Foreign Seasonal Workers in New Zealand Horticulture:

An Ethnographic Account of the Nexus of Labour and Immigration Policies and Employment Practices

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Abstract

This qualitative study explores the nexus of labour and immigration policies and employment practices in New Zealand. This thesis focuses on multiple experiences of the foreign workers employed under the main labour immigration policies. The ethnography, using both observation and semi-structured interviews of these different groups of seasonal workers provided sufficient data to review and elaborate core theoretical immigration issues.

This dissertation contributes to a growing body of qualitative studies on guest workers and temporary labour migration. My research provides an original methodological contribution by utilizing not only interviews but also participant observation including the work season before beginning this thesis. This dissertation is one of the few insider studies of foreign workers conducted by another foreigner. The main advantage of this methodology was the willingness of most informants to open their hearts to a person with the same status of a foreign worker who had similar experiences.

Situating my research in an orchard, I aimed to explore how the temporary labour policies shaped both workers’ experience with working conditions and their treatment by the employers. This research revealed questionable employment practices associated with rural work. These practices included visa-dependent controversial treatment of some foreign workers, misuse of the piece rate system, stereotypical gendered division of labour and even racial assumptions about the work performance depending on physical characteristics of different nations.
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Love,

Jana
Notes on Grammar

In this thesis, I use the exact transcriptions of foreign workers’ quotations. These contain grammar mistakes, foreign words, colloquial and sometimes coarse language.

When writing about the inhabitants of Vanuatu, I used a demonym “ni-Vanuatu,” which refers to all ethnicities originating in Vanuatu. Some scholars prefer the expression “Ni-Vanuatu,” but “ni-Vanuatu” is more frequent and I chose this term because it was used in a recent study conducted by the Department of Labour (2009).

Capital letters are used for all words in the titles of Anglo-Saxon books and articles, but lower case letters are common for other publications.

List of Abbreviations

NZIS   New Zealand Immigration Service
RSE    Recognised Seasonal Employer
SWP    Seasonal Work Permit
TRSE   Transitioning to Recognised Seasonal Employer
VOC    Variation of Conditions
WHV    Working Holiday Visa
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Chapter One: Introduction

1. 1 Three stories

Snapshot 1: Jean

Jean (French) is a twenty-four years old bored student, who does not like his studies. Jean leaves university and decides to “find himself” in a foreign country. Just any English-speaking country. Then he sees an advertisement with an idealized picture of a smiling girl picking apples in New Zealand. He applies for the Working Holiday Visa, contacts an employer in Motueka and a few weeks later, he arrives in New Zealand.

Snapshot 2: Achi

Achi (Malaysian) is a thirty-one years old technician, too old to apply for the working holiday visa. Therefore he appreciates that his friend, who works in the vineyards in New Zealand, offers to arrange a lucrative job and the Seasonal Work Permit for Achi. Achi sends some money to his friend’s account and leaves for New Zealand. But here, Achi will realize that the job is not as good as he was promised. Before going to work in Motueka, Achi and his friend will become victims of an unscrupulous labour contractor, who never pays them what they really earn.

Snapshot 3: Adam

Adam (Ni-Vanuatu) is almost forty years old, married with three children and many other relatives in his extended family. He comes from the island of Epi, where he grows peanuts for the market. Otherwise, he has never worked for an employer. Adam lives in a village with no electricity, no showers and no cars. He would like to earn some money to improve his household and to be able to pay for the school fees for his children. A missionary just told him about the Recognised Seasonal Employer scheme and Adam decided to go to work in New Zealand’s orchards. At first, his family did not want him to leave, but they trusted the missionary and realized that this was a big chance for the whole community. Adam is excited but also a bit scared to go, because that town Motueka in New Zealand seems so different than his home place.
These three men went to New Zealand for completely different reasons, under different visa conditions and they were treated in different ways. But they had something in common: they met at one workplace and they were asked for an interview by an anthropology student, who wanted to capture their experience in a thesis. What follows is their and their co-workers story, where the workers describe their experience with temporary labour schemes in New Zealand. From these stories, we can learn about the nexus of labour and immigration policies and employment practices in New Zealand.

1.2 The aims of this thesis

In the last two decades, international migration has been undergoing a change, which anthropologist Tanya Basok (2010, p.1) called “a global transformation.” This means that an increasing number of labour migrants are admitted on a temporary employment visa, which is viewed as a possible policy tool to manage labour migration. In reality, as Basok explains, it is more attractive for policy makers to provide migrants temporary visas than to admit them into the country as residents.

The re-emergence of temporary migration programs is highly contested in the academic community. The critical arguments are common because in the past, several of the guest worker programmes generated numerous unanticipated consequences (Castles 1986, Krikorian 2004 and 2006, Martin 2000, Miller and Martin 1982, Ruhs 2005). In contrast, proponents of the new temporary programmes argue that if properly administered, these programmes can be advantageous for both the countries of origin and countries of destination (Abella 2006, Basok 2000 and 2003, Hugo 2008, Ruhs 2005).¹

This temporary migration trend has been noticeable also in New Zealand where the number of workers admitted under the temporary programmes has been growing during the last few years. These were not only working holiday-makers as since 2007 also Pacific islanders were recruited into the new Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) policy. In response to this development,

¹ More details are provided in the literature review (Chapter Two).
Timmins (2009, p. 5) suggested ongoing research of the seasonal workforce: “The RSE scheme, together with other government initiatives designed to improve the supply of seasonal workers, has increased the need for information about seasonal workers, firms and industries in New Zealand to support policy decision making.” Several other authors have noticed the necessity to explore the situation of the temporary workers and the policies which they came under. For example, Bedford and Ho (2006a, 2006b) found that temporary migrants and policy to address temporary migration have become increasingly important to New Zealand economy. Although the scale of temporary migrant workers employed in agriculture in New Zealand is smaller than the numbers of such workers in some other countries, this is nonetheless an important development and one that needs ongoing research (Lovelock and Leopold 2008).

This thesis aims to contribute to filling the information gap on seasonal employment as there is a relatively small body of literature on temporary migration in New Zealand (see Chapter Two). Moreover, few of the existing studies discussing this topic are anthropological. Typically, these studies capture a selected group of overseas workers, such as working holiday-makers (New Zealand Immigration Service 2004b) or the RSE workers (for example Connell and Hammond 2009, Gibson et al. 2008, Lovelock and Leopold 2008, Luthria 2008, Ramasamy et al. 2008).

In contrast, this thesis does not focus only on one group of foreign workers, but it includes working holiday-makers, RSE workers, work permit holders and those with no work permit (undocumented workers). I hope to bring new inputs into the academic discussion by providing an ethnographic account of the nexus of labour and immigration policies and employment practices in New Zealand. This thesis is a case study that examines labour mobility schemes for seasonal rural workers and their realization at an orchard in the town of Motueka. It focuses on multiple experiences of the workers employed under the main labour immigration policies. The main aim is to examine how the policies shape workers’ experience with working conditions. Although these policies are the main focus, they cannot be separated from the relationships and employment practices at the workplace, because these practices depend considerably on the policies that the workers come under. I want to investigate this connection and describe not only how the workers experience these policies, but also how the policies work in practice; that
means to reveal how visa conditions influence employers’ treatment of the employees.

Except for this main research question, I want to examine additional questions generated from the academic discussion on temporary work schemes. These questions can be divided into several areas. The first and second area concerned the perceptions of the workers and employers on the effectiveness of temporary work programmes and employers’ reasons for hiring foreign nationals. The necessity of temporary work programmes in the face of technological or mechanical innovation was the third discussion area for the orchard managers. Did foreign workers slow technological development and reduce investment into improving the working conditions at the orchard? Was the “popular antipathy to cheap foreign labour” found in Australia (Maclellan and Mares 2006b, p. 27) also present at this workplace? What forms did this antipathy take?

