Immigration Futures: New Zealand in a Global Context

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Abstract

At no other time in the past century has there been such focused and intense <u>global</u> interest in international migration. Never before has there been such interest, internationally, in how Australia, Canada and New Zealand manage their international migration. These countries have become models for governments elsewhere who are seeking to develop policy that has a more direct impact on the quality of the population flows into their countries.

New Zealand is unusual by OECD standards in that it has a high level of emigration of citizens at the same time that it has a very high per capita rate of immigration. New Zealand's contemporary migration flows are examined briefly and it is demonstrated that the system is not nearly as dominated by migration from countries in northeast Asia as it was a decade ago.

A more flexible approach to the attainment of permits to reside in a country is being adopted in most countries now. The prospective migrants take the opportunity to assess employment opportunities and the quality of life in a prospective new home (perhaps not their only home either), while working or studying on temporary permits and gaining the sort of local experience that is valued in the points-based immigrant selection systems. The paper concludes with a brief analysis of data relating to transition to residence in New Zealand.

New "Age" and "Era" of Migration: A Point of Departure

In 1993 Stephen Castles and Mark Miller published a book carrying the title *The Age of Migration. International Population Movements in the Modern World.* The title was catchy, but the introductory paragraphs portrayed a gloomy contemporary context within which the "Age of Migration" was situated. Castles and Miller (1993:1-2) opened their discussion by referring to three dramatic events in 1992: the Los Angeles riots in May – the US's first

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"multicultural riots"; neo-Nazi onslaughts on refugee hostels in Germany in August and September – a resurgence of extreme right organizations victimizing vulnerable newcomers who were "different"; and the disintegration of Yugoslavia, a violent period of "ethnic cleansing" that generated millions of refugees. They went on to observe:

> All of these happenings were linked to mass international population movements and to the problems of living together in one society for ethnic groups with diverse cultures and social conditions. … The events of 1992 [and they listed others in Africa, the Middle East, south-east Asia, the Caribbean] were symptomatic of major changes in international relations and in the societies of both highly developed and less developed countries. New forms of global migration and growing ethnic diversity are related to fundamental transformations in economic, social and political structures in this post-modern and post-Cold War epoch (Castles and Miller 1993:2).

Fast forward 14 years to May 2006 when the Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, released the organisation's "early road map for [a] new era of mobility" that is creating challenges and opportunities for societies throughout the world, and is requiring Governments everywhere to re-examine their migration polices (UN 2006:5). The context for this "new era" is portrayed in a very different way from that found in the introduction to Castles and Miller's classic study. The authors of the UN report (2006: 5) observed:

> The advantages that migration brings, both to migrants and to the societies they join, are not as well understood as they might be. Migration stirs passionate debate. It can deprive countries of its best and brightest, and it can divide families. For all the good it can bring, it can also generate social tensions; for example, issues relating to migrant integration are the focus of intense controversy. Sometimes criminals and terrorists exploit the flow of peoples. Nevertheless, the answers to many of the problems raised by migration may be found through constructive engagement and debate. This will lead to a broader recognition of the enormous benefits and opportunities that migration provides.

A Burgeoning International Literature

At no other time in the past century has there been such focused and intense global interest in international migration. Governments, multi-lateral organisations, local authorities, NGOs, the private sector and the research community are all addressing issues to do with international migration in a more focused and coherent way. International migration has been the

subject of more major reports over the past 18 months than it has ever generated before. These include:

2006:

International Migration and Development. Report of the Secretary-General. United Nations, New York
International Migration and Development: Opportunities and Challenges for Policy Makers, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Geneva
International Labour Migration. World Bank, Washington DC
2005 Global Refugee Trends. UNHCR, Geneva

2005:

Migration in an Interconnected World: New Directions for Action. Report of the Global Commission on International Migration (GCIM), Switzerland
Communication on Migration and Development. European Union, Brussels
International Migration and the Millennium Development Goals, UNFPA, New York.
Migration and Development. House of Commons, London.

