

Migrant integration in rural New Immigration Destinations: an institutional and triangular perspective

Introduction

In mid-2016, viewers of the Australian public broadcaster's regular 'Australian Story' documentary series learnt about the apparently atypical case of Mingoola, a small (2011 popn. c. 150) and somewhat isolated village, and the former Rwandan refugee families who eventually sought its sanctuary. Central to the episode's narrative was the resolution of two strongly contrasting dilemmas. On one side lay Mingoola's battle for survival as a social collective and an economic service centre following notification of the impending closure of its primary school due to low and declining enrolment – perhaps one of the direst threats to the future viability of any rural community (see Woods, 2005; Corbett, 2007). On the other side, was a number of former Rwandan refugee families resettled within Australia's major cities following the 1994 genocide. Uprooted from the predominantly rural villages in which they practiced small-scale farming, and alienated by their new suburban surrounds, evidence of despondency and depression had emerged amongst this group.

In a classic instance of the apparent power of locally-led initiative, the Mingoola Progress Association sought to recruit different migrant groups to the region in an attempt to buttress its flagging demographic, economic and social fortunes. However, the Progress Association's overtures to various metropolitan-domiciled migrant settlement organisations were rebuffed, largely due to these bodies' ostensible desires to maintain refugees within close proximity to the many and diverse services they require. News of the Rwandan refugees' plight made its way to Emmanuel Musoni, a Sydney-based refugee advocate. Seeking to relocate at least some of his clients to rural areas where they could re-establish their connections with a rural landscape and their love of gardening and farming more broadly, Musoni was eventually introduced to Julia Harpham, of the Mingoola Progress Association, and Mingoola itself. By late 2016, and following the intervention of relevant Federal Government ministers, three families had relocated to Mingoola from the outer suburbs of Wollongong, NSW, and Adelaide, South Australia, boosting the local population by 29 (an approximate 16 per cent increase). In an overwhelmingly white Australian-born community, with less than ten per cent of the surrounding regional population born outside of the country (but that portion originating overwhelmingly from the UK, Europe or New Zealand) the influx of Rwandan migrants constituted a sudden and dramatic increase of birthplace and ethnic diversity (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012).

Further, twenty three of the new residents were children, thereby immediately securing the short-term viability of the local primary school. The adults found local employment harvesting seasonal vegetables, and established gardens around the formerly abandoned farm houses that the established residents had renovated for them. Reportedly, both groups mutually regard this ‘social experiment’ (Hassall, 2016) as a success. The new settlers are full of praise for the Mingoola community. According to one, “The people of Mingoola are good people, friendly people, lovely people. I don’t know how to say about the things that they do for us; I can’t describe that” (Hassall, 2016). For their part, the older, established Mingoola residents are greatly relieved at having the school ‘saved’ from closure, for the newfound and ready access to farm labour, and for the revitalisation of important and once-vibrant local institutions such as the church.

This case exemplifies how migration today therefore presents new complexities in often unlikely places, including new geographies of movement to New Immigration Destinations (NIDs) with new connections between space and place (Lichter and Johnson 2009; Massey 2010; Marrow 2011, 2013). NIDs have been documented across Europe, including Ireland, Scotland, Greece, Italy, Sweden, Portugal and Spain with migrants arriving from Central and Eastern Europe as well as from Southern America, Asia, Africa and the Middle East (see for instance Kasimis et al. 2003; Jentsch and Simard 2009; Collantes et al. 2014; Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014; Crowley et al. 2015). Studies show how migrants¹ are responding to economic opportunities arising from structural transformations in the labour market that created significant demand for a cheap, flexible and unskilled labour force. Employment opportunities typically lie in the agri-food, construction, light engineering, service and healthcare sectors. Similar transitions are also evident in the USA, a country with a history of immigration but that has also experienced recent accelerated immigration beyond traditional gateways into many rural areas and small towns, transforming communities along the way (see for instance Kandel and Cromartie 2004; Jensen 2006; Lichter and Johnson 2006; Broadway 2007; McConnell and Miraftab 2009; Lichter and Brown 2011; Marrow 2011; Lichter 2012; Crowley et al. 2015). Other non-metropolitan Australian localities, often with declining populations, have also actively sought to attract refugees by highlighting local employment opportunities (Hugo 2008; Krivokapic-Skoko and Collins 2016).

¹ We recognise that the label ‘migrant’ is used in everyday life to include an array of different individuals with different legal status and with different rights and entitlements. For the purposes of this article we use the label refer to voluntary and forced migrants, thus including refugees and asylum seekers, but noting that this is obscuring complexities of identity and legality.