The fourth area worth examining were my participants’ perceptions of the tensions between temporary and permanent migration. Here the focus was on how many informants intended to settle in New Zealand and what were their motivations? I wanted to explore my participants’ reaction to the immigration policies and the reasons for problems which they faced.

This study seeks answers to these questions with the hope that the research results contribute not only to the discipline of anthropology, but also that they have utility by those involved in employing and administering temporary work schemes in New Zealand, especially within the horticulture industry who expressed interest in the research results into the workers’ perceptions of their working conditions.

1.3 The researcher in the setting: Motueka and the local labour market

Before this research project began, I worked as a seasonal worker in both Hawke’s Bay and in Motueka. It was there where my curiosity for the problems experienced by seasonal foreign workers in New Zealand began. Knowing little about New Zealand society and nothing about the working conditions I started looking for a job. Initially I felt taken advantage of because the working conditions and wages were different than what the advertisement for my first job offered. In Hastings, I also saw discrimination against Asian workers who had to pay more for
the accommodation than I did. Overall, I felt that some employers exploited seasonal workers, taking advantage of their ignorance. When the opportunity arose to begin a PhD, a part of my research question was already created: I wanted to know if my own experiences with seasonal work were typical or unusual. I decided to conduct my research in Motueka, considering the size of the workplaces and the length of my stay.

Motueka is located on the shore of Tasman Bay in the South Island of New Zealand. After Nelson and Richmond, Motueka is the third largest centre in the Nelson – Tasman region, with a population of around 6,000. Originally, I was attracted to this region as a tourist. Motueka is one of the nearest towns to the Abel Tasman and Kahurangi National parks. Abel Tasman National Park, established already in 1942 (Corney 1966, p. 33), draws visitors to sea kayaking and walking the coastal track. With its mild climate, Abel Tasman Park can be visited at any time of the year. The neighbouring Kahurangi National Park, established in 1996, is one of the newest and largest in New Zealand and attracts visitors keen on mountaineering or walking the famous Heaphy Track (McAlloon 1997). Especially in summer, this region is full of backpackers who look for the possibility to stay and work temporarily.

Fruit growing is a major industry in Motueka. It started at the end of the nineteenth century and boomed after 1910 (McAlloon 1997, p. 131). The district was also the main centre of tobacco growing in New Zealand. In 1947, there were 552 tobacco growers in the district (Southern Publications and Agencies 1947, no page numbers, approx. p. 10). Since the 1970s, the orchards have diversified to apples and kiwifruit and the region became the main centre of kiwifruit growing in the South Island. The first kiwifruit was introduced in 1977 (McAlloon 1997, p. 209). Since then, kiwifruit and apple growing has made a significant contribution to the local economy. This region is the second in New Zealand’s pip fruit production, after Hawke’s Bay. There are numerous orchards in the surrounding Tasman district; most of them grow apples, pears and kiwifruit, as well as a variety of specialised crops such as hops, boysenberries and olives (Mackay 2008). A number of vineyards have developed in recent years as well; now there are about twenty-five wineries in Nelson region; however apple and kiwifruit orchards dominate in Motueka.
Currently, there are about 5,870 hectares of land for fruit or vegetable production in the Tasman and Nelson regions (www.hortnz.co.nz/about/industry/stats.html). About 339,000 tonnes of horticultural produce leaves the Port of Nelson each year for offshore markets (www.goldenbayfruit.com). In comparison with other regions, Tasman district hardly competes with North Island horticultural areas which are much larger; however, it is the leading region in South Island. According to the statistics of Horticulture New Zealand there were 10,249 ha of land for kiwifruit growing in Bay of Plenty in 2007, compared to 614 ha in Tasman district (www.hortnz.co.nz/about/industry/stats.html). Tasman district’s apple production is the largest in South Island. The 2000 census of Statistics New Zealand (see http://www.stats.govt.nz/methods_and_services/accessdata/tables/-horticulture-2000.aspx) revealed, that there were 3,696 ha of apple trees in Tasman district (for comparison, there were only 715 ha in Central Otago).

The Tasman district hosts about thirty large orchards and also some smaller family orchards, which employ only a few people, mostly locals. The bigger orchards (that is employing more than ten permanent employers) have to rely on the overseas workers, especially in the harvest time, because of the lack of local workers available. In 2009, there were twenty-six employers allowed to employ RSE workers in the region (Cowdrey 2009).

These and other growers (those employing foreign workers under different schemes) were involved in an association called Seasonal Solutions Nelson. This is the district or governance group, with responsibility of employing people to provide staff for pip fruit, kiwifruit, grapes, boysenberries and vegetable production. Seasonal Solutions also cooperated with the government on implementing the RSE scheme. It has some responsibilities within this scheme, such as training and governance. Seasonal Solutions’ staff had responsibility to coordinate labour and support the employers from the region. Seasonal Solutions is an independent growers’ association; however, it has an umbrella organisation Horticulture New Zealand, through which Seasonal Solutions receive funding from the government. According to the local (that is Nelson-Tasman district) chairman Paul Heywood, the growers try to meet their requirements through this organisation. Heywood explained his organisation’s interface with the government:
We actually have a governance group. An extended governance group in this region. We actually meet from time to time with the Department of Labour, the Ministry of Work and Income, with the Ministry of Immigration. So we meet with the regional people directly, and then we actually meet with the senior people in Wellington through Horticulture NZ. So yes, we do have access to influence change.

Seasonal Solutions’ office was located in the building of Work and Income Motueka. Their agent, seasonal coordinator Anne Riley, described the dual roles of her job. Before the main season starts, Seasonal Solutions’ staff visits employers to survey their requirements. During the peak season, Seasonal Solutions mainly coordinate foreign workers and therefore the seasonal coordinator was an important person to comment on the local labour market.

This research was conducted at Motukiwi, one of the biggest employers in the region. Motukiwi had about seventy hectares of land, both rented and owned. At the time of my fieldwork (December 2007 to May 2008), Motukiwi grew almost the same production of apples and kiwifruit.

The number of employees working at Motukiwi differs during the year. The permanent staff, about twenty people, consists mostly of locals. In winter, there is not much work in the packing shed; however, foreign workers can be offered some temporary outside work, such as pruning apple or kiwifruit trees. In October, and especially in November, Motukiwi starts increasing the number of casual staff, to work with the kiwifruit trees (bud thinning, flower picking, pruning). In December, work demands grow, with apple thinning continuing into January. However, the main picking season lasts from late February until the end of May, when all the apples and kiwifruit are harvested. During this time, Motukiwi employs about eighty people, most who are foreign nationals.

Motukiwi cooperates with another grower, Tasman Apples. Tasman Apples is a larger company that grows apples, kiwifruit and pears close to Motueka. Both companies were involved in RSE, cooperated in bringing ni-Vanuatu workers to Motueka and occasionally shared their workers. Tasman Apples is introduced here because the informants sometimes refer to work at both workplaces, Motukiwi and Tasman Apples.

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Motukiwi and Tasman Apples are pseudonyms. Only certain facts about Motukiwi and Tasman Apples are provided so that both companies cannot be easily identified.
1.4 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is organised into seven chapters. Chapter Two follows up with the explanation of the renewed interest in temporary labour programmes and provides definitions of these programmes and temporary workers. The core of this chapter is the academic discussion about the necessity and viability of temporary programmes. This part shows the diversity of opinions on such programmes as a general category, although it also describes some examples. The international debate between the critics and the supporters of temporary foreign labour generates many questions, similar to research by New Zealand authors. This chapter ends by applying this theoretical diversity to New Zealand’s scene.

Chapter Three contains a description of the methodology, data collection techniques and of the sample. I also discuss the difficulties I encountered when conducting my research.

