

Be our guest/worker: reciprocal dependency and expressions of hospitality in Ni-Vanuatu overseas labour migration

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Whilst there has been renewed interest in the development potential of temporary migration programmes, such schemes have long been criticized for creating conditions for exploitation and fostering dependence. In this article, which is based on a case study of Ni-Vanuatu seasonal workers employed in New Zealand's horticultural industry, I show how workers and employers alike actively cultivate and maintain relations of reciprocal dependence and often describe their relation in familial terms of kinship and hospitality. Nevertheless, workers often feel estranged both in the Marxian sense of being subordinated to a regime of time-discipline, and in the intersubjective sense of feeling disrespected or treated unkindly. I show how attention to the 'non-contractual element' in the work contract, including expressions of hospitality, can contribute to anthropological debates surrounding work, migration, and dependence, and to interdisciplinary understandings of the justice of labour migration.

I was feeling rather ambivalent as I piled off a coach with around fifteen women and five men, mostly from Epi, an island in central Vanuatu, to begin a day's work packing apples for Appleaseed Orchards.¹ It was a crisp autumn morning in March 2012, near Nelson in New Zealand's South Island, and the sun had not yet risen. Not only did I awake at 4 a.m., but my sleep was interrupted by a woman from the bunk opposite getting up to have a hot shower because she was unused to the cold. I had little appetite, but the women urged me to gulp down the cheap white bread, crackers, and sweet tea from the local supermarket that would provide our fuel through several hours checking, grading, and packing fruit at whirring conveyor belts.

Women made up just a quarter of the hundred-plus workers who arrived annually from Epi, and they worked in the pack-house, split into day- and night-shift groups. Whilst a few men worked alongside us stacking boxes, most were heading out to the orchards to begin a day's work picking. I had followed one group of these workers from Epi, many from Lamén Bay, and the small offshore Lamén Island, the fieldsite in which I had been living for the previous four months. Although I had heard about the Appleaseed manager's family connection to Epi and his personalized approach to

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recruitment, I was also aware the company had a dubious reputation amongst concerned local residents. In 2010, several community members had accused Appleseed on-line of exploiting seasonal workers by overcharging them for deductions, including for allegedly overcrowded company-owned accommodation. And the day before I arrived at the holiday camp where we were staying, some workers had been rehoused in portable 'bach' houses when government inspectors deemed their accommodation overcrowded.

However, the chilly apple pack-house was made more welcoming by the company's efforts to provide a hospitable environment. Appleseed's handbook had been translated into Bislama, the lingua franca of Vanuatu, and the walls of the main communal area had been adorned with numerous photos of Epi people at work and at home. Many showed workers proudly displaying the new houses they had built with their earnings. A fine mat hung above the entrance, presented as a gift to the company by the Lamem Bay woman who acted as their agent.

Appleseed, like other employers, often drew on the language of friendship, reciprocity, and hospitality to describe their relationship with workers, as in this quote from the website of an organization (here named Abel Tasman) representing Appleseed:

Over the past ten years we've extended the [Abel Tasman] family to embrace a small community in Epi, Vanuatu and [Upolu], Samoa. Every year, we host over 160 [Ni-Vanuatu] and 40 Samoans, without whom our operations would not be possible. During the season, our friends assist with thinning, picking and packing, all done with the level of care and attention required for premium-quality fruit. In return we're proud to help provide the resources and skills to provide for a brighter future for them back home.

Appleseed's interest in material outcomes on workers' home islands resonated with the promotion of New Zealand's Recognized Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme as a pro-poor initiative that contributed to development. The RSE scheme allows Pacific Islanders from several countries to work in New Zealand's horticultural industry for several months each year. The initiative has been praised for bringing economic 'triple wins' for the workers and their home countries, as well as employers. It has been described as a 'best practice' example of a managed migration scheme, and was a model for Australia's programme that followed in 2012 (Gibson & McKenzie 2013). This renewed promotion of labour migration over aid by organizations such as the World Bank has been dubbed the 'migration-development mantra' (de Haas 2005: 1276; Glick Schiller 2012: 92). Temporary worker programmes in particular are endorsed because they are seen to facilitate the return of the migrant and remittances, and thus (it is assumed) foster greater economic development in the area of origin.

Temporary migration programmes have attracted much criticism, however. Prior to 1945, there were a large number of indentured labour schemes, which were seen by some to replace slavery. Nazi Germany also designed an infamous migration programme (Castles 1986: 761). In the post-war period, many industrialized countries introduced temporary labour migration, often rebranded 'guest worker' programmes, to address labour shortages. However, by the 1970s, these schemes were generally abandoned, in part because they had become associated with unplanned long-term migration. In resurrecting these programmes, states have sought to bypass these issues through stricter controls to prevent overstayers, and regulations designed to prevent charges of exploitation (Castles 2006: 748).

Undoubtedly, Ni-Vanuatu workers were driven to migrate by a desire for development, although they acknowledged that work conditions were often exploitative.

Some admitted they were becoming increasingly dependent on overseas work, exacerbated by anxieties over land scarcity in Lamien Bay (Smith 2018). Epi workers sought to cultivate enduring personalized and moralized relations with employers to maintain employment opportunities, and to counter feelings of estrangement in the workplace.

Although most of my sixteen months' fieldwork was based on Epi, including over thirty interviews with returned seasonal workers, as well as leaders and community members, much of this article draws on two visits to New Zealand. The first was in March 2012, when I lodged with two groups from Epi for two weeks each during the work season. During this time, I took field notes, chatted to workers, and surveyed over thirty workers regarding their reasons for engaging in the work, and their plans for their earnings. In 2014, I made follow-up visits to four employers, which was when most of my discussions with managers and supervisors took place.