Drawing upon these literatures in this paper we investigate the role of state and civil society institutions in settling immigrants in emergent rural NIDs within Northern Ireland and the South-East of South Australia. We have selected locations in these places as the former provides an illustrative case of a rural NID in receipt of migrant labour and the latter of refugees. In particular, we probe how ‘the system’ is coping and the extent to which migrants interact with host communities in their specific rural space/times (Smith and Favell 2006; Marrow 2011; McAreavey 2012; Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014; Winders 2014). We begin by identifying key features of New Immigration Destinations. Taking inspiration from Halfacree’s (2006) ‘three-fold architecture of rural space’ we then explore the distinctive features of rurality that influence the emergence of non-metropolitan NIDs and the different pathways to migrant settlement that different jurisdictions and local places take. We analyse the experiences of migrants as they find jobs and become settled in a new place. Like Martin (2010), who explored migrant incorporation in an urban context, we find that the strategies employed by civil society organisations might alleviate short term challenges, but for various reasons are often unable to provide structural remedies. We argue that this is a defining characteristic of NIDs. We further argue that such is the hegemony of the capitalist system that it creates a mis-match between conceptualisations of social space and everyday lived realities which in turn causes significant challenges for host societies and the individuals interacting within these social spaces. These matters warrant the attention of researchers and policymakers.

Understanding migration to New Immigration Destinations

In 2007 Michael Woods posed the hypothetical notion of the ‘global countryside’, partly as a corrective to the pervasive view within much academic writing that the processes and forces underlying globalisation (e.g. capital flows, corporate reorganization, migration processes) were synonymous with *urban* development (e.g. ‘global cities’). Woods’ (2007) intervention sought to highlight – to rural geographers as much as anyone – that ‘the rural’ was just as centrally and causally implicated in the globalising tendencies reshaping regional and local economies and societies as major metropolitan ‘command posts’. In other words, contrary to conventional binary *gemieinschaft/gesellschaft* conceptions of the countryside as the repository of residual society, Woods (2007) argued that rural spaces and places are active sites in the reproduction of globalisation, generating, receiving and capturing flows of capital, people and ideas consistent with their competitive advantage. Unsurprisingly, international migration features prominently amongst Woods’ (2007) list of defining characteristics of ‘the

global countryside', with those places that act as suppliers and employers of international migrant labour, and as sites for international amenity-oriented migration, seen as emblematic of the phenomenon. True to some of the key themes of the NID literature, though, Woods (2007) foresaw that the social and economically divisive processes seemingly inherent to globalisation, subtly implied above, would also act as key markers of this hypothetical space. The increasing emergence of NIDs in different sites around the world provides key support for Woods' (2007) hypothesis.

Consistent with the increasing rapidity, intensity and spatial selectivity of capital and labour flows around the globe, NIDs are defined as places which experience sudden and substantial influxes of predominantly voluntary international labour into rural nodes of primary (e.g. agriculture, forestry) and secondary (e.g. meat processing, construction) production (Lichter and Johnson, 2009; Lichter, 2012; Winder, 2014). They offer a natural laboratory for better conceptualising migration and its impact on inter-group relationships (Waters and Jiménez 2005; Lichter 2012, p.3).

The early NID literature lacked definitional precision on the appropriate size or scale for a NID, suggesting that cities or even entire sub-national states could form the basic spatial unit of analysis. However, more recent research has honed in on smaller scale places (e.g. regions, local government areas and towns) in which immigrants are concentrated. Characteristically, NIDs have, at best, a limited history of immigration and, therefore, few established institutional or infrastructural supports for the generally large numbers of settlers who arrive, often from minority ethnic and language communities. While much NID research has focused on large and rapid influxes of labour (permanent and temporary), the recent rise of asylum seeker and refugee movements from the Middle East (e.g. Syria) and Africa (e.g. Rwanda, Libya) into various parts of Europe are also worthy of inclusion in the NID definitional criteria. In such a context, new settlers and their families can experience profound social and financial exclusion, greatly hindering their incorporation within the host community. Tensions (e.g. overt and covert racism) between the 'receiving' society and the new arrivals may also be present, especially in the early stages of settlement (Winders, 2014).

Present-day migration patterns are distinctive from earlier waves because of their internal heterogeneity. True to the notion of multifunctional rural landscapes, different migrant groups are also drawn to rural spaces for different reasons. For instance, a small but growing number of Western countries are home to largely involuntary refugee and humanitarian migrants, while others recruit temporary migrants working as voluntary seasonal harvest

labour. Yet other places attract lifestyle and entrepreneur migrants. Not all migrants wish or are permitted to stay permanently: their movements may oscillate between two or more places. Each of these categories bring different legal rights and entitlements.

Correspondingly, individual migrants have different levels of individual agency (Hugo and Morén-Alegret, 2008; Woods 2012; Hedberg and Haandrikman 2014; Torres et al. 2006; Popke 2011; Krivokapic Skoko et al. 2015; Woods 2015).