Chapter Four targets the immigration policies. From this review, only the policies concerning the foreign rural workers are described and their recent changes, as well as the basic information about the history of immigration to New Zealand. The review focuses on the possibilities which the seasonal workers use; highlighting the immigration policies that are a part of so called residency and work permit policies. I also discuss changes in the immigration policies that were in progress during the time of my fieldwork (December 2007 – May 2008) and the way in which they affected the foreign workers.

While chapter Four provides more historical background of the policies, the research results are presented in the following chapters. The first section of Chapter Five introduces the labour market in Motueka and illustrates why it is convenient for the growers to employ foreign labour. It also explains how ni-Vanuatu workers entered this area and some of prejudice they faced. The second section follows on policies in practice. The focus is on how the growers and foreign workers experienced the policies. Since some of my informants changed from temporary workers to “would-be migrants,” I discuss the relation between the temporary and permanent migration. Both sections focus on my informants’ perspectives, but the third section summarises my findings gained mostly by observation.
Chapter Six is an analysis into social interactions and it researches the nexus of labour policies and practices at the workplace. It investigates how visa conditions influence employees’ treatment by the employers and how the policies form the foreign workers’ experience of working in New Zealand. Of particular concern are three variables that influence the employer-employee relationship: visa, gender and ethnicity. Although these variables partly determine the employer-employee interactions, most workers are not completely powerless within this relationship and Chapter Six demonstrates how they resist their employers’ control.

In the last section, Chapter Seven, I summarise and conclude my findings.
Chapter Two: Guest-Worker Programmes: Literature review

Chapter Two outlines the theoretical approaches to guest-worker programmes. It provides definitions of these programmes and summarises the main points in the academic discussion, both internationally and in New Zealand. The diverse academic views concern mainly the viability of the programmes, their adverse consequences and their potential to help the development of the sending countries. The main aim is to introduce both the positive and negative evaluations of employing foreign workers so that I can later explore how these theories relate to the perceptions of the workers and employers.

2.1 The renewed interest in temporary labour programmes

The world appears to be on the threshold of a new era in temporary labour migration programmes, characterized by more sources and destinations for migrant workers (Abella 2006; Martin 2003, 2008). For Abella (2006), or Amin and Mattoo (2005), the issue of temporary versus permanent migration is central to the design of migration policies, which should focus on the creation of carefully designed temporary migration programmes as a means of addressing economic needs of both countries of origin and destination.

Today we can witness a renewed interest in temporary programmes that Steven Castles calls a “resurrection” (2006, in the article title), despite him considering such programmes “dead” by 1986 (Castles 1986). Many countries in the world have seasonal work programmes, which can be used as aid for developing countries and to relieve labour shortages in developed countries. Most of these programmes are designed for work in agriculture. For example, the Canadian Seasonal Agriculture Workers Programme (CSAWP) provides seasonal work opportunities for Mexican and Caribbean workers. In Europe, guest workers are attracted mostly by the Spanish, German and British seasonal agricultural schemes. In Australia, the Pacific Seasonal Workers Pilot scheme (PSWP) allows the guest workers from Kiribati, Tonga and Vanuatu to be employed in the orchards and vineyards. This Australian programme, announced in August 2008, was inspired by the New Zealand’s experience with the Recognised Seasonal
Employer policy (RSE). Up to 2,400 visas have been made available for its phase two, which began in July 2009 and finishes in June 2012 (Ball 2010).

What are the reasons for this “resurrection?” An expert in immigration issues, Philip Martin (2008), stated that current temporary labour migration programmes aim to add workers temporarily to the labour force, but not as settlers to the population. Luthria (2008) was in agreement and emphasized the need to design temporary programmes that balance benefits to both sending and recipient countries, because most destination countries are reluctant to open their borders permanently to unskilled workers due to concerns about the fiscal burden, problems with overstayers or socio-political tensions.

Abella (2006, p. 1) saw the reasons for this development within the temporary programmes’ advantages for both the sending and receiving countries. First, Abella described temporary migration as contributing to greater flexibility in the labour market of the receiving countries. Secondly, temporary admissions are easier to explain to domestic workers and electors who feel threatened by more foreign workers. Thirdly, temporary foreign workers are considered a solution which would not aggravate existing challenges with integrating immigrant communities. These are three main advantages for developed countries. These countries also use temporary programmes to fight illegal migration and to fill temporary labour shortages while remaining competitive in the global market. The main advantage for the countries of origin (often developing countries) is the possibility to gain earnings without the permanent loss of skilled and educated workers (“brain-drain”). Yet, there can be also important disadvantages, as Abella explained:

At the same time it is the source of great concern since in many countries of employment various conditions attached to temporary admission effectively preclude enjoyment of some basic labour rights and entitlements, and place many in a position of vulnerability to discriminatory treatment in wages and abuse. And a third is in the multilateral arena, especially on matters of human and labour rights, since temporary migration in many cases places people in situations where such rights are circumscribed by policies meant to ensure “temporariness” of stay. (Abella 2006, p. 1)

In the following section, I will describe what is meant under this “temporariness.”
2.2 Definitions of temporariness and temporary workers

According to Martin (2008), there seems to be no widely accepted definition of temporary labour migration. Martin conceived, that a temporary worker can be regarded as a "migrant" under certain circumstances and highlighted that the United Nations Population Division defined international migrants as people outside their country of birth or citizenship for twelve months or more, regardless of the reason for moving or legal status abroad (Martin et al. 2006, p. 3). In addition, there is the dictum that "there is nothing more permanent than temporary foreign workers" (Martin 2001, in the article title).

With this definition in my mind, I realized that many of the seasonal workers in New Zealand spent less than a year working abroad and most of those who stayed over twelve months returned to their countries of origin. Therefore, I have attached myself to the definition of Abella (2006) and Ruhs (2002, 2005) who adopted a legal criterion. This means a temporary migrant is a person whose legal status is temporary, regardless of the time he or she spends in a foreign country. His or her work visa does not provide entitlement to a permanent stay in the host country. The term "guest workers" is then the generic label for all migrant workers who have no right to permanent settlement. I also use the term "would-be migrants" which refers to those participants who were allowed to apply for a different visa type and who intended to settle in New Zealand.

In Europe, especially in German-speaking countries, a common expression “Gastarbeiter” is used. This term and its translation “guest worker” captures the German experience with labour migrants from other European states and Turkey who filled Germany’s labour force between 1955 and the early 1970s. At that time, anthropologists turned their attention to the communities of migrants coming to industrialized countries. I mention the “Gastarbeiter” because their situation had some similarities with the workforce development in post-war New Zealand: both workforces started arriving during the post-war economic boom, both were considered “temporary” but stayed longer than anticipated, and both were tolerated until the 1970s.3

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3 In the post-war era, Germany’s private sector needed an influx of a highly mobile workforce that it could deploy to specific sites throughout the country. The guest workers rapidly altered labour relations with Germans taking managerial and clerical positions while the guest workers took up the vacated industrial and
Writing about “Gastarbeiters” is limited to a particular historical situation but terms such as “seasonal-” “migrant-” or “guest-” worker are useful when talking about foreign nationals working in another country on a temporary basis. The term “guest worker” is especially related to a temporary economic migrant. According to an OECD report, temporary worker migration covers different movements and conditions, for example au-pairs, seasonal workers, trainees, contract workers, working holiday makers, exchange visitors, skilled professionals, installers and artists (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2007, p. 51). A United Nations’ publication (1998, p. 92) recognised two broad categories of temporary labour migrants. In the first group, there are persons who migrate for employment reasons such as contract labour migrants, individual contract workers, skilled professionals, seasonal workers and au-pairs. The second group are migrants who do not move primarily for employment reasons (students and tourists), but who subsequently enter the labour market. This thesis will focus on seasonal workers in agriculture.