In this article, I will show how attending to the 'moral economy' (and 'moral polity') of workers – and their employers – can both complement and critique debates over labour migration from the deductive perspectives (see Scott 1976) of political economy and political philosophy. Popularized by social historian E. P. Thompson, who defined it as 'a social dialectic of need and obligation' (1991: 334), the notion of moral economy has been applied in many contexts, but what unites these studies is attention to how people resist dehumanizing economic rationales, appealing to a sense of moral obligation and reciprocal claims and a demand for dignity and respect (Moberg 2014: 11). Debates over temporary migration programmes have often deployed the language of hospitality to discuss the politics of inclusion and exclusion, and the distribution of rights. I will interrogate hospitality idioms and practices to reveal the deep ambivalence and tensions that inhere in employment relations, but also their power in making moral claims across social divides.

In the first section of this article, I draw on recent anthropological discussions critiquing liberal assumptions that pathologize dependence, to show how employment relations are actively cultivated and maintained by Ni-Vanuatu workers as well as employers. However, an over-emphasis on agency may obscure the kinds of alienation experienced by workers in the 'hidden abode' of production. In the second section, I discuss how workers commonly feel as if their life and energies are being subordinated to time-discipline, and how they often feel estranged in the sense of being treated unkindly or being disrespected. Nevertheless, workers and employers alike often proffer language and gestures of kinship and hospitality to perpetuate their relationship. Finally, I discuss how anthropological insights into how exchanges are bound by state law, custom, and moral obligation (Durkheim's 'non-contractual element in the contract'), and into the ambivalence and dangers inherent in dealing with strangers (the 'law of hospitality'), can illuminate the relational dimensions of labour migration, and contribute to debates over the justice of temporary migration programmes.

Roads and reciprocal dependency

Dependence as agency

'Dependence' is often pathologized in liberal thought as the opposite of freedom for the individual (Ferguson 2013; Fraser & Gordon 1994), and the term has been reshaped according to prevailing political ideologies. In the industrialized West, the word 'dependent' gradually became associated with an underclass of paupers – that is, those excluded from wage labour – while wage labourers were refigured as 'free'

workers. On the global scale, in the colonies – or ‘dependencies’ – wage labourers as well as slaves, and those ‘natives’ yet to be incorporated into labour regimes, all tended to be characterized as dependants, and political subjects rather than citizens (Fraser & Gordon 1994: 317–19).

Even staunch critics of liberal theories of migration and development have characterized dependency as a form of subjection antithetical to development. In the 1970s, dependency and world-systems theories depicted international labour migration as driven by, and exacerbating, underdevelopment in sending regions, part of the wider neo-colonial subordination of the global ‘periphery’ to the industrialized ‘core’ (see Fraser & Gordon 1994: 330). At other scales, labour migration was increasingly criticized for fostering relations of dependency between migrants and employers, and between sending and receiving nations (Faist 2009: 42).

The ‘small island states’ of the South Pacific have been caricatured in both development theories and their critiques as weak, unstable, and dependent on richer neighbours such as New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. Pacific Island scholar Epeli Hau‘ofa (1994) felt that discourse about ‘dependence’ obscured the Pacific Islands’ major economic contribution to receiving countries, suggesting that islanders received much more from working kin than they did from direct aid. Hau‘ofa argued that Pacific relations of dependence should be conceived in reciprocal terms that are more compatible with Pacific identities and values:

Economists do not take account of the social centrality of the ancient practice of reciprocity, the core of all oceanic cultures . . . This is not dependence but interdependence, which is purportedly the essence of the global system. To say that it is something else and less is not only erroneous, but denies people their dignity (1994: 157).

New Zealand, has become a long-standing migration destination for people from Samoa, Tonga, and other nations in the eastern Pacific and has extended citizenship and other concessions to those countries. Melanesia has had fewer overseas migration opportunities since decolonization than these Polynesian countries, but Melanesian states have long been portrayed as politically fragmented and dependent on aid.

Rendered stateless during the 1906–80 colonial period owing to unusual Anglo-French Condominium² government arrangements, indigenous Ni-Vanuatu (then ‘New Hebrideans’) were denied citizenship or subjecthood, and passports. The minority who had the opportunity to travel could only do so with identity certificates (Rawlings 2015). But, after winning political Independence and citizenship in 1980, opportunities for international travel dwindled even more as the colonial powers withdrew.³ For many Ni-Vanuatu today, the opportunity to travel for work is experienced as a form of freedom: an opportunity to travel and expand one’s horizons and to attain goods previously unavailable to them, even when it requires opting in to a restrictive and unequal work relationship.

Ferguson (2013; 2015: 97) argued that viewing dependence as a ‘mode of action’ helps us to understand how forms of dependence can be sought that may otherwise be characterized by liberals as a travesty of paternalism, inequality, and exploitation. He explained that South Africans often actively seek out asymmetrical but personalized relations of social dependency with patrons and potential employers (Ferguson 2013: 232). By social dependency, Ferguson refers to forms of personalized relationships which can be configured either horizontally, as in egalitarian relations between kin and neighbours, or hierarchically, with traditional authority figures, employers, and

patrons. In the African context (Ferguson 2013), he suggests that dependence can be understood as a foundation of personhood and political identity in which people conceive of themselves as fundamentally relational and co-constituted, even through incorporation into asymmetrical power relations.

Ferguson (2015: 149) shows how South African work patterns under capitalism suggest some continuity with precolonial patterns of personalized dependency on chiefs and patrons. He reveals how familial sentiments are often mirrored in kin-like descriptions of managers by workers, even though such language can mask deeply unequal power relations (Ferguson 2013: 227). Ferguson (2013: 232) suggests that South Africans often prefer personalized relations with employers or patrons over forms of asocial inequality and dependency such as state welfare. Next, I describe how enduring relations of dependence have also been actively sought and maintained by Epi islanders and their New Zealand employers.