Previous research indicates the importance of migrants gaining access to key services including health, housing and employment for their integration and wellbeing. However, institutional commitment to successful migration settlement tends to be geographically variable (Popke 2011). Some new destinations actively eschew immigrants through negative attitudes or legal measures such as the creation of anti-immigrant ordinances and legal barriers to employment (Pruitt 2009; O’Neil 2010) or by challenging social and cultural norms (Marrow 2011). Other areas, perhaps acknowledging their labour needs, have provided a relatively warm reception, like Marshalltown, Iowa (Jensen 2006) or Armagh in Northern Ireland (McAreevey 2012). Some migration destinations simply struggle to accommodate the ‘diversity of diversity’ (Vertovec 2006) as they face increased pressures to deliver health, social care and education (Dax and Machold 2015). Reflecting on recent European rural migration research, scholars have recognized the need for a deeper appreciation of NIDs. Woods (2016) has advocated greater exploration of the macro-concepts of agency and structure in order that the geographically varied experience of integration is better understood. In a similar vein, others have urged inquiry into micro, meso and macro structures and the complex and unequal power relations that lie at their intersection as a useful lens to enrich migration studies (Bürkner 2012; McAreevey 2017). Such approaches would encourage the examination of the (relative) agency of migrants, of host community residents, migrant support agencies and host community institutions (e.g. social and sporting clubs, religious organisations), together with the social, political, economic and legal structures associated with migration policies and visa programmes, labour laws, international commodity markets and free trade agreements, along with the social and political power structures that run through all societies.

Towards new conceptual framings for migrant incorporation in rural space and place

What seems to be required, then, is a conceptual framework that contextualises the relationships between structure and agency in the rural migrant settlement process, explicitly

recognising the mediating functions of rural social space and place and recognising the variegated character of economic and land use change. Following Halfacree (2007), we recognise the potential for an emergent ‘counterspace’ which would challenge contradictions inherent in capitalist land use. We argue that conceptualisations of rural change are made substantially more robust and compelling if the (changing) cultures of work, domestic and social life – together with the more or less quotidian practices, or ways of life, and politics of community – are interwoven with the chiefly economic elements and characteristics of regions and communities. Our theorisation of the emergence and ongoing conduct of rural NIDs hones in on the exploration of the enabling and constraining influences of rural space and place on migrant incorporation in rural NIDs, paying particular attention to the ways in which the forces of structure and agency are mediated by ‘the rural’. Our ideas are influenced in part by Halfacree’s ‘rural trialectic’, itself inspired by the scholarship of Henri Lefebvre (1991).

Lefebvre was concerned with intersections in everyday life, of ‘illusion and truth, power and helplessness; the intersection of the sector man controls and the sector he does not control’ (1947, 40). Central to his thinking was the idea that space is deeply felt (perceived) and lived, and not solely the product of contemplation. For Lefebvre, (social) space is thus a (social) product. Three realms of experience thus form his spatial triad:

- 1) The perceived (spatial practices): the more or less coherent relationships between production and reproduction, including the sites and networks in which these relationships occur;
- 2) The conceived (representations of space): the largely ‘expert’ representations typically produced by planners, academics, policymakers, explorers, tending to conform to and in support of society’s dominant mode of production; and
- 3) The lived (spaces of representation): the largely passive space of everyday life, overlaying real space, in which the signs, significations, codes and forms of knowledge necessary to allow communication within a society occur (Harvey, 1991, 218) but can also include the modes of representation and communication of otherwise marginalised groups (Lefebvre, 1991; Merrifield, 1993; Elden, 2004).

Consistent with the philosophical points above, the relations between the elements of the triad are dialectical and, therefore, dynamic and unstable (Merrifield, 1993; Elden, 2004). For

Lefebvre (1991), the dominant representation of space in capitalist societies is that conceived by entrepreneurs, developers, policymakers and planners: this is the abstract space of calculation and technical rationality that, by and large, people live within but only partially perceive. This ontological gap between the conceived, on the one hand, and the lived and perceived, on the other, is arguably a key element in the alienation of the human agent under capitalism (Lefebvre, 1991; Elden, 2004).

There have been few attempts to apply Lefebvre's ideas to rural social science (though see, for example, Halfacree, 1993, 2006; Cloke, 2007). Halfacree's (2006) rural trialectic recognises the fundamental role of capitalism and of institutions, collectivities and individuals in shaping the more-or-less complex corporeality of local rural life via everyday socio-cultural practices and interactions. The three dimensions of his framework are:

1. Rural localities – the perceived realm in which everyday relations and interactions of production, consumption and reproduction are inscribed and in which the relative stability (or instability) of social and economic life is disclosed. This is the arena in which, for instance, farmers and migrant labour come together in the field, migrants interact with local community members and in which new settlers develop their perceptions of attachment and relative security or otherwise in the local environment.
2. Formal representations of the rural – the domain of the conceived, mapped and planned out by 'experts'. Visa programmes that direct migrant labour to particular regions, local government planning by-laws covering migrant housing and legal frameworks covering migrant employment all fit within this dimension.
3. Everyday lives of the rural - this category incorporates the "...diverse and often incoherent images and symbols ... associated with the tumults and passions of space as directly lived" (Halfacree, 2007, 51). This is primarily a local and vernacular space in which, for instance, tensions and protests over new migrant settlement and, by contrast, welcoming ceremonies and celebrations can be seen.

Halfacree's (2006) schema offers numerous valuable insights for this paper. First, its conceptualisation of the social, cultural, demographic and economic forces and processes reshaping rural places as, *a priori*, non-hierarchical helps us avoid overly structuralist or voluntarist perspectives of rural change. Second, it captures the dialectical to- and fro- of these processes within particular localities but also across geographical scales, drawing

attention to the roles of institutions (e.g. migrant support agencies) and individual agents. Third, it emphasises the materiality of rural space and place as an active constituent of local and regional change (e.g. the natural environment, land use patterns, relative location, economic restructuring) and the migrant settlement experience.

