It does so through examination of the lived experience of transnational, temporary skilled labour migrants resident in Ravensthorpe in rural Western Australia (WA) who were confronted with the sudden closure of the mining operation where they were employed. As a result they faced imminent forced departure from Australia. Drawing on qualitative data collected in Ravensthorpe three weeks after the closure, this paper foregrounds the role of this shared, profoundly socially-disruptive event in the formation of a temporary, multi-ethnic migrant network and related interactions with a local network. Analysis of these social relations foregrounds the role of catalysing events and external prompts (beyond ethnicity and the migration act) in the formation of temporary migrant networks, along with the importance of local contexts, policy conditions and employer action. The social networks formed in Hopetoun, and associated mobilisation of social capital, confirm the potential and richness of non-migrant networks for shaping the migrant experience, and foreground the ways in which these interrelations in turn can shape the local experience of migration, just as it highlights the capacity of community groups to act as social and political allies for temporary migrants.that would require migrants to depart after a set number of years and instead recommend a pathway to permanent residence based on duration of stay.*

Introduction

Social network theory and analysis has long been a mainstay of a diverse body of migration research. This approach is central, for example, to understanding migration decision-making, choice of destination, and post-migration well-being and access to labour markets (Raghuram et al.2010; Ryan et al 2008). However, the diverse and dynamic nature of migrant networks tends to be insufficiently recognised (Ryan 2011). This is in part the result of an ongoing emphasis on “continuity and stability” in the conceptualisation of social capital (Ryan et al 2008) which in turn elides the “spatial and temporal dynamism” of migrant networks (Ryan 2011,709). Relatedly, as argued by Raghuram et al (2010), most studies foreground the act of migration or shared ethnicity as

the principal driver for the formation of migrant networks. Analyses of the networks thus identified reproduce understandings of migrants as ‘other’, and as having little in common with non-migrants (Raghuram et al 2010). Consequently, attention to interactions—as opposed to comparisons—between migrant and non-migrant networks is limited, particularly in terms of how migrants create new ties in destination communities or establish connections to existing local networks (Ryan et al 2008). This matters, as Raghuram et al (2010) suggest, in that migrant experiences and lives are profoundly affected by non-migrant networks, just as differentiations between migrant and non-migrant experiences are contextual rather than absolute.

This paper seeks to address these lacunae in the crucial contemporary context of the rise of transnational temporary skilled labour migration as the lynchpin of migration policy in a growing number of OECD countries. This highly diverse and often cyclical temporary labour migration (Yeoh et al 2002; Castles 2016) is a significantly larger undertaking than permanent labour migration (OECD 2014). Such migrations point to a pressing need to attend to the formation and functions of transient migrant networks, potentially in relation to multiple, temporary host destinations. Specifically, this paper seeks to address the question: in what ways do temporary sponsored labour migrants form networks and interact with local communities? It does so through examination of the lived experience and actions of sponsored, transnational, temporary skilled labour migrants resident in Ravensthorpe in rural Western Australia (WA) who faced imminent forced departure from Australia as the result of the sudden closure of the mining operation where they were employed.

The body of research on temporary skilled labour migration in Australia is relatively small. To date, scholars have examined, among others, the motivations of participating employers and employees (Khoo et al 2007), the labour market outcomes for international students transitioning to skilled category visas (Hawthorne 2010), and the role of recruitment agents (Xiang 2001) and unions (Oke 2012). In terms of qualitative studies seeking to understand the lived experiences of transnational temporary skilled migration, Boese and Macdonald (2016) demonstrate the way in which the restriction of social entitlements for temporary labour migrants is falsely justified as a result of migrant ‘choice’. Breen (2016) has highlighted the emotional costs attending this form of migration along with systemic causes of ‘individual’ migration ‘failure’. There is, however, very little work examining social networks in relation to temporary skilled migrants in Australia. As one exception, Velayutham’s (2013) study of Indian temporary skilled migrants foregrounds exploitation wherein co-ethnic, transnational social networks facilitated access to otherwise unavailable employment opportunities in Australia while at the same time exposing workers to significant exploitation by fellow Indian migrants. In line with much of the broader literature on migrant social networks, Velayutham’s (2013) study concentrates on co-ethnic networks central to the act of migration and in relative isolation from non-migrant networks.