International migration is certainly topical, and the UN Secretary-General "is confident that the High-level Dialogue on International Migration and development on 14 and 15 September [2006] will be remembered as the moment when cooperation on this vital matter attained a new level". Cooperation is essential for several reasons, not the least of which is the burgeoning competition between countries for labour, especially skilled labour. One of the key stimulants to the recent proliferation of reports on migration and development is the recognition that skilled labour is in demand in the labour markets of most economies, not just those in the more developed countries. New Zealand has been in competition for many years with Australia, Canada and the United States for highly skilled labour; we are frequently the fourth preference out of this group for migrants seeking work and residence, but even to attract the people we do we have to be constantly evaluating our policy settings to ensure they send signals that encourage rather than discourage potential immigrants.

If we think the current competition is stiff then we have a major surprise awaiting us in the future. At the Immigration Futures International Forum in Prato (Italy) in May, Ronald Skeldon, author of a very interesting book entitled *Migration and Development: a Global Perspective* (1997), alerted participants to the massive demand for skilled labour in China as that economy continues to grow at more than double the rate of most economies elsewhere. China is now attracting back many of the migrants who left for tertiary education and professional training overseas in the 1980s and 1990s

– the jobs and salaries that can now be obtained at home are encouraging significant return migration, especially from Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Our immigrants of yesterday are not necessarily settlers; as will be seen later in this paper, almost a third of New Zealand's permanent and long-term departures in the year 1 April 2005-31 March 2006 were not New Zealand citizens – they were citizens of other countries that are still considered to be their homes. For an increasing number of highly skilled migrants "home" is no longer in one country – as Tracey Barnett (2006) observed in an interesting article in the *New Zealand Herald* on 14 June, they "represent the unprecedented growth of a transnational global culture".

Managing Migration in a New Era: Best Practice in the New World?

In the "new era of mobility", with its blurred boundaries between different types of movement (permanent, temporary, settler, visitor, circular, return), New Zealand, like Australia and Canada, is fortunate in having a long history of pro-active immigration policy – in most parts of the world there is no tradition of deliberately seeking migrants who might settle. As John Martin (2006), Director for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs at the OECD, argued recently, only a small number of countries grant the right of permanent residence on entry to selected migrants; the great majority grant temporary residence rights with options for a transition to more permanent residence for some groups. Temporary permits are the normal entry-way, rather than approval for permanent residence, with accumulation of work/residence rights over time being the pathway to long-term stays.

Never before has there been such interest, internationally, in how Australia, Canada and New Zealand manage their international migration. Our policy settings, have many broad similarities including: points-based selection systems for skilled migrant streams; a family sponsorship/reunion stream; provision for quotas of refugees; English language requirements (and/or French in Canada); a preference for younger migrants over older ones; and we all give credit for high academic qualifications. There are important differences in our selection systems as well, and these are not just in the specific operational details. Australia manages its selection of skilled migrants much more closely in terms of aligning qualifications and skills with specific jobs, with an increasing emphasis on using international students with Australian education and work experience, as the key pool of

potential approvals in their skilled migrant stream. In New Zealand attempts are made to match skills and experience with demand in the labour market, but there is less concern with quite deliberate alignment of jobs, qualifications and skills. Canada selects on the basis of human capital and is much less inclined to try and match migrant skills with particular jobs.

An excellent comparative analysis of current skilled migrant selection systems in New Zealand, Australia and Canada, and the newly introduced 5 tier system in the United Kingdom, can be found in Chapter 4 ("International approaches to skilled migration") in a major report evaluating Australia's skilled migration categories (Birrell *et al.* 2006). This is probably the most comprehensive contemporary analysis of skilled migrant selection systems in countries deliberately targeting such people as potential settlers. Appended to the report are case studies dealing with skilled migration in New Zealand (Bedford 2006), Canada (Hiebert 2006) and UK (Salt 2006). The report can be downloaded from the website of Australia's Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (DIMA – until recently, DIMIA).