Methods

Recognising the dearth of international studies on NIDs (Winders 2014), we follow Mayes and McAreavey (2017) to provide an illustrative account rather than a comparative analysis of emerging features of NIDs. Together these examples represent two main types of migration to rural NIDs with the Northern Ireland case focusing on migrant labour and the Australian example on refugees. The following account relies on primary and secondary data from Northern Ireland and secondary information and data from Australia. The data from Northern Ireland was separately commissioned in 2009 and 2013 to investigate migrants' experiences in everyday life, particularly in the labour market. Northern Ireland is a typical NID, over a very short period of time experiencing a reversal of a long term pattern of immigration. This paper draws from a series of focus groups and interviews that were carried out with migrants and with support agencies in rural areas near the small cities of Newry and Armagh, Northern Ireland (see Fig. 1). Research was conducted mainly with interpreters and access to respondents provided through gatekeepers, typically comprising individuals advocating for migrants in a paid or voluntary capacity (for fuller methodological insights see McAreavey 2017). The South Australian South-East case study (Fig. 2) draws entirely on secondary population and migration data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics quinquennial Census and from recent research reports on migrant settlement into this broad region and the specific localities of Naracoorte and Mount Gambier. As is highlighted below, these towns and their surrounding regions have recently experienced relatively substantial waves of immigration from non-traditional migrant source areas, eliciting a wide variety of responses from local government, informal social institutions and individual citizens.

For the remainder of the paper, we explore the role and performance of the formal and informal institutions of migrant settlement in these emergent NIDs through the lens of Halfacree's rural triad, set out above.

Formal representations of the rural and the creation of NIDs

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

As already noted, numerous late-industrialised nation rural towns and regions have become NIDs over the past two decades as major industries have struggled to recruit sufficient numbers of suitably trained workers during peak times of demand. In all of these places, the international supply of labour – skilled and unskilled – has become essential to the ongoing viability of individual firms and entire industries. In many circumstances, government departments and agencies have worked closely with private capital to develop visa schemes as a means of regularizing migrant flows into rural areas, thus conceiving of select rural spaces and places as suitable for immigrant settlement. International migrants to Australia, Europe and the USA have increasingly been recruited to perform the so-called ‘3D’ work (dirty, dangerous, difficult) (Hugo, 2008) that the domestic labour force is increasingly less willing to do (see for instance Corrado et al. 2016). Partly as a reflection of this fact, Australian migration policy has undergone a philosophical and strategic shift towards the recruitment of more economically-instrumental and temporary migrants (e.g. skilled workers and entrepreneurs) and away from family reunion and related immigration (Breen, 2016). This has brought the country in line with Western European migration policies which seek to contribute to economic growth and development. Some illustrative examples of these structural labour market and migration programme shifts and the associated creation of NIDs include the case of Afghan refugees working as slaughterhouse workers in Young, Australia (Stilwell, 2003) and the sites of fruit and vegetable picking along Australia’s ‘Harvest Trail’ (Hanson and Bell, 2007). International temporary workers have been hired to perform such generally physically onerous and often not well-remunerated work in part because of the offer of an extended stay, as in the case of working holiday makers, or, in other situations, the offer of permanent residency as in the case of some regionally sponsored visa migrants (Argent and Tonts, 2012).

From the mid-1990s the former Australian Federal Department of Immigration and Citizenship determined to settle higher proportions of the national migrant (including refugee) intake away from the major metropolitan areas (see Hugo, 2008; Argent and Tonts, 2015). This concern for migrant redistribution was extended with the Department’s more recent (2005) preference for a ‘place-based’ approach to the settlement and – hopefully, retention – of all categories of migrant, in which a number of major regional centres with established migrant populations were designated by the nation-state as suitable destinations in Australia. The South Australian towns of Murray Bridge and Mount Gambier – the last-mentioned being the major regional centre of the Limestone Coast region – were conceived

as refugee and humanitarian migrant settlement towns based on their already established if small migrant populations, ‘threshold’ population size (i.e. over 20 000 residents) and assumed capacity to provide employment and other necessary goods and services to migrant groups. These actions reflect the abstract spaces that are shaped by the powerful in society and that people live within, but do not necessarily fully perceive.

Like numerous similarly productivist agricultural ‘heartland’ zones across Australia, the Murray Bridge and Limestone Coast regions of South Australia experienced rapid influxes of temporary unskilled migrant labour after 2000 to assist with, *inter alia*, fruit and vegetable harvesting and meat processing work. Both regions are relatively well-watered and fertile agricultural environments, renowned for high quality mixed horticultural and livestock production and processing. Around the turn of the current century, Murray Bridge received 80 Afghan humanitarian migrants on Temporary Protection Visas who subsequently filled vacancies in the local meatworks (Taylor-Neumann and Balasingam, 2009). Although these earlier ripples of migration could hardly be said to have established a beachhead for subsequent migratory waves, they were an important catalyst (Woods, 2016), made real by the actions of ‘experts’ conceiving this space as a refuge for migrants.