A special case of temporary labourers are undocumented workers, who need to be mentioned because they create a part of the foreign workforce in New Zealand. Not only in New Zealand, but in many countries with developed economies, a common phenomenon is the existence of illegal or undocumented immigration. This phenomenon deserves attention because it can be connected with human trafficking and exploitation of workers who are especially vulnerable agricultural jobs. The expression “Gastarbeiter” was used for these temporary economic migrants as they were not expected to integrate but return home as skilled workers. Therefore they were not given full rights of citizenship and their legal status remained unclear (Meier-Braun et al. 1998).

Kritz and Keely (1983) viewed the idea of employing unskilled foreign workers and sending them back equipped with experience and new skills as too idealistic. In reality, skills learned were not transferable and there were few opportunities for re-absorption of these workers in their countries of origin (p. xxv). Kritz and Keely explained that labour migration has generally had negative macro consequences for the sending countries or at least has done nothing to change the development status (p. xxx). The sending countries were supposed to benefit from reducing the number of unskilled labour, from receiving remittances from the workers and from getting the workers back equipped with new skills and experience. Nevertheless, this idea did not fulfil the expectations: “Migrants tended to be self-selected at origin and to have higher education, employment experience and motivation than non-migrants. Thus, they were not excess labor, drawn from the ranks of the unskilled and unemployed” (Kritz and Keely 1983, p. xxiv).

Similar to Pacific Islanders in New Zealand, the “Gastarbeiters” were also officially tolerated until the 1970s, when the global oil crisis and recession led to efforts to limit the number of foreign workers and a xenophobic reaction by the majority of the population. Nonetheless, many of the “temporary” Gastarbeiters stayed, their families joined them (Ruhs 2005, p. 18) and Germany had to deal with the consequences of its former immigration policy including the segregation of the first generation of workers from Germans, xenophobia and attacks by the right-wing extremists (see Göktürk et al 2007, pp. 1-17). Until today, neither the politicians nor the public seem to understand that Germany is a country of immigrants (Meier-Braun et al. 1998, p. vii) and the first generation of foreign workers remains in an “in-between” state (see Gail 1998, pp. 173-181).
because of a lack of rights and fear of deportation (Fenton 2003, Lim 1992). Undocumented workers may be visa overstayers, asylum seekers or tourists working clandestinely (United Nations 1998). Others cross borders illegally or are smuggled by organised traffickers (Talcott 2000). In the early 1990s, there were an estimated thirty million undocumented labour migrants in the world (United Nations 1998, p. 92).

To sum up, I will refer to my informants as temporary or seasonal workers and to some of them as “would-be migrants”. The terms temporary and seasonal workers include foreign workers coming under several schemes and also those foreign nationals who did not have any work visa. For example, they obtained tourist visas but could be hardly considered real tourists as they worked illicitly.

2.3 Are guest-worker programmes a “dead end?”

From the growing body of international literature on temporary work, I have selected those parts relevant to my thesis that address the effectiveness of guest-worker programmes.

Mark Krikorian (2006), the Executive Director of the Center for Immigration Studies in Washington, USA,\(^4\) and other authors connected with the Center (for example Briggs 2004, Martin 2001) have been critical of guest-worker programmes, especially of those within the USA, but also of the general concept of importing guest-workers in other countries.

Krikorian’s approach to guest-worker programmes is based on his theory that they are “a dead end, both morally and practically” (2006, p. 1). In his view, guest-worker supporters are immoral traders, who view foreign labour as an economic input which can be used and disposed of like any other resource. These programmes promote a master-servant environment and create a mutual dependency: “Once employers come to depend on foreign workers, they cease looking for alternatives, and foreign workers come to depend on their guest-worker wages to support their families” (Krikorian 2004, p. 5). For example, importing foreign farm workers to the USA created dependence on the Mexican workers, retarded mechanisation and led to inefficient use of labour. According to Krikorian

\(^4\) This center is an independent non-profit organization which associates academics from various universities as well as writers who comment on immigration issues.
(2004, 2006), every guest-worker programme fails. His two examples of this supposed failure are the “Bracero” programme in the USA and the “Gastarbeiter” programme in Germany.

As with the German guest-worker programme, during Bracero (1942-1964) the practice was to admit migrant workers under one major national programme (Martin 2008). This programme brought unskilled Mexican workers to the USA. During the 22 years the programme lasted, there were 4.6 million Bracero entries (Krikorian 2004).

Krikorian views the “Bracero” programme as an unfortunate Government decision as this programme lasted longer than intended and dramatically increased Mexican legal and illegal immigration. Similarly, the German post-war guest-worker programme (1955-1973) also had unintended consequences, as the “guests” stayed and had their families joined them, leading to a sharp increase in the number of foreigners in Germany.

The “Bracero” and “Gastarbeiter” programmes led Krikorian to conclude that there was nothing as permanent as a temporary worker (also quoted by Martin 2001 in his article title and by Ruhs 2005, p. 1) and all guest-worker programmes are unworkable:

In addition to their moral hazards, guest-worker programmes just can’t work even on their own terms. Every guest-worker programme – everywhere – has failed. In every instance, they lead to large-scale permanent settlement, they spur parallel flows of illegal immigration, and they distort the development of the industries in which the foreign workers are concentrated (Krikorian 2006, p. 3).

Similar to Krikorian, Briggs (2004) highlighted the “unintended negative consequences” and necessary side effects which reportedly harm the wider society. Moreover, they increase illegal immigration: “Guest-worker programmes do nothing to stop further illegal immigration and, in fact, they serve to condone past illegal conduct while encouraging more illegal immigration” (Briggs 2004, p. 7). This is a typical argument of the critics, explaining that many temporary workers tend to stay in the country, where they inflate, rather than reduce, the ranks of undocumented migrants (Castles 1986, Miller and Martin 1982). According to Castles (1986), guest-worker programmes inevitably lead to settlement. This is considered a failure and consequently, Martin (2000) concluded that guest-worker programmes have failed wherever and whenever they have
been tried. Moreover, they lead to the employers’ dependency on foreign labour and to employers’ assumptions about foreign workers being always available for them to hire (Beck 1996, Martin et al. 2006). In fact, foreign workers are not necessary and many more local workers would be willing to work in agriculture if the conditions were better and the pay higher (Beck 1996, Martin 2007).5

Although not connected to the Center for Immigration Studies,6 Ruhs (2005) agreed that the past guest-worker programmes, notably Bracero and Gastarbeiter failed to meet their policy objectives and instead led to numerous unanticipated consequences. The adverse consequences similar to that of past programmes include: (a) the emergence of “immigrant sectors” in the host economy; (b) the vulnerability of migrant workers toward exploitation in recruitment and employment; (c) the tendency of temporary programmes to become longer in duration and bigger in size than initially envisaged; (d) native workers’ opposition against the introduction or expansion of foreign work programme; and (e) the emergence of illegal foreign workers who circumvent the programme (Ruhs 2002, p. 5). This perceived failure is the main reason why the re-emergence of similar programmes is “highly contested” (Ruhs 2002, p.1).

The opponents of migration have usually emphasized the social problems or tensions between different ethnic groups and viewed foreign workers as a threat for the labour market (Borjas 2007, Poot et al 1988, p. 1, 5). An Australian study of the Working Holiday Visa holders (incorporated in New Zealand Immigration Service 2004b) expressed a concern about jobs taken by foreigners, which could be otherwise taken by local students and unemployed. This study indicated that working holiday-makers might have negative impacts also on working conditions in New Zealand. For example, they contributed to low wages through the types of jobs they fill (New Zealand Immigration Service 2004b, p.11). The degradation of the pay rates might be a real concern. By 1990, the Human Rights Commission warned about the possible creation of a “pool of cheap foreign labour,” especially

5 D. A. Martin (2007) is a Professor of International Law, University of Virginia. Other references about “Martin” relate to Professor Philip Martin, from University of California in Davis, Comparative Immigration and Integration Programme, editor of Migration News and Rural Migration News.