The major assumption underlying the human capital model of immigrant selection that all of the current points systems in Australia, Canada and New Zealand are based on is that people with good education qualifications, appropriate language skills, and appropriate work experience will integrate easily into domestic labour markets. However, this approach to migrant selection is being subjected to increased micro-management, especially in Australia. Recent comparative research on employment experiences of immigrants in Australia and Canada (Richardson and Lester 2004; Hawthorne 2006; Birrell *et al.* 2006) has demonstrated that the labour market outcomes in terms of types of work, incomes, and matching qualifications/skills with jobs are much better in Australia than in Canada. "Picking winners", as Lesleyanne Hawthorne (2005) has called the recent transformation of Australia's skilled migration policy, is attracting a lot of interest in other countries, including New Zealand. It is a new dimension to immigration policy that has upped the competition for the best and brightest in the intensifying battle for brains. Experience with managing immigration is itself a skill that is in demand. Australia, Canada and New Zealand have become models for governments elsewhere who are seeking to develop policy that has a more direct impact on the quality of the population flows into their countries.

In the next section the flows of people into and out of New Zealand for periods of 12 months or more are examined briefly. New Zealand's contemporary international migration system (Bedford 2005) remains heavily influenced by the movements in and out of the country by New Zealanders; own citizen movements are not tracked in many OECD countries but it is clear in the case of New Zealand that these cannot be ignored in either the outflows or the inflows. Traditional sources (especially the UK and Ireland and the island countries of the eastern Pacific) have come to dominate the net migration gains of citizens of other countries again – the system is not nearly as dominated by migration from countries in northeast Asia as it was a decade ago.

The paper concludes with some observations on an important recent trend in immigration in New Zealand and Australia: the transition to permanent residence status from temporary work or student permits. This more flexible approach to the attainment of permits to reside in a country is being adopted in most countries now – it is the "suck it and see" approach to residential migration. The prospective migrants take the opportunity to assess employment opportunities and the quality of life in a prospective new home (perhaps not their only home either), while working or studying on temporary permits and gaining the sort of local experience that is valued in the points-based immigrant selection systems.

Contemporary PLT Migration in New Zealand

New Zealand is the OECD country with the highest per capita rate of immigration, the highest per capita rate of emigration and the second largest diaspora per person (after Ireland) in the resident population. The country is unusual in having such a high level of emigration of citizens at the same time that it has such a very high per capita rate of immigration. In the year ended March 2006 there were 80,125 PLT arrivals, 24,234 or 30 per cent of whom were New Zealand citizens returning after absences overseas of 12 months or more (Statistics New Zealand 2006) (Table 1). Over the same period there were 70,386 PLT departures, 22,088 or 31 per cent of whom were citizens of countries other than New Zealand leaving after a period of residence of 12 months or more. The difference between the numbers of PLT arrivals and departures was +9,739 – the balance between a net loss of 24,064 New Zealand citizens, and a net gain of 33,803 citizens of other countries (Table 1). The broad components of New Zealand's

international population flows are remarkably symmetrical in terms of magnitude. When all of the arrivals and departures (including short-term visitors and tourists) are taken into account the net migration gain falls to 7,386 – the balance between 4.342 million arrivals and 4.320 million departures.

The main groups of people, defined by citizenship, moving to and from New Zealand for 12 months or more during the year ended March 2006 are shown in Table 1. Leaving aside the New Zealand citizens, the major group of non-citizens entering was from the UK and Ireland – just over 15,500 PLT arrivals or 28 per cent of the 55,900 non-NZ citizens who came to New Zealand during the year intending to stay 12 months or more. Citizens from northeast Asia (People's Republic of China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Korea, Japan) comprised a much smaller group in 2005/06 -- 9,845 (18 per cent of non-NZ citizens).