From 2005, approximately 150 Sudanese refugees were settled in Murray Bridge (Taylor-Neumann and Balasingam, 2009) while Mount Gambier became a destination for ongoing numbers of Congolese and Myanmar (Karen) refugees (Feist, et al., 2015). A measure of the cumulative impact of these refugee flows into the Limestone Coast region can be found in the ten most commonly spoken languages at home: the 2011 Census revealed that the Karen (Myanmar), Dari (Afghanistan), Tagalog (Philippines) and Swahili (Eastern Africa) languages had entered this list for the first time (Feist, et al., 2015). Between 2006 and 2011 the number of South-East Asian migrants into Naracoorte-Lucindale local government area increased by 420 per cent with particularly strong growth of the Philippines-born population. However, Afghani immigration over the same decade was even more spectacular, increasing by some 7 000 per cent (from 3 to 221). Meanwhile, more traditional British and western European countries declined in importance as migration sources. A similar pattern held for Mount Gambier local government area, with over three-fold growth in South-East Asian immigrants from 2006 to 2016 but an over 900 per cent increase in migrants from central and west Africa (ABS, 2017). These inflows were comprised of a mixture of refugee and employment-oriented moves.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Different factors resulted in a sudden increase in diversity in Northern Ireland. Firstly, structural changes in the agri-food system had resulted in an increased reliance on low waged, unskilled workers during the late 1990s, demand that was filled by Portuguese workers. Secondly, the National Health Service has since the 1990s actively attracted foreign born personnel, such as nurses from the Phillipines, to fill gaps in the labour market. Finally, the expansion of the European Union in 2004 meant that the UK, along with Sweden and Ireland, had minimal restrictions for EU citizens to enter the labour market. As a result Northern Ireland was among many of the regions that experienced a significant increase in migration during the post-2004 era. These factors combined have resulted in increased diversity across Northern Ireland as evident in statistics for the health and social care interpreting service. Demand increased from 823 requests in 2004 to 96,751 in 2014/15. Approximately 300 interpreters are employed by the service and they accommodate 36 languages (Northern Ireland Health Service, 2016).

This intense social change was enabled by the actions of policymakers at the national and European levels and made real through NHS-related recruitment drives and the expansion of the European Union in the mid-2000s. For the first time in recent history, between 2000 and 2014 Northern Ireland was a country of immigration (Russell 2016), perhaps reflecting the wider conceptualisation of a European Union with free movement of capital and labour and also signaling the importance of a globalized labour market.

From the conceived to the perceived and lived: economic incorporation in NIDs

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Thus conceived of as new migrant destinations by official government policy, the Murray Bridge and Limestone Coast regions received their migrant quotas via the formal channels and institutions of the Federal Department and its designated supplier, Humanitarian Settlement Services (HSS), along with formal non-government bodies such as the Migrant Resource Centre and local church groups. However, just as important, perhaps, in directing refugee and some labour migrants to these ‘new’ spaces were the informal communications networks created between the settlers from the early 2000s, and potential immigrants, including family members, resident in detention centres and other parts of the globe. It is through this information ‘grapevine’ that a substantial secondary movement of international skilled and unskilled, permanent and temporary migrants made its way into the towns of these two regions (Taylor-Neumann and Balasingam, 2009; Feist et al., 2015).

These connections are not always easily made and social structures can prevent economic inclusion. Thus economic integration was hampered for refugees to the Murray Bridge and Limestone Coast regions, relative to the labour migrants, due mainly to a lack of English language proficiency, problems of skill recognition, and lack of mobility (Feist et al. 2015). The paucity of transport options served to compound communication difficulties due to the inadequate number of local English training providers, further hampering this group's ability to enter the workforce. In around half of humanitarian migrant/refugee households, their physical isolation was exacerbated by the local absence of close friends and/or kin. Not surprisingly, only around half of the Murray Bridge migrants expressed satisfaction with their work, with many unhappy with its perceived monotonous character, the lack of diversity in local employment, and dissatisfaction with their employer (Taylor-Neumann and Balasingam, 2009).

NORTHERN IRELAND

Eventually the migrant grapevine was used by migrants moving to Northern Ireland, although in the first instance they opted to find jobs through recruitment agencies. Shortly after the accession of countries to the EU in 2004, meat processing firms sent representatives to events in new member states in an attempt to recruit workers. Very soon they had no need to make this investment as informal networks ensured a steady stream of new arrivals to meet labour demand:

'[A] kind of avalanche there was one person in work and in the following day that person brought another which multiplied and snowballed... If you know people in [meat factory] you can still find jobs...for instance in the slaughter house there are only 8 Irish people and 40 Polish people. At the end of the day they still prefer migrant workers – Polish and Bulgarians. There is an agency that works in close co-operation with [meat factory] and if you cannot get work directly with [meat factory] then you can get work through an agency. It is much better to get a job directly with [meat factory] than with the agency, if you work through the agency then you don't get holidays and you can be fired very easily' (Polish Focus Group 18.01.12).