Reciprocal dependency

Paradoxically, despite the seemingly contingent and temporary nature of seasonal employment, increasing dependence on employment relationships by employers, as well as by seasonal workers, tends to prolong them beyond the immediate economic rationale that precipitates such programmes. Relationships between employers and migrants have a tendency to become shaped not only by 'dependency' of migrants on opportunities for overseas work, but also through processes of 'distortion' – whereby employers become reliant on the availability of migrant labour and reinvest in its continuation rather than technical or economic solutions such as wage rises (P. Martin, Abella & Kuptsch 2006: 93). So-called 'dependency' works both ways, and employers also become reliant on a productive, reliable, and increasingly experienced workforce.

Employer-worker relations have become personalized and moralized as both sides have adopted language and actions expressing kinship, friendship, and hospitality. In fact, the initial opportunities for direct recruitment on Epi came about through enduring interpersonal connections. The first company to recruit at Lamén Bay, Appleseed, was managed by the son-in-law of the missionary who was based at Lamén island in the post-war period, and the manager's wife had grown up there. The manager told me that he felt recruiting on Epi would be a fitting way to address chronic labour shortages, but also to continue the legacy of his missionary in-laws:

When I read about the scheme . . . I went to [the company owner] and said, 'Hey, why don't we do a trial with these [people]? I've got this contact, why don't I go and do that?' That's how it started. And I just thought it was a nice fit. I'm not a religious person but knew what my in-laws did, the work they did, their view of the world . . . It just seemed this is a way to carry on with their contact . . . Trying to get the same outcomes if you like, but in a different way.

Phrased in terms of an ethic of reciprocity, this quote also reveals how the employers accepted a degree of responsibility in facilitating development in workers' home islands. The manager and his Pastoral Care workers⁴ had been visiting Epi annually to conduct interviews, noting seasonal workers' motivations and achievements. The manager and his colleagues would visit workers' homes, and photograph their new houses and businesses.

The Appleseed manager told me that the RSE programme had given his directors the confidence to reinvest and plant further orchards. As far as he was concerned, there was no turning back with the programme, unless 'political philosophy', such as a backlash

over unemployment rates, was to intervene. The manager's statements highlight the ambivalence at the heart of the seasonal worker programme between the interests of employers, workers, and the state, whose economic and moral interests can be in tension with one another, even whilst they become increasingly interdependent.

For Durkheim (1984 [1893]: 160), 'mutual interdependence', in terms of economic ties between individuals bound by contract through division of labour, is not sufficient for peaceful co-operation; labour relations are also subject to state law and to moral obligations and customs. The relationship of dependence between the two parties tends to endure beyond the immediate moment of exchange, and involve mutual sacrifice as well as respective self-interest (Durkheim 1984 [1893]: 173). Durkheim's (1984 [1893]: 154) interest in this 'non-contractual element' of the contract was expounded by his nephew Mauss's (2002 [1923]) interest in 'the gift'. Mauss in turn has inspired anthropologists to show how focusing on economic abstraction and structural alienation of labour may obscure a more 'entangled and ambiguous mix of "gift and commodity" exchange, in which relationships not only decline but simultaneously proliferate' (Kjaerulff 2015: 2; cf. K. Martin 2015).

Epi workers, like their employers, understood that the perpetuation of the seasonal worker programme also depended on state politics and economic forces beyond their control. They often describe the RSE policy launch as the 'opening of the road' to New Zealand, but fear it may 'close' again. The chief of Lamenu Bay understood that the engagements required particular alignments, or alliances, in order for them to continue, in terms of both state law and personal relationships with employers:

[The RSE programme] is a good thing. Since Independence, many people have stayed here, and never travelled. I know there was a time when there was blackbirding.⁵ But now we are asking governments, like that of Australia, to take the people here . . . Now we have decided that the missionaries that were here, they remembered all the good times when they were here, how everyone looked after them and they wanted to make a return good thing from them to us. So, that's it, it's a good sign.

The chief's quote illustrates how islanders often conceived of work contracts in gift-like terms, as a reciprocal return in ongoing relationships with the missionary's family.⁶

Finding roads

Epi people's cultivation of overseas employment opportunities extended and multiplied enduring relations of interdependence. As Ferguson (2015) described for South Africa, workers actively seek out relations with potential employers, and the familial terms with which Ni-Vanuatu workers express their relations with seasonal employers suggest continuities with Melanesian identities and personhood. Following Appleseed's initial recruitment, subsequent connections were made through the active efforts of Epi people who used their ingenuity and agency to find new employers and opportunities. In 2008, eager potential recruits approached a visiting yachtsman to see if he could organize any work. The yachtsman contacted a friend who runs a hostel specializing in finding work for backpackers. This man arranged contracts with KiwiGold, who have recruited over forty workers from Epi annually, through interviews based in Lamenu Bay. Through networks gained while working at Kerikeri in the northernmost part of New Zealand, one seasonal worker built relationships with two smaller employers and became a recruiter for them. Likewise, during their first season of work at Appleseed, some workers also travelled to work at vineyards around Blenheim, in the northeast of New

Zealand's South Island, and whilst there, two of them approached two new employers, who now recruit directly through their Epi contacts.

The first opportunity for a group from Lamén to participate in the Australian Pacific Seasonal Worker programme came about via friendships made through tourism. The chief invited an Australian couple to stay with him after they visited Lamén Bay as tourists. The couple became close to the chief's family and would spend several weeks each year at his residence. After being asked if they knew of any employers, the couple persuaded a local farmer to employ some workers, took on Pastoral Care duties, and offered meals and friendship to the group during their stay in Yarra Valley, near Melbourne.