6 The Center for Comparative Immigration Studies (CCIS), University of California, San Diego
in connection with undocumented foreigners working “outside the system” (Human Rights Commission 1990, p. ii).

Foreign labour can provide a cheap alternative to the local labour. Thus by employing migrant workers, there is no need to improve the working conditions or to boost the wages, which would have to be done in the case of employing locals (Castles 1985, p. 376). Foreign labour requiring work permits or contracts with employers (as it is in the case of the Pacific Islanders) can be regulated in a more efficient way (Ongley 1991, p. 22). Miles (1986, p. 62) wrote that labour migrants come as “ready-made” workers, because the cost of creating such workers was met within the political framework of the sending country.

While the critics of the guest-worker programmes have expressed their worries, they also described measures which could reduce the “necessary side effects” and the number of “unnecessary” rural foreign workers. Krikorian (2004) and Martin (1998) saw mechanization as a hope and called for introducing more labour-saving technologies and different methods of harvesting crops. Both authors referred to the example of growing grapes for raisins. While the manual harvest of raisin grapes was labour-intensive and required numerous workers to cut each bunch of grapes individually, a new Australian labour-saving method called “dried-on-the-vine” radically reduced labour demand at harvest time. This innovation involved cutting the base of the vine, letting the raisins dry and then harvesting the dried-on-vine raisins mechanically by shaking them off the vines. Krikorian supposed that this innovative method was not widely spread in the USA because of the mass availability of foreign workers.

Similarly, Huffman (2002) wrote that the reliable supply of immigrant farm workers in the USA has undoubtedly slowed the discovery, development and adoption of mechanized technologies for agriculture. Findeis (2002) supposed that the guest worker programmes kept wages and benefits low, put less pressure on employers to improve working conditions and retarded technological development. Not only did American authors take this view, but also Mares (2005 and 2007) warned that importing workers to Australia may inhibit innovation, reduce investment in equipment and productivity growth.

These criticisms can be summarised in several main points. First, it has been suggested that the guest-worker programmes are unworkable and fail. Second, they do nothing to fight illegal labour migration. A third argument explains
that there is no or little need for foreign workers and these can be replaced by local labour. Foreign workers reportedly take the jobs of the domestic workforce and bring down the wages. The fourth argument highlights mechanization which can reduce the numbers of foreign labourers.

There are a plethora of further studies writing about the “failures” of past guest-worker schemes; however, most authors cannot be simply divided in two groups such as “critics” and “supporters” but stand between (especially Martin 2000 and 2003, Ruhs 2005). The following section will present the main arguments for introduction of temporary programmes and will explain how these programmes can be made to work without causing adverse consequences.

2.4 How to make temporary programmes work

Against the plethora of critical studies stands a body of literature emphasizing the expected advantages of temporary labour programmes. The main argument supporting the temporary work programmes can be summarised as follows: these schemes are not predisposed to fail, but they can become a “triple win” if they are properly administered (Abella 2006, Hugo 2008, Ruhs 2002 and 2005).

Ruhs (2002, p. 4) pointed out that given the lack of a comparative study of past and existing programmes, it is not clear if the adverse consequences were generic or specific only to the Bracero and Gastarbeiter programmes. Similarly, Hugo (2008, p. 15) added that temporary work programmes have the potential to produce a triple-win result for the migrant, the origin and the destination. The fact that this has not always happened in the past has been largely due to the way in which these programmes have been operationalised:

The argument here is that it is important that these negative experiences not be allowed to conceal the potential of the process to deliver a triple bottom line positive effect. The process in itself is not intrinsically bad but in many cases the way in which it has been operationalised in the region has often left much to be desired. (Hugo 2008, p. 15)

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7 For example, see Castles (1986) and Martin and Teitelbaum (2001) for overviews.
If the programmes really have the potential to become a success, how can this be achieved? A World Bank report (2006) concluded that potential problems could be overcome successfully, if some specific design elements are included into a temporary programme. This report identified four main elements: cost sharing between employers and employees, appropriate selection of workers, sufficient duration of the programme and the possibility of repeated access. For example, AusAID’s Pacific Economic Survey (2009) distinguished between two types of temporary migration: short-term (one-off opportunity) and circular, which allows people to return home and then work in a foreign country again. Circular migration programmes have two advantages compared to short-term programmes: there is more incentive to invest in skilling-up foreign workers, and more incentive for workers to leave the host country (p. 82). This is important for New Zealand’s RSE scheme, which belongs to these circular migration programmes.

Ruhs (2005) has argued that the first step for destination countries developing policies on temporary labour migration is effectively managing the demand for labour. Employers will always look at lowering their costs by hiring foreign workers; therefore a good temporary labour programme is not a means for displacing locals or driving down the working conditions. A common practice of a good programme is offering wages at the same (or better) levels than are offered to local workers, so that labour shortages reported by employers are more likely to be genuine. A successful programme also requires an effort to be made by the sending countries. According to AusAID (2009, p. 91), the most effective programmes are those linked to long-term development plans. This is when sending countries work with host countries to ensure that workers are treated well. They also screen workers for a ‘work-ready’ pool. Pritchett (2006) recommended that labour-sending countries take responsibility for ensuring that temporary workers actually return home. On the other hand, developed countries take responsibility for certifying labour shortages in specific industries. Finally, both rich and poor countries will benefit when rich economies admit low-skilled workers. Pritchett viewed the temporary work programmes as development aid provided to sending countries and described the gains from labour mobility as enormous in comparison to everything else on the development agenda.

To sum up, if specific design elements and effective management are implemented, temporary labour programmes can work and there are sufficient
examples of schemes judged to be successes in the countries that adopted them (Abella 2006). One example is the German seasonal foreign worker programme which turned several unauthorized migrants into legal guest workers (Abella 2006, p. 30). Abella also answered the critical voices that accused guest-worker programmes from increasing the numbers of undocumented labourers and illegal migrants by demonstrating that in reality, these programmes change illegal workers into legal workforce. Also Basok (2000) used the example of the Bracero programme and the Canadian guest-worker programme to show that a properly managed programme does not increase the numbers of visa overstayers and illegal workers. While desertion and illegal work was a common phenomenon in the Bracero programme, the Canadian programme’s specific design (based on the workers’ tight relationship with smaller family farms) made the Mexican workers’ desertion unlikely. Basok concluded that desertion and swelling the ranks of undocumented workers is not inevitable, but depends on how the programme is administered (Basok 2000, p. 215). Basok emphasized the need for a sufficient control of the programme and wrote:

Guest worker programmes have been advocated as a substitute for the employment of illegal migrants in sectors experiencing labour shortages. It has been suggested that by imposing control, these programmes promote general respect for the law and discourage wholesale law breaking. (Basok 2000, p.216)

This is significant for New Zealand’s RSE programme, which was partly based on CSAWP’s design. RSE workers are also under employers’ control and their movement is restricted. I want to examine if a similar design of these two programmes caused similar negative consequences for the workers resulting from

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8 The German seasonal labour scheme, developed in the 1990s, attracted mainly Polish workers who were employed in the agriculture, forestry and catering sectors. About 90 percent of the 293,000 seasonal workers admitted in 2002 were Polish (Martin et al. 2006, p. 115).