Drawing on qualitative data collected in Ravensthorpe three weeks af-

ter the mine closure, this paper foregrounds the role of a shared, profoundly socially-disruptive event in the formation of a transient, multi-ethnic migrant network and related interactions with a local community network. The paper commences with a brief discussion of temporary skilled labour migration in Australia followed by an explication of understandings of social networks and social capital informing the analysis. Next, the case study site and method are described. The ensuing empirical section presents the formation of the '457 visa-holder network' and interactions with a key local network. In concluding, the paper explores implications of this case in relation to the literature on migrant social networks and the experience(s) of temporary migration.

Temporary Skilled Labour Migration Policy and Mining in Australia

The OECD shift toward temporary labour migration is exemplified in Australian policy since the 1990s (Migration Council nd; DIBP 2014). Central to this program is the (renewable) Temporary Work (Skilled) visa (subclass 457), more commonly known as the '457 visa', under which employer-sponsored, skilled labour migrants enter Australia for fixed periods with an upper limit of four years. The program privileges the highly-skilled type of migration popular with receiving countries (Castles 2002), is demand-driven and uncapped, and stipulates pay levels and workplace rights identical to those of Australian workers (DIBPb nd). The 457 visa allows employers to bring skilled workers to Australia in occupations where there is a demonstrated national skill shortage and is promoted by the state as enabling economic productivity by providing businesses with the flexibility to "respond quickly to economic and business challenges" (Azarias et al 2014: 6). After acquiring government certification as 'approved' sponsors, employers nominate a position/occupation and, finally, name a specific person to fill that position. Visa holders can be accompanied by eligible dependents and can travel freely to and from Australia while the visa is valid.

The central condition of visa validity is ongoing employment with the sponsoring employer; if a visa-holder's sponsored employment ceases s/he has a prescribed number of days to find a similar position with another sponsor. At the time of the research reported here, 457 visa-holders had twenty-eight days to do so.¹ Failure to find another sponsor and similar position leads to exit from the country. Reported high levels of employer satisfaction with the program and intentions to continue using it (DIBPb nd) suggest that the program is increasingly a "part of workforce planning" (Migration Council nd, 18). Many temporary labour migrants in Australia are recruited while living abroad and often through migration agents (Oke 2012). Between 2010 and 2015 roughly half the number of 457-visa holders converted to a permanent or provisional visa (A National Disgrace, 2016: 12).² While substantial num-

¹ This changed in 2013 to 90 days (Migration Council of Australia nd). Note also that at the time of this research the visa was known as the 'Subclass 457 Business (Long Stay) visa': as of November 24, 2012 it became known as the "Temporary Work (Skilled) (subclass 457) visa" (see <http://www.immi.gov.au/skilled/skilled-workers/sbs/> accessed March 16, 2013). This visa program has been subject to numerous reviews and revisions including substantial restructuring in 2017.

bers of 457 visa holders clearly decide, and are able, to take up permanent residence in Australia there are a number of barriers to this, including age restrictions (Azarias et al 2014).

According to a peak industry advocacy body—the Minerals Council of Australia—the 457 visa program is critical to the sector’s global competitiveness. Mining industry transnational labour migration is part of a broader regime of mining labour mobility including intra-company transfer, and the use of fly-in, fly-out labour.³ Survey data collected in 2012 suggests that mining industry 457 visa-holders are highly paid, tend to work for multi-national organisations (63% of respondents), are not unionised (98.5%) and, also in line with the broader 457 visa-holder population, are predominantly male (72%) (Mayes 2015).

Social Networks: Embedded Relationships and Resources

Following Granovetter (1973), as is the norm in much of the migration literature, networks tend to be understood as constructed around and through strong and weak ‘ties.’ Strong interpersonal ties are associated with a combination of longer-term involvement marked by intense emotions, intimacy, and reciprocity of services “within socially bounded groups with strongly overlapping network membership” (Raghuram et al. 2010, 625). On the other hand, ‘weak’ ties, describe relations with other social groups, and through which larger numbers of people are reachable. Weak ties are “indispensable to individuals’ opportunities and their integration into communities” (Granovetter 1973, 1378). In particular, strong and weak ties are connected to two principal forms of social capital, namely bonding and bridging capital. ‘Bonding capital’ is understood to arise from engagements that bring together people with similarities in significant areas such as class, gender, ethnicity (Raghuram et al 2010; Vertovec 2003), whereas ‘bridging capital’ involves capacities for bringing people together who are different from each other in significant ways (Raghuram et al. 2010).