Efforts to cultivate relationships with potential seasonal employers in New Zealand and Australia were often couched in Bislama in typically Melanesian terms as 'finding roads' (*faenem rod*). Across Melanesia, the term 'road' (*rod*) expresses a way, course, direction, or trajectory, in the dual sense of both a route and a means of achieving an objective. The term *rod* can be applied to a range of different positively valued relationships, and connotes the formation, extension, and maintenance of mutual connections, or relational routes, along which people, goods, and knowledge can travel. On Epi, marriage to spouses from other islands and villages is also described as 'making roads', and this often leads to further marriages and reciprocal hospitality between the new kin. The 'road-like' similarities between marriage and exchange and seasonal employment opportunities were compounded when one seasonal work engagement was followed by the marriage of a manager at a Kerikeri employer with a woman from Burumba village in west Epi. The manager had previously worked for Applesed, where he met his now-wife. Having found work at another kiwi producer, he began to recruit annually on Epi for his new employer through his wife's family.

Epi workers act to strengthen, intensify, and multiply their relational 'roads' with seasonal employers (see Kjaerulff 2015: 19), often through acts of hospitality. When employers visited Epi for further recruitments and interviews, seasonal workers and prospective migrants would often offer food and gifts to their visitors. Ostensibly to thank employers, perhaps this was also a way to reinforce employers' favour towards them when allocating future opportunities. Workers place great value on building relationships with visitors to their home villages, and to 'friendships' forged overseas, and these have proved productive of further opportunities for work, travel, and development.

Anthropologists of the Western Pacific have highlighted the importance of enduring 'roads' of hospitality and exchange as key to Melanesian personhood, political identities, and social reproduction (Hocart 1953: 83-4; Munn 1992). Such alliances fit Mauss's description of interdependent gift transactors bound by enduring moral obligations who had

no option but to ask for hospitality, to receive presents, to enter into trading, to contract alliances, through wives or blood kinship and the refusal of such alliances were often tantamount to the declaration of war. These types of alliances were characterized by a state of perpetual dependence towards one another (2002 [1923]: 82).

The characteristic of perpetuity in Melanesian exchange relations was highlighted by Gregory (1982: 100), who drew on Mauss to characterize Melanesian gift relations as the exchange of inalienable things between persons in a relationship of 'reciprocal dependence'. By contrast, the logic of commodity exchange is premised on a form

of interdependence characterized by mutual alienation, or 'reciprocal independence' (Gregory 1982: 100).⁷

In the anthropology of Melanesia, by contrast to that of sub-Saharan Africa, dependency has often entailed more egalitarian expectations of mutuality and reciprocity. Whilst Ferguson (2013: 226) describes how Southern African precolonial models of dependency often appeared as hierarchical and asymmetrical relations of dependency on a chief or patron, Melanesian expectations were more reflective of conceptions of 'roads' of reciprocal dependence characterized by symmetry, equality, and exchange. These more egalitarian expectations sit uneasily with an unequal model of the dependence of the worker on selling his labour-time in the 'hidden abode' of capitalist production (see Marx 1990 [1867]: 279).

The propensity to realize relations with foreigners and international companies as kin-like 'roads', moralized and marked by obligations of mutuality or reciprocity, is well documented across Melanesia. For example, in indigenous engagements with mining companies there are often expectations of degrees of interdependence and mutual obligation (Kirsch 2008; Wardlow 2005: 65). The breakdown of these relations, or their failure to materialize, can result in frustration and disappointment (Foster 2005: 212, 214; cf. Leavitt 2005).

In the context of historical labour migration, too, islanders' expectations of a kind of egalitarian reciprocal dependency familiar in relations between allies and trade partners in Melanesia often clashed with experiences of wage labour regimes. Bonnemaïson (1984: 141-2) suggested that although in the colonial era islanders often hoped to build enduring reciprocal relations with employers, their expectations of equality and mutuality were often not met favourably:

For Melanesians this journeying was to widen the horizons of alliance, but Europeans organized these transfers of labour in accordance with the cold logic of a profitable system of production. In the former case, it was a question of encounter, of a desire for mutual communication, sometimes a philosophical quest; in the latter, of simply exploiting a source of adult labour (1984: 141-2).

As with some of these historical periods of labour recruitment, seasonal workers' hopes and expectations can often be frustrated by experiences of exploitation and estrangement. The contradiction between economic valorization through the labour-process and the personalization of employer-employee relations which perpetuate it often results in ambivalence and tensions.

Estrangement in the hidden abode

Exploitation and alienation

Whilst some modes of dependence may offer political possibilities, other forms may serve to reinforce inequalities, or create new forms of subordination (Shah 2013). Anthropologists of temporary worker programmes in North America (Basok 2002; Binford 2013; Hahamovitch 2003; Hennebray & Preibisch 2010) have suggested that seasonal workers, who are typically tied to particular employers on short-term contracts regulated by the state, are vulnerable to the threat of deportation or of not being re-recruited, and so tend to accept exploitative conditions. Dependence on labour contracts makes for compliant workers, who are likely to accept low wages and perform exhausting and sometimes damaging work for long hours, and are unlikely to leave, protest, or unionize.

Although, for many, seasonal migration was their first introduction to wage labour, Epi workers quickly became astutely critical of wages and conditions. A frequent worry was the perceived illegitimacy of wage deductions: some groups felt they were being overcharged for food, transport, and work gear. Some told me that they were frightened of reporting poor conditions and practices, as they did not wish to be deported, or threaten employment opportunities on which they had become increasingly reliant. Whilst some legal provision allows for a change of employer, in practice this was difficult to achieve during a work season. However, there were several cases where Epi people sought out new employers, either because their current employer was deemed less favourable, or to gain prestige and extra income from acting as a recruiter.