9 Canadian Seasonal Agriculture Workers Programme (CSAWP) provides seasonal work opportunities for Mexican and Caribbean workers. Caribbean workers have been allowed to come since 1966, Mexicans since 1974. These workers can stay up to eight months a year and most of them are employed on fruit, vegetable and tobacco farms in Ontario (Martin et al. 2006). These are mainly family farms (Basok 2000). Employers have to offer a certain number of working hours, free approved housing and at least the minimum wage. They provide a written evaluation of each worker at the end of the season and can invite the same workers to come to work again. Although the programme is often considered a model exemplifying best practices, it has been also criticised and called “a shameful dirty secret.” This concerns foreign workers’ being charged fees such as unemployment insurance but not being allowed to obtain unemployment benefits (Martin et al. 2006, p. 113).
dependence on their employers, as described by Basok (2002), Gogia (2006), Satzewich (1991) and Sharma (2001).\textsuperscript{10}

To sum up, the critical argument about unworkable programmes is disputed and a remedy is a specific design and sufficient control. The issue of the reportedly unnecessary temporary labour is addressed by other authors in several ways. Foreign labour is described as a salvation for ageing populations and declining work-forces (Abella 2006). Foreign workers do not “steal” jobs, but create additional jobs in related industries. In horticulture, they support jobs in the supply and processing sectors (Basok 2003). This was confirmed by the Australian Parliament’s Committee on Migration (The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia 1997) which concluded that an effectively operated working holiday programme can create jobs for Australians rather than take work away from them. A study on the impact of immigration on the labour market outcomes of New Zealanders (Maré and Stillman 2009) did not find any evidence of a significant influence of foreign workers on the wages of New Zealand-born workers.

The advocates of guest-worker programmes emphasise the co-existence of long term unemployment and labour shortages in some sectors within developed nations (Mares 2005). Advocated of guest-worker programmes claim that local unemployed are not interested in the jobs offered. The disinterest of the unemployed people in rural work can be demonstrated by an Australian example. According to Mares (2005, p. 3) labour shortages cannot be simply solved by attracting more local workers. The labour problems are not self-correcting and those who believe in attracting local workers by improving wages and conditions

\textsuperscript{10} Although Basok (2002) presented CSAWP as a workable scheme, she was also critical of the tight employer-employee bond. Mexican workers coming under the CSAWP are hired as “unfree” labour (Basok 2002, Gogia 2006, Mares 2005, Satzewich 1991) indentured to their employers (Sharma 2001). “Unfree” means that the workers' contracts tie them to one employer, do not allow them to change jobs and the workers feel obliged to provide labour whenever their services are required. Such unfree workers meet the growers' demands for readily available labour who try to please the employer and have no social commitments outside of work. In order to get positive letters of evaluation from the employers, many workers remain silent in the face of abuse and do their best to win a good reputation. They rarely take time off when injured, they don’t object practices such as exposure to sprays and most continue working despite the discomfort (also see Culp and Umbarger 2004 describing the same problems in the USA). They do not demand holiday and vacation pay. Basok (Basok 2002, Basok and Carasco 2010) summarised, that the workers accept some abuse in exchange for positive evaluation, because they are dependent on these positive letters if they want to return to Canada. Moreover, the workers' loyalty is reinforced through the paternalistic relationship between them and their employers.

Gogia (2006, p. 362-3) even described the Mexican workers under Canadian CSWAP as “mobile bodies” secured through the network of violence. Mexican “bodies of colour” carry out the work that Canadians refuse. Hidden on remote farms, these workers are “invisible” and most of Canadian rural landscape remains a “white space.”
They also ignore that farmers compete in a global market and increasing wages (that means costs) will reduce their market share. Basok (2002) described a similar situation in Canada. Basok argued that the Mexican workers have become necessary for Canadian horticulture. Domestic workers are not interested in farm jobs because of low wages; however, family farms cannot increase wages or improve the working environment because they are under pressure of rising costs and the low prices they are forced to charge for their produce. It is not primarily the vulnerability of farming which causes the dependency on foreign labour, but mainly the need to secure a reliable labour which is available on demand:

The insecurity of sales created by weather and market fluctuations affecting every grower, even the most successful among them, would make it highly unlikely that they would be willing to substantially increase their costs of operation by raising wages. And if they did, they would risk ruining their businesses. Furthermore, even if some larger businesses decided to raise wages in order to retain local workers, the effect of this initiative on smaller farms could be so devastating that it would force many of them out of business, leading to increases in unemployment not only among the farm operators and members of their households but also among the local workers they employ. (Basok 2002, p. 147)

As Basok summarised, some employers would be able to pay more, but they would understand this increase as a waste, because they cannot expect full commitment from local workers, who cannot be forced to stay at one employer for the time needed to finish the harvest. Basok emphasised that foreign workers do not take the locals’ jobs, but their presence sustained many farming businesses and saved, or even created, many new jobs. As a consequence, domestic workers indirectly benefit from the employment of foreign labour.

Maclellan and Mares (2006b, p. 27) also wrote about the fear that overseas workers will “steal” Australian jobs and about “a popular antipathy to cheap foreign labour from Asia and the Pacific” present in Australia. Yet, the Australian growers’ association Growcom reported that there are many cases where growers are short-staffed although there are available or unemployed local residents. A survey conducted by Growcom (2006, p. 4) revealed the following Australian employee perceptions of work in agriculture: low wage rates, low security of employment, low...

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11 Among these factors are changing gender roles and attraction of urban centres, where the social safety net combined with economic growth has probably reduced the numbers of unemployed urban workers who would be willing to seek short-term work in rural areas. (Mares 2005).
poor image, lack of career paths, tough conditions, physically demanding, location, the hours of work and poor recognition of skills development. A similar perception of agricultural work in New Zealand was confirmed by an academic source. Some New Zealand potential workers are not interested in agricultural work because it is regarded as too demanding, unpleasant, remote and poorly paid (Connell and Hammond 2009, p. 84).

Mares (2007, p. 80) has also discussed the relevance of mechanisation. He viewed the mechanisation in the grape-wine industry as an effective response to labour shortages in Australia, but noted that there are limits to mechanisation in horticulture, where careful handling of fruit is essential. For instance, wine-grapes can be picked mechanically, whereas table grapes need to be hand-picked. Similarly, the Labour Mobility Report (World Bank 2006, p. 103) highlighted that there are still crops resistant to mechanization because of their tender, perishable and highly seasonal nature. This leaves production heavily dependent on low-skilled manual labour, especially in peak seasons. Therefore, there were still labour shortages in Australian horticulture because of this resistance to mechanization. A report published by the Australian growers’ association Growcom (2006, p. 6) emphasized the permanent need for manual labour and that human capital will continue to be a prominent issue in horticulture regardless of future development within mechanisation.

In sum, all critical arguments against guest worker programmes are counterbalanced by different opinions on their viability and their possible benefits. The positive evaluations can be summarised as: The temporary work programmes are possibly workable if properly administered. The need for these programmes is not artificial. Although some domestic workers fear the foreign workforce as competition “stealing” jobs from them, this worry is usually not well founded. Labour shortages co-exist with certain levels of local unemployment and work in agriculture is not a good prospect for some of these unemployed people. Therefore, foreign workers cannot be easily replaced either by local unemployed or by machines. There will always be a need for manual labour.

Before I return to these theories in the following chapters, I introduce New Zealand’s research concerning the temporary programmes.
2.5 Literature on temporary migration in New Zealand

The relatively small body of literature on temporary migration in New Zealand stands in contrast to the vast international literature on temporary work (Lovelock and Leopold 2008). With the introduction of the RSE scheme, the number of articles on temporary migration has grown significantly, as academics wanted to capture this new topic. The researchers have focused on the RSE schemes’ implementation and provided an initial evaluation (Connell and Hammond 2009, Lovelock and Leopold 2008, Luthria 2008, Ramasamy et al. 2008). Others have explored the impact of the RSE scheme on Pacific workers and their households (Gibson et al. 2008, McKenzie et al. 2008) or conducted research among Pacific workers in New Zealand (Bailey 2009b). Although there is ongoing research on the RSE scheme in the workers’ countries of origin, the results were not available at the time of writing.