As Ryan (2011), following Putnam, reminds us, relationships between individuals may encompass both bonding (for example, through the sudden loss of employment experienced by 457 visa holders in Hopeoun) and bridging dimensions (for example, across ethnicity as occurs in this cohort of 457 visa holders). Moreover, as this suggests, variation and complexity characterise links between these two forms (Ryan et al 2008). As is noted in the broader critique of the social network approach in migration studies, attending to network structure does not shed light on either the (fundamentally) qualitative nature or social content of its constituent relationships (Vertovec 2003; Krippner

² This is not to suggest that skilled labour migrants are necessarily seeking permanent residency in Australia. However, it is also the case that the potential for moving to permanent residence can inform migrant decisions to pursue a 457 visa (Boese and Macdonald 2016). As Robertson (2014) reminds us, this shift is not simply from linear settlement migration to circular and repeat patterns: both temporary and circular migration have a long history in Australia.

³ Fly-in-fly-out work regimes involve a cycle in which workers travel to mine sites where they work for a set number of days and live on site and then return home for a set number of days.

2001). There is further a problematic tendency to take “networks for granted” while failing to attend to both the opportunities and difficulties encountered by migrants seeking to join or form new post-migration networks (Ryan 2011, 720). As Ryan (2011, 721) argues “rather than attempting to differentiate bonding and bridging on the basis of how similar or dissimilar people are, it is more useful to think about the nature of the relationship and the resources available”. Relatedly, networks encompass “a vast number of exchanges that permit communities to ‘make sense’ of their shared existence” (Nguyen Long 2015, 2722). Importantly, migrant social capital and networks are “deeply embedded in the inequalities and vulnerabilities engendered by restrictive migration regimes” (Hoang 2016, 702), just as interpersonal networks are central to “social action in economic contexts” (Krippner and Alvarez 2007, 219).

Indefinite suspension of Ravensthorpe Nickel Operation

In January 2009, at an onsite ‘safety meeting,’ BHP Billiton announced the indefinite suspension of its Ravensthorpe Nickel Operation (RNO). The announcement came eight months after the official opening of the mine and despite repeated forecasts of a twenty-five year life-span. According to the BHP Billiton press release, this decision was largely due to “diminished prospects for profitability” as a result of falling global nickel prices. The closure of the AU\$2.2 billion dollar mine site involved the dismissal of 1800 workers including Australian citizens who had relocated with their families to nearby Hopetoun and transnational workers residing in Hopetoun on 457 visas. The closure was announced without warning and workers were immediately sent home and told to await further directions. This unexpected closure caused profound social and economic disruption for mine workers and families and also for the wider local (non-mining) community as dismissed workers sought to come to terms with this radical change in personal circumstances including not only the need to find new employment but also, for many, new homes (McDonald et al 2012; Pini et al 2010).

Method

The empirical data consists principally of an in-depth, semi-structured, two-hour group interview undertaken with seven transnational workers employed by RNO living in Hopetoun on 457 visas and two spouses. Recruitment of migrant participants in rural communities can be a challenge not least as a result of the often small numbers of potential interviewees (Schmalzbauer, 2009). Access to this network of temporary labour migrants was unplanned and the result of the efforts of local community members and migrants on 457 visas. I was introduced to two 457 visa-holders at a Hopetoun Progress Association (HPA) meeting, who then organised the group interview undertaken the next morning. This introduction was arranged by local community residents with whom I had developed a trust relationship through previous ethnographic research in Hopetoun.⁴ The interview was held in the Hopetoun Transaction Centre conference room, a community space managed by the HPA. This brokering of the group

interview enacts bridging capital made available through the multiple relations underpinning both the HPA and migrant networks, and their intersections.

Participants came to the interview as a clearly defined, self-selected group. During the interview each individual actively participated in the co-construction of a shared narrative of the mine closure and subsequent events, experiences and collective action. There were many affirmations of their standing as a group, along with references to other members unable to participate that day. As such, this interview constitutes a rare opportunity to examine “how migrant networks are actually formed” (Ryan 2011,707). Indeed it can be argued that the interview, in providing a space for the performance of a shared narrative, was a formative part of the group’s development.