The option of finding work with an alternative employer helped to provide some limit to domination (see Ferguson 2013: 227). Those who were not returning to the same employer were more often willing to make complaints about working and living conditions. In 2011, vineyard workers at Grape Harvest Company, Blenheim, had complained that they were being overcharged for their flights. A group leader, Sam, spoke directly to the boss to say their deduction was up to NZ\$800 higher than for other employers of Ni-Vanuatu in the vicinity. Sam reported the issue to Vanuatu's Department of Labour, and the deduction fell by NZ\$600 the next year. Sam had already arranged a work agreement with another vineyard for the following season, and perhaps this is why he was less fearful of complaining.

Some remaining Grape Harvest workers approached me the following year to complain that they had been barred for five years, as their boss had reported them to Vanuatu's Department of Labour for drinking. They said that the real reason for their blacklisting⁸ was that they had refused their boss's request to defer their holiday pay, which he said would be used to pay for their flights the following season. The blacklisted men were unhappy as they wished to spend the money – around NZ\$1,200 each – and keep their options open. One of them told me that he was worked too hard, as if he was 'just muscles'. He said he and the others suffered from aching bodies, seized-up hands, nosebleeds, and sometimes coughed up blood. He felt dehumanized: 'I'm a man, not a machine'.

Time is money

After I 'clocked in' with the women that autumn morning in 2012, I was to experience the demands of staying on one's feet, and the relentless pace of the pack-house, in which work rate was dictated by the speed of the conveyor belts: if one looked away for seconds, pallets of apples could fall off the conveyor. Later, when I visited the night-shift women, one said she felt the machines were in control and the 'world was upside-down': the workers have to keep up with the machine, rather than the machine making work easier. A stacker noted that his employers tended to slow down the conveyor belts when there were inspectors present, but the conveyors were normally set to a high speed that endangered workers.

Most of the men who worked outdoors as pickers and pruners expressed a preference for 'contract', or piece rates, because they could earn more than the hourly minimum wage, and because they were perceived to be fairer by rewarding hard work. Sometimes they would resist the 'time is money' formula through 'weapons of the weak' such as foot-dragging (Scott 1985: 29). One Epi orchard worker joked that hourly work means 'work a little, rest a lot', whereas piece rate work means 'work a lot, rest a little'.

Workers did not only attribute feelings of exploitation or subordination to breaches or manipulations of contractual conditions, but often expressed this in more general terms of feeling like their time, health, and energies were being subordinated to a calculative regime. Their grievances recall the subordination of people to things, and the production of things via the waste of the human body in its compulsion to work, in Marx's notion of 'estrangement' or 'alienation' (1988 [1932]:73). For Marx, estrangement occurred through the subordination of human life to the abstract commodity value of workers' labour-time.

Seasonal workers repeatedly contrasted their experience of wage work with their autonomy at home, asserting that in New Zealand, 'time is money'. As one female worker put it:

Something I experienced over there is when I work and I work and I'm tired, but I still have to work ... So, 'time is money'. In Vanuatu, you work and you work and you feel exhausted, so you stop and rest, because you are feeling tired. But over there, you must work to complete your hours ... That place is good to go to work and come back, but not to live in.

This statement recalls E.P. Thompson's (1991: 359) argument that the imposition of the time-is-money equation under capitalism in nineteenth-century England was not only a means of labour exploitation, but was also experienced by workers as a loss of freedom, marking a sharp distinction between work-discipline and rhythms of life and nature.

Understanding relations of dependency under capitalism requires the recognition that persons are valued in the abstract, as quantities of labour-time (White 2013). However, in practice, relations of production are produced by, and produce, social relationships (Granovetter 1985: 487; Narotzky 1997: 171-2). The 'estrangement' and 'alienation' entailed by the subordination of human life to a capitalist regime is often experienced as a more personal kind of estrangement: a lack of recognition and respect. However, as Carrier has suggested, forms of estrangement in relations of production can be countered by people's inclination towards forming personal relations with other people and things, 'for people seem to want to colonise the alienated realm with more durable, less alienated relationships' (1992: 541).

Countering estrangement

Islanders' and their employers' assertions of friendship and hospitality may help to soften experiences of estrangement and alienation. Expectations of kindness, generosity, and fairness informed Epi people's evaluations of employers, and some bosses were considered particularly generous. One worker, David, found a small employer to recruit for while working for his previous company. When his new boss rang him and three of his relatives to offer to purchase discounted electronics on their behalf, three requested laptops, the fourth a mobile phone. They expected their boss to deduct the money from their pay, but he told them they were gifts. David was happy with his employer, and said he earned two or three times more there than at his previous company. Despite this, David considered both his current and his previous employer 'kind', because they brought gifts of freshly caught game and fish.

Workers and employers alike may try to counteract or humanize the structural alienation of the production process through the extension of personalized relationships of hospitality and friendship. The couple who acted as Pastoral Care workers at

Appleseed developed a close relationship with the workers, often visiting and donating warm clothes. They had been to Epi recruiting and visiting families, and had come to address one family they had stayed with by kin terms. Such was her caring role that female pack-house employees took to addressing their female Pastoral Care worker – also a supervisor – as ‘mama’ and organized a Mother’s Day presentation for her.

The couple told me that many pickers were just ‘dumped’ in remote company-owned houses and given very little attention. The pair had repeatedly asked the company for concessions, such as heaters, to make workers more comfortable. When some workers broke an alcohol ban in 2011, the Pastoral Carers blamed their drinking on a lack of care and attention from company management. The couple conceived of their duty of care and time commitment as above and beyond their contractual obligations:

Wife: There aren’t many people . . . that will go out of their way to do anything for these guys . . .

Most of the supervisors don’t want to know after 5 p.m. and at weekends, they don’t go the extra mile.

Husband: We could never not do it the way we do it. It could never be just a workplace thing.

Wife: I just want to make sure they’re alright: that they’re warm, that they’ve got the right accommodation, that they’re okay.

Husband: They’re such a lovable bunch . . . They’re so responsive. If you’re willing to put in some time you get so much out of it.