Finding a job via a recruitment agency was less desirable for migrants due to reduced rights and the payment of a fee, showing the fine-tuned navigations that need to be made with the misalignment of social space. In a series of focus groups with ten Polish women, about half of their partners used employment agencies to find work. They demanded an up-front fee as

well as charging rental fees over a specified period. Given the choice these women stated that they would not use agencies again. Not only does this show the strength of individual networks, but by considering the intersection of micro and meso structures across different social spaces, it exposes the way in which representations of space can lead to inequalities, in this case the vulnerability of migrants within recognized legal structures. Incorporation into the market did not mitigate against inequalities, instead it obscured pockets of exclusion: in this case employment via a recruitment agency meant that individuals had few employment rights. A few described how they had been injured in work only to discover that employers had not registered them as employees and thus they had no recourse to insurance payments – small, local groups often stepped in, providing vital information and support. Social practices allowed conceptions of social space to be made real, but oftentimes this was boosted by everyday encounters where individuals acted as a conduit, filtering information and making connections between meso level structures such as the market and legal frameworks.

Everyday Encounters: lagging behind abstract social space?

NORTHERN IRELAND

As already discussed Northern Ireland was conceived as a migration destination, made possible within the wider European project. Not all social spaces (everyday encounters and perceptions of spatial practices) aligned with this wider vision, giving rise to information problems. An volunteer support worker explains:

‘... but it also comes back to a political issue, because the European Union gates were opened up and proper policies and procedures were not put in place for both people on the ground and for employers and that is where part of the problem lies. And if we have a group of people out there who do not actually know the facts and figures or the statistics and what is going on then...those problems are always going to arise. If we don't understand what is happening, then racism will happen’ (FG support and advocacy groups, 18 May 2009).

Racism occurred in the labour market through subtle discriminatory measures (McAreavey 2017). Further, an overall increase in ethnic diversity has occurred in parallel to increased racist attacks that included graffiti and attacks on homes and verbal abuse. In 2014 the UK's only Chinese-born locally elected official was the victim of serious racial abuse (McDonald 2014, PSNI 2017). Support services for migrants were often piecemeal, retrospective and insufficient to cope with the scale and pace of immigration, failing to recognize the diversity

of migrants themselves and also to uphold basic equality legislation.

Many local communities thus felt morally compelled to fill service gaps due to inadequate state planning:

'A [Local charity] is increasingly receiving calls from the migrant population and I'm going out to visit a young mother of four children who has been deserted and how does she pay her bills, how does she pay rent. We are increasingly seeing domestic violence; we increasingly receive calls or letters from the social services asking us if we can provide all of the material goods for migrants to set up homes. Yes we receive letters from statutory bodies, from the social services. Our pot of money isn't very large, we rely on ordinary people on their donations at the church door or on the street but yet we have requests from statutory services asking us if we can provide basics for migrant people – we have this for the local community but there are increasing needs for the migrant population. Another thing that we were talking about last night, we would provide Christmas dinners and we just happened to have a number of Christmas dinners left over and our volunteers thought that rather than let them go waste, because we are on the ground and we know the area we thought of a few places that they could go to. So we knocked on a few doors and some people were actually in tears because somebody had bothered to think about them and go to their door with a dinner'
(FG support and advocacy groups, 18 May 2009).

This extended quote shows the dialectical process of social change arising from immigration. While policymakers conceived the ideal of free movement of labour, the reality is that it occurs within a messy social space that is negotiated by individuals within a particular locality. Even though Northern Ireland remains the least ethnically diverse region of the UK, in the last census (2011) 1.8 per cent of the population belonged to minority ethnic groups, more than doubling the ratio from ten years earlier (Russell 2013). The necessary adjustments to allow social structures to cope with new pressures and demands arising from this shift had not been made. This 'ontological gap' demanded negotiating between spaces of representation and those of spatial practices, neither of which correlated to the conception of free movement of people. Access to social networks were critical to migrants' incorporation in formal and informal elements of civil society.

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Diverse support structures were also crucial in rural South Australia. Refugee/humanitarian migrants were assisted through the first, legal/formal stage of integration through the

functions of formal non-government agencies such as the Migrant Resource Centre which delivers the Federal Government's Humanitarian Settlement Services. Surveyed refugee respondents were also heavily dependent on local outlets of the national welfare agency, Centrelink, together with interpreter and employment services for the first year or so of settlement. This group also nominated the important role of schools, already established friend and family and real estate agents in providing practical, local scale advice on how to access housing, welfare and related services (Feist, et al., 2015).

Everyday (micro) Encounters

We have already shown how migrant networks are important for providing migrants with access to the labour market, but they are also crucial in other aspects of integration including local and regional education and training systems, and social and sporting groups. Migrant workers in both research sites communicated and formed close networks with work colleagues – though relatively rarely with locally-born workers – while their families were also able to make at least incipient inroads into local social networks via their children's school attendance, shopping trips and the like. English proficiency is a key enabler of social interaction in such English-speaking societies for it facilitates communication and allows relationships to develop, but this is a necessary rather than a sufficient condition for community acceptance. Individuals often accessed English language classes via civil society organisations and this typically led to other connections, including additional training and support such as help with applying for jobs. In this way civil society acted as a conduit to the labour market. On other occasions it connected migrants to formal social structures, if their migration status was contested as in the case of one Polish immigrant to Northern Ireland:

'I had experience of a young Polish woman who came to the centre about a year ago and she explained to me that coming to this centre was the first contact she had had since she had been here for 6 months. She had been in the country for 6 months and had never spoken to another Polish person and then she had seen the sign for the English classes and so she came along...I don't know because we have literally had hundreds of people through these doors for [English language] classes but that was literally the first contact that she had had with other Polish people' (Focus group support agencies 18.01.09).