All interviewed transnational workers were employed directly by BHP Billiton in various engineering roles. While official figures are not available regarding the number of transnational workers employed at RNO, several interviewees expressed the opinion that there were forty such employees, some of whom were living elsewhere in Australia on fly-in, fly-out rosters as opposed to residing full-time in Hopetoun. The majority of the interviewees had relocated from home towns in the Philippines, while others hailed from Japan, Mexico and South Africa. Four of those from the Philippines had worked on another Australian nickel mine. That site had closed down six months earlier; with the assistance of management staff at the previous mine site, these four temporary migrants were able to find a place at RNO and thus, in that instance, avoid forced repatriation. Interviewees had worked at RNO for between one and two months prior to the sudden closure. Reflective of the masculine culture of mining in Australia particularly in relation to engineering roles, all workers with one exception were male. Three workers had migrated with families.

Qualitative methods are widely used to elicit narrative data on social networks which is then subject to content and thematic analysis (Edwards 2010; Nguyen Long 2015). In the case at hand, through iterative close reading of the transcript data (Dunn and Neuman 2016), core shared themes around the effect of the mine closure and ensuing formation of this migrant network and social relations with local community members were identified. Given the group’s emphasis on a shared narrative, I do not individualise quotations. The following analysis is organised around interrelated, substantive themes to emerge in the interview data: formation of the group, vulnerability and risk, involvements with and of local community members, and temporal dimensions.

To a lesser extent I also draw on fourteen individual, semi-structured interviews conducted in Hopetoun during the same period. Of these interviews, eight were with long-standing pre-mine local residents, and six were with Australian citizens who had relocated to Hopetoun in order to work at the mine and who were also forced to leave once the mine closed. This data is used to provide a multi-perspectival understanding (Taylor et al, 2016) of the local community context and social relations with the 457-visa holders.

⁴ This research encompassed a number of extended visits in 2006 and 2007 to the Shire of Ravensthorpe of which Hopetoun is a part.

'We Should Go as a Group': Development of a 457 Network

During the interview it became clear that the participants had not previously seen themselves as a group. Though four interviewees had previously worked at the same nickel operation in another Australian town before transferring to RNO, their co-presence in Hopetoun “happened by accident.” Another two interviewees who had known each other previously also met up in Hopetoun without knowledge of each other’s presence. This lack of preceding relationships makes sense given that the 457 visa migration is sponsored, and encompasses intra-company transfer, which reduces the need for migrant social networks commonly associated with finding employment and accommodation. In contrast to the networks privileged in the extant literature, the social relations underpinning this multi-ethnic group of 457 visa-holders were not a straightforward determinant or outcome of the act of migration, nor was the group’s purpose related to integration into the host community. Rather, the formation of the group was deeply connected to the shared, time-pressured experience of the closure of the mine and the prospect of imminent repatriation.

The decision to take action as a group, to see and present themselves as such, followed individual meetings with a representative from the one of the psychological and financial counselling services brought to Hopetoun by BHP Billiton and the WA government to help workers adjust to the closure. Thus, an industry and state driven mechanism designed to individualise workers was pivotal in the development of a collective voice and action. As explained in the group interview:

[the Counsellor] said: ‘you should stand together as a community and be one voice.’ It was first originally the 457 getting together and then the community. We got together. We held a meeting [not just for 457 visa holders] and there was like 80 people or more.

The formation of this group was facilitated by the close geography of mining housing located in one small area. Interviewees were able to meet regularly and informally, and to ‘see’ how others were managing in the aftermath of closure. A sense of commitment to the group, and of associated empowerment, was evident throughout the group interview. For example, when a local HPA member interrupted the interview to announce an opportunity to meet with a government representative, the immediate response from participants was: “we should go as a group” and “let’s not go as individuals.” Participants also expressed the view that “the company will [only] deal with us each on an individual basis because it’s weaker that way.” At the same time (as explored below), the convening and attending of public meetings enabled the group to transcend the ‘social quarantining’ enacted in the spatial separation of housing, a traditional impediment to interrelations with host communities (Horgan and Liinamaa 2016).

Vulnerability and Risk

The closure was keenly felt by the 457 migrants as a consequence of the sub-

stantial, interlinked financial and emotional commitments entailed in taking up this transnational employment. Experiences of “sacrifice” and “risk” were described throughout the interview. The group saw the move to Hopetoun as “a long-term commitment” that they and also BHP Billiton had made not only to each other but also to the local community. They explained that: “we’ve all sold our homes, our cars, physically wrapped up our lives in order to come here.” Their interpersonal relationships were characterised by shared intense emotions and vulnerabilities resulting from the mine closure, and qualitatively shaped by their experiences of engaging with BHP Billiton post closure. In the succinct summary offered by one group member: BHP Billiton “basically gave us a redundancy package thing and said here it is, do you understand this? And thank you for working for us. That’s it.” Overall, the company was experienced as distant and unreachable: “we had a general HR telephone number and email address but we don’t have a contact person.” Interviewees commented that “now we are being sent home, I feel like we’re invisible (to BHP Billiton).” Though a number of unions advocate for temporary migrant workers (Oke 2012), RNO was a non-union site and such support was entirely absent in this case, as it is in general for 457 visa-holders as noted above.