This was a very different situation from that which prevailed a decade earlier in the year ended March 1996. In that year, the citizens from northeast Asia comprised 18,667 (33 per cent) of the 56,840 non-NZ citizen PLT arrivals, while the citizens of UK and Ireland numbered only 8,147 (14 per cent) (Table 2). Indeed, the position with regard to "traditional" and "non-traditional" sources of immigrants for New Zealand (see Bedford et al. (2002) for an elaboration of this classification of source countries) in 2005/06 was effectively the reverse of that in 1995/96 (Tables 1 and 2). Traditional sources accounted for 60 per cent of the non-NZ citizen PLT arrivals in 2005/06 compared with 36 percent in 1995/96. Citizens of all of the long-established sources of immigrants to New Zealand were more numerous in the PLT arrivals in the year ended March 2006 than they had been in the same year a decade ago.

While numbers of PLT arrivals in the two March years are very similar (80,125 in 2005/06 and 80,228 in 1995/96) there are some major differences in the numbers and citizen distribution of the PLT departures (70,386 in 2005/06 and 50,456 in 1995/96) (Tables 1 and 2). There is a tendency to regard PLT departures essentially as New Zealand citizens leaving the country for 12 months or more. In 1995/96 76 per cent of the PLT departures were New Zealand citizens. Of the remaining 11,931 PLT departures in that year, 8,091 or 68 per cent were citizens of countries that have been traditional sources of migrants to New Zealand for many decades – Australia, the UK and Ireland, North America and the Pacific Islands.

In the larger PLT departure flow in 2005/06, New Zealand citizens leaving, while more numerous than they had been a decade earlier, comprised a smaller share (69 per cent) of the outflow. The proportion of the remaining 22,088 PLT departures who were not travelling on New Zealand passports and who were from traditional sources had also fallen to just over half (53 per cent) (Tables 1 and 2). In fact 30 per cent of the PLT departures, who were not travelling on New Zealand passports, were citizens of countries in northeast Asia – a much higher share than they had been in the out-flow in 1995/96 (17 per cent).

Table 1: PLT arrivals, departures and net migration, 2005/06

Citizenship	Arrivals	Departures	Net gain/loss
New Zealand	24,234	48,298	(24,064)
Traditional sources			
Australia	5,070	3,175	1,895
Pacific Is	5,163	939	4,224
UK/Ireland	15,522	4,389	11,133
Nth/West Europe	4,270	1,487	2,783
Nth America	3,327	1,731	1,596
Sub-total	*33,352*	*11,721*	*21,631*
Non-traditional sources			
Sth/East Europe	1,148	379	769
NE Asia	9,845	6,720	3,125
SE Asia	3,897	1,358	2,539
Sth/Cent Asia	3,700	843	2,857
Middle East	664	126	538
Africa	2,439	486	1,953
Sth/Cent America	846	454	392
Sub-total	*22,539*	*10,366*	*12,173*
NS/not collected	0	1	(1)
Total	**80,125**	**70,386**	**9,739**
Excluding NZ citizens	55,891	22,088	33,803
% Trad. Sources 2006	59.7	53.1	64.0
% Trad. Sources 1996	35.8	67.8	27.3

[Note: last row of Table is duplicated at bottom of Table 2]
Source: unpublished tables provided by Statistics New Zealand