Before this boom of literature on temporary schemes started, the research aimed at temporary labour in New Zealand mostly focused on the schemes recruiting labour from the Pacific from the 1960s until the late 1980s (Gibson 1983, Levick and Bedford 1988). An important stream that influenced also New Zealand’s authors was Miles’ (1982) political economy of migration.

The political economy of migration, developed in the 1980s, viewed migration as the product or direct result of capitalist development and analysed the connections between migration and the requirements of post-war capitalism (for example Miles 1982 and 1986). Miles studied the relationship between labour migration and capital accumulation in Western Europe, focusing particularly on the role of the state economy. In his view, migration was the result of the increased demand for labour during structural changes of the competitive capitalist production after the Second World War.

Gibson (1983), Ongley (1991), Spoonley (1990, 1990b, 1991) and Walker (1995) used this approach in order to explain migration and the resulting political and ideological relations in connection with the requirements of capitalism. This approach concerns migration, ethnicity and racism and should be distinguished from purely economic approaches. In this view, the subordinate position of certain ethnic groups in the labour market is a result of the needs of the post-war economy rather than an outcome of ethnic relations, discrimination or racism. The
political economy of migration turns away from the motivation of an individual migrant, looking for the causes of labour migration in the forces creating uneven economic development. The role of the state in sustaining the capitalist economy is highlighted here (Ongley 1991). According to Gibson (1983, p. 40), large scale movements cannot simply be explained using individual motivation theories but should be viewed in terms of the structural and historical context. Spoonley (1990b) emphasized the key role of economic trends in shaping historical immigration trends.

Similar to Miles (1982, 1986), these New Zealand authors examined the structural changes in the post-war labour market and the need for predominantly unskilled labour which precipitated not only indigenous Maori but also overseas workers (mainly Pacific Islanders) being brought into industrial areas. This new urban labour force engaged in economically inferior positions with lower wages, poorer conditions and fewer prospects (Ongley 1991, p. 17). With the end of an era of prosperity in the 1970s, Pacific Islanders were subsequently racialised and seen as a threat – as those who take jobs and create social problems (Spoonley and Bedford 2003). Yet, a political economy of migration does not approach racism as a phenomenon per se, but in a broader context, as described by Ongley (1991, p. 19):

> In adopting this approach, the significance of racism and cultural relations is not denied, but it is argued that they must be viewed within a particular set of historical and material circumstances and that, on their own, they cannot provide a sufficient explanation.

The presence of these new labour migrants is not viewed as creating race relations problems, but as altering pre-existing relations.

The political economy of migration frames the historical background of Pacific labour in New Zealand as well as the roots of the problematic relationship between New Zealanders and Pacific workers. These workers were publicly referred to as an “underachieving Pacific underclass” by the Minister of Immigration in 2008 (Bedford et al. 2009, speech at conference). As documented below, the Pacific workers in my research site also sometimes faced controversial behaviour from local co-workers, managers and the public. Therefore, the political economy of migration is an important approach for my research, despite it having
been criticized by authors emphasizing personal motivation theories. For example, Haberkorn (1992) viewed the political economy of migration as underestimating the potential of individuals to respond to changing realities in different ways.

The personal motivation theories need to be introduced here as a stream emphasizing different topics than the political economy of migration. According to personal motivation theories, labour migration is formed mainly by factors of social nature. This focus shifts to family, social networks, ecological conditions and community (Ferro and Wallner 2006, Mahalingham 2006). Mahalingham (2006) described labour migration as a dynamic process where the individual’s costs and benefits of staying versus leaving an area should be considered as well as the family, social, societal and ecological conditions which influence them. Rios (1992) argued that migration is as much an economic process as it is a social, political and cultural movement that transforms social relations. He stated: “It is people – not just objects and victims – who are following capital, and who are consciously participating in the construction, deconstruction, and manipulation of their identities and roles” (p. 226). Migration movements involve the decision of families and individuals, therefore an analysis of international migration must concern all levels – global, national, community, as well as household and individual (Talcott 2000, p. 9). Borovnik (2009), researching the situation of seafarers from Kiribati and Tuvalu, highlighted the necessity to place current international contract labour migration in the concept of transnationalism. This recognises multiple interconnections across borders and includes the shift from economic explanations of labour migrations to the social and cultural aspects.

These two streams - political economy of migration and personal motivation theories - are important when researching my informants’ motivations to work in New Zealand. While the political economy of migration diverts from the motivation of an individual, the personal motivation theories emphasise individual and family decisions. Nevertheless, both streams are useful for the analysis of the participants’ reasons for coming to New Zealand. On the other side of the participants’ story are reasons for staying. The connection between temporary and permanent migration needs to be considered as it was an important topic for eight of my participants.

Bedford and Ho (2006a, pp. 60-61) observed that researchers in New Zealand have treated temporary and permanent migration quite separately. Little
consideration has been given to the relation between the two. In the “new era of mobility”, with its blurred boundaries between different types of movement, the policy makers need to be aware of this interconnectedness between forms of movement which have tended to be treated separately for policy purposes.

The relation between temporary and permanent migration was addressed by European authors Balaz, Williams and Kollar (2004) who tried to answer the question of why some temporary migrants stay. They proposed four hypotheses on the relationship between temporary and permanent migration. First, people might change their original intentions after learning about the destination and permanent migration is facilitated by their experiences. Second, temporary migration is an intended first step towards permanent settlement. Third, temporary migration might work as a substitute for permanent migration by satisfying the desire to experience living and working in a foreign country. The fourth hypothesis views temporary migrants applying for residency as people who want to have more residential and employment options, even if they might not want to stay permanently.

These four hypotheses apply to my informants who discussed their intention to settle. As Bedford and Ho (2006a) noted, some potential migrants work temporarily or up-skill in a destination before deciding to seek permanent residence. This was the case of my skilled and educated informants (mostly Europeans); however, for the low-skilled this option was constrained or even forbidden, such as for those working under the RSE scheme. Most of the educated participants who wanted to settle experienced various problems, especially when trying to secure a skilled employment, and felt discriminated against. The feeling of discrimination was pronounced among many Asians.

There are several important publications that deal with the disparity between the high qualifications versus obstacles and discrimination when looking for skilled employment. A Statistics New Zealand study (2004, preface) stated that after the introduction of the point system in 1991, New Zealand’s immigration policy has been directed at attracting qualified and skilled migrants. Ten years later, they were almost twice as likely as locals to have university qualifications (Statistics New Zealand 2004, p. 22). Nevertheless, there has been concern and debate about how effective these policies have been, since many foreign workers have experienced difficulties finding employment appropriate to their qualifications.
In New Zealand, highly qualified foreign nationals find it difficult to secure appropriate employment outside agriculture. This has been documented in several studies (Department of Internal Affairs 1996, Friesen and Ip 1997, North and Trlin 2004), especially in connection with workers from non-traditional source countries (Butcher et al. 2006, Henderson et al 2001, Ward and Masgoret 2007). There is also growing evidence of Asians being discriminated against by employers (Spoonley and Bedford 2003). In the case of the Asians, one of the problems is racialisation that followed their rapid increase in numbers during the 1990s (Spoonley 2006).

In Oliver’s study (2000, p. 7), the skilled foreign workers identified multiple barriers to employment: personal, cultural, economic, societal (aspects of New Zealand society and values) and systemic (aspects of government and employment systems). Among these, the systemic and societal factors – especially employers’ attitudes, race discrimination and government policies and systems were described as the greatest obstacles.