A number of Polish women immigrants to Northern Ireland described how they kept close relationships with other Polish people because of language barriers. Neighbourhood networks

and connections are made possible with language skills and they were valued by migrants not just for the instrumental function that they very clearly provide in terms of vital resources, services and other information, but they assist migrants in navigating through emerging social spaces and so contribute to a wider sense of wellbeing and of belonging. For example a Polish support worker describes how *‘Daniel went to give his wife a lift at 11pm at night and his car wouldn’t start – his neighbour came out and handed him her car keys and let him take the car, he didn’t even have to ask. When Agnieszka had an accident with hot water, her neighbours came over and helped her. When she was in hospital her friends from work came to visit her and talk with her’* (Polish Focus Group 18.01.12).

Migrants with families to both rural South Australia and Northern Ireland had more opportunities to be welcomed into the community due to the almost inevitable interactions between longer-term residents and migrants at the school gate, around the sporting field and through homework clubs. While not downplaying the social anxiety that might attach to even such a basic task as shopping for a new migrant in an unfamiliar place, such ‘everyday’ lived experiences were seen as “... creating wider local networks or points of contact and having more opportunities for interaction in the broader community” (Feist, et al., 2015, 15).

Religious observance by migrants also brought them within established social networks. In the Irish context, the predominance of Catholic values and norms was a source of familiarity to many Polish migrants, many of whom found significant support networks via the local church. In the Limestone Coast region of South Australia, nearly nine out of ten humanitarian migrants, and just under three quarters of labour migrants, perceived the local community as friendly (Feist, et al., 2015). Nonetheless, in NIDs misunderstandings of culturally-specific mores can quickly spiral into tense situations. In Naracoorte, where 300 Afghani Hazara migrants have settled in a hitherto largely monocultural rural community, local press have reported incidents of occasional inter-ethnic tension and outright racism over such apparently trivial matters as migrants not returning greetings in the street, or migrants opening packets when shopping to inspect the quality of the product, as is common in their origin culture. Occasional letters to the Naracoorte Herald have attacked the formal representations of the rural encapsulated in the multi-scalar governmental programme of immigrant settlement, arguing that such policies seek to impose an ‘Islamisation’ of rural Australia. In the words of one such letter to the editor, “Multiculturalism, contrary to the ads, kills harmony” (Pomeroy, 2015). In spite of official local initiatives to welcome migrants and celebrate the cultural diversity that they had introduced into the region, such as ‘Harmony Day’, many migrants

expressed the view that most established Australian residents had difficulty moving beyond superficial and more remote forms of social interaction with new migrants. However, longitudinal research demonstrates that, over time, migrant and host friendship networks increasingly overlap. Less than ten per cent of migrants resident in the Limestone Coast under one year counted local Australians as members of their friendship group; for those resident longer than one year this proportion climbed to 44 per cent (Feist, et al., 2015).

The double triangulation of migrant incorporation in rural NIDs

The Mingoola story that was used to introduce this paper fits into an increasingly popular folk and local development genre: ‘the little town that did’ (see Barnes and Hayter, 1992), albeit with a slight twist. Little acts are instrumental to migrant incorporation and are often made possible because individuals connected to local institutions have the localized knowledge that allow them to respond speedily as needs become visible. But those individual acts are emblematic of the interplay between different social spaces. Individuals enable the realization of conceived spaces in everyday acts that are mediated by signs, codes and localized knowledge.

The trials, tribulations and apparent triumphs evidenced in our examples of Australia and Northern Ireland offer some useful parallels with and insights into the complexities surrounding the development of NIDs in rural localities around the globe. First, often the implications of immigration into rural areas are conceived of from a deficit perspective. Locating vulnerable and marginalized groups in low density environments where employment, housing and welfare services are scarce and of poor quality is a major challenge. Popular representations of migrants as a deficit and needy group who are going to take from ‘the system’ rather than being understood as potential contributors compounds this disadvantage.

Second, the more traditional nature of rural and regional society is also frequently assumed to be less tolerant of migrants, especially those from non-dominant language societies. However, the cases discussed above highlight that migrant groups’ perceptions and lived experiences of their rural surrounds indicates that they are just as, if not more, likely to integrate and feel an attachment to place in rural than in metropolitan settings. The materiality of the rural environment and landscape, together with its perceived ideal attributes, can prove crucial in the success or otherwise of the settlement experience. The Northern Ireland case illustrates how cultural connections, as evident between Polish and

Irish cultural and religious norms, has been an important part of the integration story.