The couple ‘went out of their way’ and made time for the workers, in defiance of a logic of calculation. Following the drinking incident, the couple joined the weekly devotion at the men’s house, and took workers to literacy classes. They also helped the women set up a weekend market stall selling baskets.

The Appleseed manager ended up firing the couple because he thought they were making too many demands on behalf of the workers. He said the company would fight to protect the scheme, but compromises would always have to be made to keep it profitable: ‘There’s always a balance in how far do you go in protecting it, how much Pastoral Care money do you invest? . . . Versus the reality is you still have to run a business and you still have to make it economically efficient’.

Employers may find themselves in a double-bind, trying to be moral hosts whilst running an efficient and profitable business (see Holmes 2013: 58). Whilst workers often cultivate personalized relations with employers, sometimes employers may try to establish more formal and distant relations (Binford 2013: 61). The Appleseed manager had come to regret some of the friendship he and some of his staff initially offered, culminating in an incident where a few workers broke into a staff member’s home for a drunken party. To send a message that Epi workers were not indispensable, he replaced forty Epi migrants with Samoans the following year. The manager led a meeting with chiefs, who expressed their anger that the misbehaviour of some had harmed the community’s reputation, and ruined the chance for others to work overseas. He and his wife had taken conscious steps to distance themselves from the workers, feeling workers were taking their hospitality for granted. The wife told me she was reluctant to return to Epi, where she was raised by her missionary father, for fear of being hounded by prospective workers looking for employment. By contrast, the former Pastoral Care couple continue to visit and support workers each season in New Zealand, and have visited Epi since they finished work at Appleseed.

Despite the allegations and ambivalence in employment relations at Appleseed, one of the workers from a different island in Vanuatu who had transferred from a company in Blenheim told me that compared to the Blenheim company, Appleseed had been '*komfotim gud mifala*' (Bislama for 'making us very comfortable'), and even said they offered '*gudfala hospitaliti*' ('good hospitality'). This phrasing in terms of hospitality is revealing. Workers and employers alike often draw on the language of hospitality when discussing their relationship, mutually evaluating each other in terms of 'good hosts' and 'good guests'. Anthropologists have long shown how hospitality can temper tense or threatening relations with outsiders, but there are limits to how 'kin-like' one can act before relations are broken off, or turn hostile.

The law of hospitality

The ambivalence of hospitality

Hospitable language may invite us to view welcoming outsiders as disinterested generosity, but anthropological studies have revealed the ambivalence and dangers that are always present in the 'law of hospitality', or 'the problem of how to deal with strangers' and the potential dangers they represent (Herzfeld 1993: 171; Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977]: 501; cf. Rozakou 2012: 565). Mauss (2002 [1923]: 104-5) suggested that the 'law of hospitality' compels strangers to offer hospitality to avoid outright hostility, giving an example from Melanesia of how a slip in the terms of the relation can result in suspicion or plain aggression. Indeed, the tension between guest as friend or enemy is conserved in the English terms 'host' and 'hospitality' versus 'hostility'. These words derive from the same Latin root, *hostis*, and a notion of strangeness underlies both (Benveniste 2016: 61; Derrida & Dufourmantelle 2000: 157 n. 2; Friese 2009: 51; Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977]: 508). Hosts may delineate boundaries and limit rights to guests, attempting to control the potential danger they may embody even whilst they proffer a warm welcome (Graeber 2011: 101; Rozakou 2012: 565; Candea & da Col 2012).

The ambivalence and danger surrounding hospitality is also present in Melanesian ethnography.⁹ Hostility and hospitality should not be seen as distinct modes of sociality; rather, as Brown (1979: 730) argued regarding feasting and warfare in the Papua New Guinean Highlands, the possibility of one always inheres in the realization of the other. For West Papua, Stasch (2009: 50-1) has emphasized the paradoxical and contradictory nature of encounters of hospitality, in which a sense of interconnection is sought whilst at the same time difference, or strangeness, also becomes foregrounded. Across Melanesia, and beyond, hospitality can be seen as a form of 'social boundary maintenance' (Wagner 2012: S162; cf. McDougall 2016: 28).

Anthropological interpretations of expressions of hospitality have gone beyond considerations of generosity to understanding such claims in the context of ambivalent and power-laden relations. The ambivalence on which the 'law of hospitality' is based conceals conflict even while it perpetuates the relations of difference and subordination on which it is founded (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977]: 513). Nevertheless, gestures of hospitality do not simply express existing asymmetries of power, or relations of economic dependence, but are also occasions for moral contest and evaluation (Herzfeld 1987: 77; cf. Candea & da Col 2012: S14; Marsden 2012: S123). For instance, offering hospitality can also be a way for the less powerful to invert their position of dependence, albeit temporarily (Herzfeld 1993: 171; cf. Barth 1981: 106-7). By welcoming employers in Vanuatu, workers may assert a semblance of equality, even while they perpetuate the employment relation.

Universal hospitality?

The ambiguity and ambivalence that generally characterize expressions of hospitality are apparent across different scales. Appeals to hospitality, and the kin-like obligations or bonds which they entail, operate at different levels of social organization, from intimate face-to-face interactions through to state bureaucracy (see Candea 2012: S43). Hospitality does not deteriorate with capitalist expansion, but is flexibly adapted to different contexts, extents, and levels. Indeed, the concept is necessary to the maintenance of the nation-state (Herzfeld 2012: S212; cf. 1987). There is a contradiction, amplified at the scale of the nation-state, between the 'law of hospitality' as an ethical orientation towards openness, generosity, and mutual respect, and the political attempt to encode such an orientation in fixed laws and policies (Benhabib 2004: 28-9; Derrida & Dufourmantelle 2000: 77). At the national scale, boundaries of 'inside' and 'outside' are especially rigid, and hospitality may shift into hostility in particularly threatening ways (Benveniste 2016: 68; Shryock 2012: S28).