Table 2: PLT arrivals, departures and net migration, 1995/96

Citizenship	Arrivals	Departures	Net gain/loss
New Zealand	23,405	38,525	(15,120)
Traditional sources			
Australia	4,967	2,707	2,260
Pacific Is	3,332	1,029	2,303
UK/Ireland	8,147	2,520	5,627
Nth/West Europe	1,738	773	965
Nth America	2,180	1,062	1,118
Sub-total	*20,364*	*8,091*	*12,273*
Non-traditional sources			
Sth/East Europe	2,528	96	2,432
NE Asia	18,667	2,002	16,665
SE Asia	4,802	1,112	3,690
Sth/Cent Asia	5,142	222	4,920
Middle East	2,391	77	2314
Africa	2,639	156	2,483
Sth/Cent America	307	142	165
Sub-total	*36,476*	*3,807*	*32,669*
NS/not collected	43	33	10
Total	**80,288**	**50,456**	**29,832**
Excluding NZ citizens	56,883	11,931	44,952
% Trad. Sources 1996	35.8	67.8	27.3

Source: unpublished tables provided by Statistics New Zealand

The departure of migrants who have been living in New Zealand for 12 months or more is not necessarily a sign that they have decided to re-emigrate either back to their former homes or on to another new one, like Australia. A recent study of the subsequent mobility behaviour of all migrants who were approved for residence between 1998 and 2004, and took up residence in New Zealand, reveals that for some groups movement in and out of the country is an important feature of their lives here (Shorland 2006). This very timely study reveals a great deal about the movement behaviour of new settlers in New Zealand; it is quite clear from the results that maintaining economic and social connections in more than

one country is as important for many of our recent migrants as it is for New Zealanders who have moved overseas.

The subsequent mobility behaviour of New Zealanders, who migrated to Australia between August 1999 and July 2002, has recently been studied by Lynda Sanderson (2006a, 2006b) using a data set provided by the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs in Canberra. The 112,454 New Zealanders included in the data base had made over 900,000 moves since arriving in Australia, and the majority of these moves had been to and from New Zealand. Settlers are not necessarily intending to stay put when they arrive in their new homes; circulation of people, rather than a one-way movement to a new country of residence is the norm now rather than an exception. As Kofi Annan notes in the UN's recent report on international migration:

> [T]he personal experience of being a migrant has … changed dramatically. Just a quarter of a century ago, going abroad in pursuit of opportunity, or in flight from conflict, meant a wrenching, long-term separation. Contact with home was, at best, a precious five-minute phone call every month, perhaps a visit every few years, and a cherished newspaper that arrived weeks late.
>
> Owing to the communications and transportation revolution, today's international migrants are, more than ever before, a dynamic human link between cultures, economies and societies. Penny-a-minute phone cards keep migrants in close touch with family and friends at home, and just a few seconds are needed for the global financial system to transmit their earnings to remote corners of the … world where they can buy food, clothing, shelter, pay for education or health care, and can relieve debt. The Internet and satellite technology allow a constant exchange of news and information between migrants and their home countries. Affordable airfares permit more frequent trips home, easing the way for a more fluid, back-and-forth pattern of mobility (UN 2006:7).

New Zealand's data on PLT arrivals and departures, when used in conjunction with information on approvals for residence collected by the Department of Labour, demonstrates clearly that migrants to this country are living the new paradigm of international migration. This paradigm emphasizes circulation of population rather than one-way flows of migrants from source countries to destinations (Hugo 1999), and the dual role of many countries, including New Zealand, as both the source of as well as the destination for many of its citizens as well as its immigrants.

Transition to Residence

An integral dimension of the new paradigm of international migration is the shift towards more flexible policies with regard to changes in visa/permit status by people who do not have the right to reside permanently in a country. There has been a fundamental shift in thinking by policy makers in New Zealand about international migration over the past decade. At the time of the national Population Conference in 1997, the discourse about immigration was still overwhelmingly couched in terms of permanent or long-term movement for residence (NZIS 1997; Bedford and Ho 1997). Temporary migration was considered to be a different process and topic altogether. Nine years later, there are virtually no reports being produced by the Department of Labour, or by the significant academic and private sector research providers who specialize in international migration, that do not make reference to temporary as well as permanent movements. The domain of international migration for policy makers, at least in New Zealand, has come to encompass a much wider array of movements than was common in the past.