While company support and engagement with 457 visa holders post closure was experienced as highly inadequate, government agencies and representatives were also of little assistance. This was particularly so regarding the misinformation given to 457 visa holders. For example, interviewees recounted how

we heard that we were going to get the 90 day extension for our visa but then it was for a tourist visa, not for the 457 visa. But then we said what if we want to apply for the tourist visa? But we still couldn’t apply for the tourist visa because we need to show we have been travelling around the country but we’ve been working.

As Velayutham (2013) and Breen (2016) have shown, in different circumstances, a lack of information is detrimental to temporary migrant experiences and outcomes. Membership of the 457 network in this context was a source of bonding capital in the forms of much needed reciprocal emotional and practical support, and information via what was referred to as a “457 grapevine.”

Involvements of and with Local Community Networks

The HPA organised public meetings also at the suggestion of a visiting counselor who expressed the opinion that “the business people have an avenue through the Chamber of Commerce and their meetings to talk about what’s happening. But the public haven’t and they need an outlet” (HPA member). Accordingly:

we called a meeting through the Progress Association and we had a lot of people there. We had no plan of what to say to them; we just let them talk and we took issues from that to try and find answers.

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As a result, as another interviewee put it: “We became involved with the 457 visa people. And tried to find answers.” The local reception of 457 visa holder perspectives and needs was also shaped by the manner of the mine closure. While the 457 visa program positions migrants as flexible and mobile workers, it is “human beings who arrive” (Dauvergne and Marsden 2014, 225), and certainly there was a strong sense of local empathy for 457 visa-holders as ‘ordinary people.’ A retrenched Australian worker who had relocated to Hopetoun and who was about to move his whole family again, commented: “They [457 visa holders] were at this meeting that I went to, and they were the people that needed help first up. [...] These guys have been bought, dumped, and told get out, and quickly.” Others spoke of how ‘scary’ the situation must be for 457 visa holders:

I don't even want to talk to them about it. It's too upsetting. [...] I feel really bad for them. 'Cause some of them just got here ... you feel really bad for them. What are they going to do?

This local empathy with the migrant workers' intense and socially-disruptive experiences of the mine closure occurred alongside (misinformed) local concerns that 457 visa-holders might take non-mining jobs needed by redundant local mine-workers. A member of the local council noted that “people are already saying: ‘well I hope you give a local the job, don't tell me you're going to give it to these 457 visa people, they can go back to their own country, you know’.” The public meetings convened by both the HPA and transnational migrants enabled a shared and inclusive understanding of the experience of the mine closure alongside such concerns. These meetings point to the active and directed formation of intersecting migrant and community networks and proactive social relations. Through the relations established with local community members involved in the HPA, the 457 group were able to contact potentially influential individuals within and beyond the local community. This helped them achieve a primary goal, as they expressed it, of getting the attention of “higher ups about an extension” of the twenty-eight day period in which to find similar employment. For example, it was explained in the interview that through their relationships with the HPA the group was able to tell local government representatives about their situation and to meet with the Premier of WA when he visited Hopetoun. The concerns articulated by Australian workers in Hopetoun, and the actions of the HPA, counter the substantial body of literature delineating “a general indifference of local communities to migrant workers” (Horgan and Liinamaa 2016, 5). This case also demonstrates that local bodies besides church groups and social justice organisations enable social relations with migrant workers as a group. Further, through the HPA social relations with the 457 visa-holder group—grounded in a local culture of ‘helping others’—the local community is part of a shared politics which challenges state policy, and BHPB's treatment of 457-visa holders, as unfair.