Kant's call for 'Universal Hospitality' (1903 [1795]) has been a much-debated position in political philosophy regarding the rights of strangers (Cavallar 2002) and concepts of (distributive) justice (Frieze 2009: 57). Kant (1903 [1795]) famously advocated a right to free movement around the globe, but his vision of 'Universal Hospitality' would decree a moral obligation to host a stranger only for a limited time and in a state-administered locale, alongside legal and political arrangements to prevent incomers' full incorporation as citizens (see also Dikeç, Clark & Barnett 2009: 5; Shryock 2012). Debates over the 'politics of hospitality', argues Frieze (2009: 64), point to ambivalences and tensions in how different expressions of hospitality accommodate different kinds of membership and inclusion, forms of exchange, and allocations of duties and obligations (see also Candea & da Col 2012: S4). The temporal and spatial constraints on temporary workers make temporary foreign worker programmes a particularly appropriate context in which to critically interrogate political philosophical ideals of the limits of hospitality.

The justice of temporary migration programmes

The references to 'hospitality' for 'guests' that appeared both on Appleseed's website and in the seasonal workers' statements evoke expressions common in migration policy and theory such as 'guestworkers' and 'host states'. Hospitality idioms are so ubiquitous in discourses about immigration that, '[t]he vision of the immigrant as guest is a metaphor that has forgotten that it is a metaphor' (Rosello 2001: 3). The metaphor has often been extended to levels of policy and media as well as everyday interactions and evaluations (Herzfeld 1993: 170; 2012: S210).

Temporary foreign workers came to be called 'guestworkers' (translated from the German term *Gastarbeiter*) in post-war Europe, and the term spread across Europe, Southern Africa and Asia. In Germany, temporary migrant workers had previously been called *Fremdarbeiter* – 'alien workers' – but this term had come to connote 'sub-human' in its association with Nazi slave labour (Hahamovitch 2003: 70). The term 'guestworker' evokes a much friendlier language of hospitality (Rozakou 2012: 566).

Temporary foreign worker or 'guestworker' programmes have been criticized by political philosophers and critical theorists in terms of the politics of membership and exclusion, as well as economic distribution. The seasonal worker does not enjoy the status and rights of a full community member or citizen, but is dependent on a relationship with established members. The guestworker is incorporated only by a tie to a particular employer, and thus is in-between a stranger and a citizen-member: like

the stranger or alien discussed by Pitt-Rivers in his treatise on the law of hospitality, he or she is 'incorporated practically rather than morally' (2012 [1977]: 503-4).

Whilst cosmopolitan theorists have redefined hospitality to assert the rights of migrants (Benhabib 2008: 31), communitarians have tended to emphasize the rights of sovereign political communities to determine their membership (Friese 2009: 53). This tension is central to debates over the justice of labour migration, particularly to temporary foreign worker schemes, in which inclusion is necessarily transitory and highly contingent. For Walzer (1983: 56-61), a communitarian philosopher, guestworker programmes are unjust because they fail to assure equitable political rights. He argued that guestworkers are exploited to serve the interests of the host state, which can obtain a workforce without raising wages and working conditions to attract local workers. Aside from their deprivation from social, sexual, and familial activities, workers are denied the political rights accorded to a citizen-member of the host country.

For Attas (2000), guestworker programmes can be considered exploitative even by free market standards. The restrictions surrounding the employment of a guestworker, often limiting him or her to a single employer, creates a monopsony, or distortion of market prices due to lack of competition. To prevent exploitation through low wage levels, Attas argues workers should be granted full economic rights based on their membership of that sphere, which would include freedom to choose their occupation and employer. However, Attas disagrees that the host country has a duty to grant citizenship to migrant workers, arguing instead that temporary workers are motivated by a disinterested market attitude of mutual benefit, not an affective loyalty that would bind together a national citizenry.

Ni-Vanuatu workers' moral economy and 'moral polity' (see Faist 2017; Thompson 1991: 202), their definition of exploitation (Scott 1976: 3, 160), and their claims of justice, recognition, and dignity are concerned not only with economic distribution or distribution of rights and political membership, but also with a desire for enduring relations of reciprocity, mutual recognition, and respect from both employers and the state. As one worker put it: 'We want recognition for the sacrifice that we RSE workers make . . . We make a big sacrifice in our personal lives and our family welfare for this labour mobility scheme'. Workers' dignity is not opposed to dependence, argues Sayer (2007: 570), but rather dignity is affirmed when we can make claims on others, and achieve respect and recognition while acknowledging our dependence on others.

Conclusion: The non-contractual element in the work contract

Whilst seasonal worker programmes have recently been promoted in some corners as an alternative to aid in facilitating economic development, they have long been critiqued for exploiting pools of cheap labour, and for fostering relations of dependency between sending and receiving nations, and between migrants and employers. Anthropological studies have complemented political economy analyses in revealing the experiences of workers performing difficult, dirty, and sometimes degrading work (e.g. Basok 2002; Binford 2013; Hennebray & Preibisch 2010; Holmes 2013). As a fledgeling fieldworker versed in this literature, and having come across allegations of exploitation on-line, I was prepared to focus on the dark side of employment relations. However, I was struck by the fact that most of the time, workers described not only the high value they placed on employment opportunities, but also their employers and colleagues in personalized and affective terms. I felt that to ignore workers' desire to perpetuate and cultivate

these employment relations would betray them, and may threaten the chances of such relationships to flourish.