In their annual report on migration trends, the Department of Labour (2005: 32) reported that:

> Approximately 30 per cent of [temporary] work and student permit holders gain permanent residence within five years of being issued a temporary permit. Although this proportion is relatively steady over time, the increasing number of people approved for work or student permits since 1997/98 has seen a growing number of workers and students transferring to residence. …
>
> Work permit holders are more likely to convert from a temporary permit to residence than students. This finding is expected, given the links between temporary entry policy (such as Work to Residence policy) and permanent residence. Overall, 37 per cent of people issued with a work permit in 1997/98 have subsequently gained permanent residence. The comparable figure for students is 21 per cent.

This is not the place for a detailed analysis of the transition to residence phenomenon; a more comprehensive examination of the statistics relating to workers and students can be found in Bedford and Ho (2006), and the policies that facilitate this movement are discussed in Bedford (2006) and Birrell *et al.* (2006). The important point to appreciate is that transitions to residence are being used now as a major strategy to attract longer-term

residents, especially residents who already have some knowledge of and familiarity with the job market and living conditions in the country to which they are moving. Australia has been targeting international students in particular as potential migrants and the extensive review of the skilled migrant category that was commissioned by DIMA was designed in part to assess how successful his sort of policy has been in producing desirable outcomes for the Australian labour market as well as for the new settlers (Birrell *et al.* 2006).

In New Zealand's case the Department of Labour (2005: 30) has pointed out that:

> Eighty-eight per cent of all principal applicants approved for residence in 2004/05 had previously held a work, study or visitor permit at some stage since July 1997. Principal applicants approved through the skilled/business stream were more likely than principal applicants approved through the other two residence schemes [family sponsorship and international/humanitarian] to have held a temporary permit prior to residence (92 per cent). Of this 92 percent, most (80 per cent) had previously held a work permit.

The nationalities with the highest incidence of prior visits, work or study before applying for residence were South Korea (99 per cent), Japan (98 per cent), Germany (97 per cent), South Africa (96 per cent), the USA (95 per cent) and the UK (90 per cent). Almost half of the 15,174 principal applicants approved for residence in 2004/05, who had held a permit before applying for residence, had been issued with a labour market tested work permit. A further 30 per cent had been issued to immigrant partners or spouses of New Zealand residents and citizens.

Clearly, transfers from work and study are becoming a very important route to residence in New Zealand, and it is no longer advisable to treat temporary permits as a completely separate category of migration policy. Good employment and settlement outcomes for both the migrants and the host society are critical determinants of the success of contemporary immigration policy, and the work to residence transition provides one very effective route to building the experience and capability required to achieve these outcomes. The links between temporary and permanent movement are inextricably interwoven in the lives of those approved for residence, and policy makers concerned about their settlement and labour market experiences need to be fully aware of this interconnectedness between forms

of movement which have tended to get treated separately for policy purposes.

A Concluding Comment

The pivotal space for the debate about immigration remains the nation. As the Secretary-General for the United Nations notes, "It is for Governments to decide whether more or less migration is desirable" (UN 2006:8). However, the stage within which national policy and debate is taking place has taken on new dimensions in recent years. As the UN (2006:9-10) acknowledges:

> Many, if not most, States understand that international migration cannot be managed unilaterally. Consequently, country partnerships and bilateral agreements on migration are multiplying. In addition, regional consultative processes on international migration have been established in most parts of the world. The latter have proved useful in building trust and promoting cooperation among Governments. But migration is not only a regional phenomenon. Its scale and complexity are global. Furthermore, international migration, like trade and finance, is a fundamental feature of today's world system. And like trade and finance, migration demands attention at a global level.

There is plenty of scope for innovative, challenging and rewarding work in the migration field, especially as most developed countries, including New Zealand, as well as many of the less developed ones, are in the process of reviewing and amending their immigration policies and regulations so that they can compete better and cope better in the rapidly changing world of international migration.

Acknowledgement

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