The Lived Experience of ‘Temporariness’

The 457 group were at the same time socially committed to the local community. Interviewees talked of their participation in company-organised tours of Hopetoun and how this had given them a sense of Hopetoun as “this nice community” to which they could contribute by helping “to make this town grow.” Following the mine closure and their positive experiences of local empathy and support, the 457 interviewees felt even more strongly that they wanted to be part of the Hopetoun community. As one member of the group expressed it: “the more you see it [the community working together and wanting to help 457s] and you see how people are trying to get together to go through it ... well ... I would like, I really like to be part of this.” This social commitment is a marker of a desire to become socially embedded in the host community (Tsuda 1999) not just economically embedded as part of the local mine workforce. Emotions around leaving are shaped not only by economic pressures. Importantly, this increase in social embeddedness is linked to local actions in turn informed by state policy and employer actions.

It is not unusual for migrants to be “subjected to forms of control that set up temporal conditions” (Cwerner 2001, 10). Such conditions, as Robertson (2014, 1917) has deftly shown, constitute a “disciplinary practice of the state” and are complexly interlinked with ‘being temporary.’ In the case of 457 visa-holders in Hopetoun the rigid invocation of the twenty-eight day limitation enacted a state assertion of control over their presence in the country, repositioning them as individual, flexible and mobile workers no longer of value. What is less commented upon is the disciplining role of sponsoring employers. In the consensual opinion of the interviewed 457 visa-holders, “basically what BHP’s been trying to do is in a roundabout way tell us that they want their responsibility for us to be ended as soon as possible.” The means to end this responsibility was the repatriation of the 457 visa-holders. The group spoke of feeling hounded by repeated communications from removalists acting for BHP Billiton asking “when do you want to pack your bags.”

Not surprisingly the group’s main ambition, as indicated above, was “to be given a chance,” in the form of more time to find another Australian sponsor. The seemingly arbitrary twenty-eight days was not long enough, especially given that there would also be a lot of Australians looking for work. In the face of this experience of the temporal conditions of the 457 visa as authoritarian and beyond their command (Cwerner 2001) what this group was striving for, in effect, was an extension of their temporary status (see also Robertson 2014) and thus a small degree of control. The 457 migrant network and social relations with the host community enabled ‘tactical action,’ in de Certeau’s (2005) terms, as the informal means available to disempowered others and involving working within the imposed rules. It is unlikely that any of the 457 visas-holders in Hopetoun were successful in finding a way to remain (employed) in Australia. Attempts to extend the twenty-eight day rule were certainly unsuccessful at this time. Though the group was able to gain, briefly, the attention of ‘higher ups’ this was ultimately of little value in preventing or postponing repatriation. Nevertheless, the 457 network and social relations established with the local

community clearly played an important role in ameliorating the social effects of the mine closure on involved migrants in such a way that this group experienced an intensified sense of / desire for social embeddedness in the host community.

Conclusion

This paper contributes to a richer understanding of the interactions between temporary labour migrants and host communities, arguing that such interactions are complex, nuanced and contingent upon the interactions of local contexts, policy conditions and employer actions including treatment of workers. This case demonstrates the ways in which temporary migrants both instigate and use networks as a means to a collective voice and tactical action including through engagement with host communities. At the same time, the temporal conditions attached to the 457 visa support the rapid development of (intense) social relations. This study further contributes to the literature on migrant social networks by elucidating the role of catalysing events—beyond the migration act—in the development of transient migrant networks and opportunities for engagement with local groups. Importantly, as this case indicates, for the identification of these short-term networks to be achieved through more than serendipity, methodological approaches that attempt to foreground interrelations between host communities and migrant workers, for example through attention to similarities and shared experiences, are much needed.

The social networks formed in Hopetoun, and associated mobilisation of social capital, confirm the potential and richness of non-migrant networks for shaping the migrant experience, as argued by Raghuram et al (2010). In addition, in this particular case, the interrelations between migrant and host community groups can be seen to shape non-migrant perceptions and experiences of migrant groups, and point to the capacity of (non-politicised) community groups to act as social and political allies for temporary migrants. The social relations to emerge in response to the mine closure highlight a non-migrant willingness to align with 'foreign' workers against both the state and transnational capital. Concurrently, the supportive and inclusive nature of the non-migrant group's relations with the 457-visa holders had a profound effect on migrant perceptions of and attachment to the host community. This study not only traces the temporal and spatial dynamism of temporary migrant networks and relationships with non-migrant networks, it also points to the ways these may shape everyday experiences and opportunities for social and political solidarities. Scholarly attention to the everyday, transient interactions of migrant and non-migrant networks and social relations is clearly crucial to a full understanding of temporary labour migration.

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