Ethnographic insights into the 'moral economy' of actors in temporary worker programmes help reveal how relations of dependency between temporary foreign workers and employers can lead to experiences of exploitation and manipulation, yet also mutual advantage and reciprocal obligation. Ni-Vanuatu seasonal workers experience a double estrangement: one concerns the subordination of their rhythms of life to a new regime of time-discipline; the other, their relationships with employers and others within the host-state. The latter is heightened when exploitation and dehumanization are experienced not only as a structural condition of the labour process, but also as a betrayal of personal and moral relationships.

Ni-Vanuatu seasonal workers and their employers draw on the language of hospitality, kinship, and friendship when discussing employment relations. Although such language can conceal relations of inequality, even exploitation, it can also be used to make moral claims, asserting mutual obligations and a right to dignity because of the general character of the 'law of hospitality', and its resonance across political, social, and cultural divides. The 'law of hospitality' is expressive of a 'non-contractual element in the contract' that extends beyond the reach of the state and is legally unenforceable. It is bound by mutual obligation and recognition (Mauss 2002 [1923]; Shryock 2008: 413), and is not only crucial to how workers evaluate their engagements as just or unjust, but also a means whereby they can alter and renegotiate their employment relations (Moore 1978: 18, 24-5). Whilst it is easier to refuse recognition to strangers (Pitt-Rivers 2012 [1977]: 506), appeals to friendship, kinship, and hospitality help workers to affirm their dignity and mitigate vulnerability in the context of dependence. In appealing to a sense of enduring moral obligation and reciprocal dependence, Ni-Vanuatu workers can counter the kinds of estrangement that inhere in the doubly alienated position of their abstract valuation as quantities of labour-time, and their marginalized positions as cultural and political outsiders.

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¹ Personal and company names have been changed to protect their anonymity.

² The New Hebrides was declared an Anglo-French Condominium in 1906 when France and the United Kingdom agreed to administer the islands jointly.

³ Lamén and Epi have undergone intermittent periods of labour migration. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Epi was a major destination for recruiters in the labour trade to Queensland (see note 5), New Caledonia, Fiji, and Samoa, where islanders were indentured for years at a time. After suffering heavy depopulation and land alienation, Epi became a destination for plantation labourers from other islands, and later from Vietnam, whilst Lamén islanders preferred to trade their own copra. Compulsory war conscription of adult males in 1942 led to many islanders experiencing town life for the first time (Haberkorn 1990: 155). The 1950s and early 1960s saw most younger Lamén men engaging in circular migration to a fishery on Espiritu Santo island, through Donald Gubbay, whose company was seen as having cargo cult-like characteristics (Guiart 1951: 244). From the late 1960s through to the 1970s, many Lamén men travelled in groups to Noumea, New Caledonia, to work in mining and construction. During this period, remittances became an important source of national income, until the economic decline in the mid- to late 1970s (Haberkorn 1990: 156-7). This period also saw a transition from more circular migration patterns to more permanent migration to urban centres. Following Independence in 1980, there was little opportunity to work internationally, except on foreign fishing vessels, until the launch of these seasonal worker programmes.

⁴ Employees charged with providing 'Pastoral Care' for seasonal workers, such as ensuring workers receive necessary medical attention, have access to religious observance, shopping, banking, and other resources. Provision of Pastoral Care is required by state policies, although in practice what it entails has been subject to contestation.

⁵ 'Blackbirding' is the colloquial term for the notorious nineteenth-century labour trade. More people from Epi were recruited to Queensland than any other island except Malaita – an island many times its population (Price & Baker 1976: 114). Munro (1995) outlines a pertinent debate surrounding the Queensland labour trade, between those historians who emphasize voluntary recruitment and islander agency, versus those who foreground coercion and exploitation. It seems that in Epi, kidnapping and abuse were prevalent in the early period, but gradually workers actively sought to recruit.

⁶ Work opportunities also resonated with people's interpretation of development as evidence of God's blessing: the missionary was celebrated for having delivered a secondary school and a hospital, reversing the fortunes of a former 'island of the lost' (Young 1997: 118-22).

⁷ Markets originated on the boundaries between communities, taking place between strangers and would-be enemies; a relation that Marx termed one of 'reciprocal isolation or foreignness' (1990 [1867]: 182; cf. Graeber 2011: 30; Polanyi 1944: 61-2; Sahlins 1972: 199). One could argue that market logic and the gift logic of the 'law of hospitality' are alternative ways to 'deal with strangers'.

⁸ They have since been invited back. They told me this was because their novice replacements were not nearly so productive.

⁹ Prior to missionary pacification in Melanesia, when a castaway or stranger was unfortunate enough to stray onto one's territory, the choice was often to kill them or make them kin (Codrington 1891: 346; cf. McDougall 2016: 28-9 on 'warrior welcomes').

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Sois notre hôte/notre ouvrier : dépendance réciproque et expressions d'hospitalité parmi les travailleurs migrants Ni-Vanuatu

Résumé

Bien que l'on s'intéresse à nouveau davantage à leur potentiel de développement, les programmes de migration temporaire sont critiqués depuis longtemps parce qu'ils créeraient les conditions de l'exploitation et favoriseraient la dépendance. Dans le présent article, basé sur une étude de cas de travailleurs saisonniers Ni-Vanuatu employés par l'industrie horticole néo-zélandaise, l'auteur montre comment ouvriers comme employeurs cultivent et entretiennent activement des relations de dépendance mutuelle et décrivent souvent celles-ci dans des termes familiaux de parenté et d'hospitalité. Il n'en reste pas moins que les ouvriers se sentent aliénés, à la fois dans le sens marxien d'une subordination à un régime de discipline temporelle et au sens intersubjectif où ils se sentent traités sans respect ou sans bienveillance. L'auteur montre comment

l'attention portée à « l'élément non contractuel » dans le contrat de travail, notamment aux expressions d'hospitalité, peut contribuer à des débats anthropologiques autour du travail, de la migration et de la dépendance et à la compréhension interdisciplinaire de la justice des migrations de main-d'œuvre.

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