Third, formal and informal networks, operating within and between geographical scales and involving individual migrants and their families, institutions and agencies are critical to the success or otherwise of the settlement process. Central to the qualified success of the Mingoola story is the role of the refugee advocate and his contacts with refugee groups and relevant agencies, on the one hand, and the lobbying of government representatives by the local Progress Association, on the other. Linking these together, in this instance, was a Federal Government minister able to introduce Musoni to the Mingoola Progress Association. This story of individual advocates as vital intermediaries is reflected within the Northern Ireland case (McAreavey 2012) and across the NID literature more generally.

Fourthly, a host rural community's desire to grow the local population and 'save' local services and a threatened way of life or to shore up struggling labour markets can be a powerful driver for a NID. How smoothly the settlement process occurs, though, remains strongly dependent on the host community's capacity to provide employment and key services (e.g. education and cheap housing). The fact that the Rwandan settlers arrived in Mingoola as large family units, thereby providing the community with an immediate demographic dividend, was significant. Their religiosity (devoted Pentecostal Christians) also aided their acceptance by the community. A final factor underpinning the success of migrant incorporation in both Northern Ireland and Australia, is the ability of the new settlers to communicate readily (i.e. competence in English) with local and extra-local contacts. Together, these last two factors emphasise substantial congruence between the host and migrants' senses of an ideal lived and perceived way of life.

Final comments

We used this paper to consider perceived social practices and everyday reality across formal, market and civil society domains. This 'double triangulation' is essential given the increasing complexity of contemporary migration currents into rural regions - spatially, ethnically and categorically. This complexity frequently defies many of the stereotypical features of rural areas. Some research has highlighted that the two dominant categories of migration – internal and international – need to be regarded less as mutually exclusive types and more as functionally related in the case of a growing proportion of migration involving rural areas (see, for instance, Hedberg and do Carmo 2012). NID research also highlights the increasing ethnic and birthplace diversity of migrants into rural places. An important contribution of this

research is its emphasis on the role of kin-based or instrumental networks or simple communication links between migrant destination and origin regarding work opportunities. There are many positive aspects to the arrival of newcomers to new migrant destinations. Different individuals can experience very different social and economic mobility. The role of different agencies is critical to this process, particularly that of local groups as they help migrants navigate conceived and perceived spaces in an attempt to get on with their everyday life. Civil society organisations are committed to the interests of migrants by delivering front line services and offering vital support and information.

However, if we sharpen our gaze and consider more closely the role of civil society organisations in social reproduction processes, chinks become visible. To be clear, these institutions offer an invaluable service in the integration of migrants to NIDs. However, in Australia and in Northern Ireland, the capacity of support agencies and advocacy groups to sufficiently represent the interests of migrants was not always guaranteed. We know that the relations between the elements of the triad are dialectical and, therefore, dynamic and unstable (Merrifield, 1993; Elden, 2004), but there is clear evidence of them advancing static and outmoded views of the groups they represent (Shortall and McAreavey 2017). Indeed, one volunteer for a small advocacy group maintained that some organisations were intent on ensuring organizational longevity over anything else. At times this did in fact work against the better interests of migrants in the longer term. On the one hand, supporting migrants' incorporation into precarious labour market regimes by bolstering low pay and by helping migrants navigate through complex and inadequate administrative systems ensured their day to day survival in often challenging conditions. However, this did little to address underpinning problems and structural issues such as the lack of recognition of overseas qualifications. Individual migrants were generally not willing to pursue incidences of discrimination, causing much frustration for trade unions, but they were able to survive on very low wages because of the external support from civil society. The gap between lived reality and the concept of our studies as migrant destinations brings into focus the hegemony of economic development.

Perhaps the point here is less about the way that civil society organizations inadvertently support weak social systems and precarious employment practices while upholding a more deeply held conception of space as a zone of immigration, and more that NIDs have inadequate infrastructure to deal with the novelty that arises when social space alters (Phillimore, 2015). The mis-match in social space arises in part because NIDs are conceived

by policymakers, planners and the like as economic zones. Alternative functions and spaces become of secondary importance, yet it is those alternative social and cultural spaces that fill the gap between policy rhetoric, social practices and lived experiences. In a NID there is a danger that embryonic social practices are inherently undermined if the primary purpose of civil society organisations is sidelined.

Our analysis suggests that a disruption to one element of social space can dislocate the overall status quo, requiring changes and the establishment of a new equilibrium. However, in order to ensure equity within that emerging social space, policymakers need to be challenged as they conceive ideal-type spaces. Addressing labour deficits is not 'simply' solved by encouraging the settlement of newcomers. To paraphrase Lefebvre, the double triangulation sheds light on the tensions between those areas in life that migrants have control over and zones in which they are more helpless, it draws our attention to tensions between economic, social and cultural integration. It raises the question: to what extent are these three elements of integration mutually exclusive?

Different social scales and spaces in rural NIDs are greatly affected by official, national-scale structures and rules regarding migration programmes, visa schemes, permitted settlement regions and the like (the realm of the conceived). However, the arguably deeper social integration of individual migrants and migrant groups often occurs on the sidelines, depending more on an appreciation of the mutual perception of host and migrant and their shared but also differing lived experiences of the rural localities within each dwell, work and socialize.

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