Not all the cases can be viewed as “discrimination,” as some deficits can be detected on the workers’ side. The Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research of Victoria University in Wellington\(^\text{12}\) identified obstacles that many foreign workers face such as cultural differences, English language skills, accent, communication and interpersonal skills. Many foreign nationals also lack work experience in New Zealand and social networks. They also face lack of recognition of overseas qualifications, negative anecdotes, myths and negative employers’ attitudes.

According to the research conducted by the Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research, workers from Asian countries belong to the most disadvantaged groups. The barriers to obtaining skilled employment are sometimes largely connected with a lack of cultural awareness and cultural specific knowledge. This leads to a perception that some people are more dissimilar than others and to a preference by employers for certain groups of people (see the ongoing research of the Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research at [http://www.victoria.ac.nz/cacr/index.aspx](http://www.victoria.ac.nz/cacr/index.aspx)).

This raises the question about how far the origin and background of workers influences their success in New Zealand’s labour market. According to Rainer (1998, p. 2), performance in the labour market has two components. In terms of labour supply, the language, cultural and educational background of foreign workers is likely to influence both the initial labour market position and the speed of progress. In terms of labour demand, structural labour market characteristics are also likely to affect the foreign worker. Rainer confirmed that labour market disadvantage was the greatest for non-Europeans (p.22). Ongley (2004, p. 199), as a protagonist of the political economy of migration, viewed the origins for these disparities and inequalities between ethnic groups in historical patterns of employing different ethnic groups in certain areas of the labour market. This tends to be reproduced across generations.

When discussing discrimination, it is also necessary to study the employers’ view. A survey among the employers who could employ skilled foreign workers (Graeme 2007) identified several obstacles related to communication and immigration issues. The typical complaint was about the time taken to issue work visas and “having to fight with Immigration again.” These employers saw immigration policies as conflicting and confused. Other obstacles included complicated checking and assessing of overseas skills and the potential employees’ insufficient understanding of the local culture (Graeme 2007, pp 36-42).

In sum, discrimination against foreign workers in employment relations is not denied; however, the literature found also other factors that influence foreign nationals’ success in New Zealand labour market. In this thesis, I study these factors and I try to answer the question of how my participants’ feeling of discrimination was created.

2.6 Summary and implications

The literature on temporary work programmes is contradictory. While some like Briggs (2004), Krikorian (2004 and 2006) and Martin (2000, 2001) doubt that these programmes are meaningful, others (Abella 2006, Basok 2000, Hugo 2008) view them as a potential triple win and a chance for developing countries.
Similarly, others (Findeis 2002, Krikorian 2004, Martin 1998) question the need for foreign labour.

The discrepancies in the academic debate generate many additional research questions. These questions, listed in the introduction, can be summarised into four topics. The first topic concerns the viability of temporary work programmes in Motueka, the second topic touches employers’ reasons for hiring foreign labourers. The necessity of temporary work programmes in the face of technological or mechanical innovation is the third discussion area. The fourth area that will be examined are my informants’ perceptions of the tensions between temporary and permanent migration.
Chapter Three: Methodology for a Transient Workplace

3.1 Introduction

My research is based on ethnography. Ethnography, in this case, is seemingly confined inside the boundaries of a single workplace. Nevertheless, my research also crosses these boundaries and examines relations and outer influences that concern this workplace. It draws upon two qualitative data collection techniques: participant observation and semi-structured interviews, followed by their transcription and analysis.

The core of this chapter is reflexivity, defined as an ability of the researchers to tell a story about themselves so that they become aware of their own research activities (Roberts 2001, p. 4). When describing the challenges of my research, I was inspired by Van Maanen’s “confessional tales” (1988). He explains this approach used in ethnographic writings in this way:

The confessional attempts to represent the fieldworker’s rapport and sensitive contact with others in the world described, and something of the concrete cultural particulars that baffle the fieldworker while he learns to live in the setting (p. 91).

The researcher’s confession describes the research and fieldwork experience including any missing data, incompleteness and blind spots in order to “unmask” fieldwork. The result is an attempt to demystify fieldwork by showing how the technique was practiced in the field.

3.2 My relationship to the field and to the informants

In some respects, collectively my informants reflect my own experience as a foreign seasonal worker. I spent three seasons working in two regions in New Zealand and I am able to describe first hand the lived daily experience of some foreign seasonal workers in New Zealand. I understand the different perspectives, because my experience contains several different stages. At first I was an uninformed visitor having insufficient knowledge about my own rights and I was treated like a commodity in the labour market. After two seasons I became a
trusted worker, sometimes driving other employees in the employer’s van to work. Not only did I work with other employees, but I also shared common accommodation and participated in their everyday activities. During this time, I spent time with numerous seasonal workers from different countries and cultures, who shared their experience with me about work in other regions and other countries. This immersion provided an opportunity to find out how typical or exceptional was my own experience in comparison to other foreign nationals’ stories.

Over time and between regions, I began to grasp the complexities and problematic areas of New Zealand’s seasonal immigration policies. Prior to beginning this dissertation I had a strong feeling that attention should be focused on these complexities, such as the impact of the foreign labour force on the local labour market; the problems the foreign workers experienced when coping with the cultural differences and on the workers’ minimum knowledge of their legal rights. The latter, the ignorance of legal rights, sometimes led to employers exploiting foreign workers. This was especially true for some workers from Europe and Asia. In the last season I also witnessed the arrival of Pacific workers, who appeared to be even more vulnerable group. These people arrived under the new Recognised Seasonal Employer policy (RSE).

Later when I started my studies, I decided to return to my previous workplace in Motueka as a participant observer working part time and living (as a student working on this thesis) with other seasonal workers. After I obtained the ethical approval from the Otago University Ethics Committee, I contacted the company Motukiwi in Motueka via e-mail and they agreed to my request and offered me a part-time job. I lived in their workers’ accommodation for six months, from December 2007 to May 2008. My research goal was to observe the living and working conditions, trying to understand the workers’ perspective on seasonal work by taking the opportunity to talk to them both formally and informally. My focus was on the foreign workers’ experience with the working conditions in New Zealand and on their presence here, not so much on the influence of the temporary work schemes on their households or on their countries of origin.

My own seasonal work experience during 2006-2007 proved beneficial to the research, but it also produced it own problems. I knew the site and the employers, which gave me insight into the work practices, the working conditions
and the life of the foreign workers. However, this familiarity proved a mixed blessing.

At the start of my employment, one of the managers arrived to hand me my room key and he started talking to me in a friendly way, which was observed by my future informants who were sitting in front of the building. I was also asked to drive the other workers to the workplaces because I had worked there before. I explained that I was not really happy about this arrangement, but I was given the car key. Immediately I felt there was a gap between me, the researcher and some foreign workers who would hardly talk to me even when I tried to establish a friendly contact with them. Gender problems also emerged and some men indicated they were not happy about me driving them to work and supposed they should be chosen as drivers, not an unknown woman who just arrived. As I realized and as my informants later admitted, they were puzzled about my role and after seeing me talking to the manager, they assumed I was not one of them, because I had personal connections and advantages. My situation was similar to what Pun (2005) experienced after she developed a relationship with the supervisory staff. This bond later hindered her communication with the workers, who did not trust her during the first month.

I was concerned over whether I could ever be trusted by any participants willing to be interviewed. Fortunately this reserved relationship changed within one month after these people saw I had no special advantages and after I participated at some gatherings and meetings at our accommodation. I tried to “demystify” my personality by talking about my studies, about my previous work experience and by explaining I was not the managers’ friend but an ordinary worker who the managers knew from the previous season.

This experience reminded me of the importance of some concepts mentioned in the methodology guidebooks, to be specific, the ideas about the necessary “naivety” or, in other words, the “anthropological strangeness” (Garfinkel 1967, p. 9; Tolich and Davidson 1999, p. 18). These authors highlight the necessity of becoming detached from the familiar in order to see things as something to be explored and understood. This might be easy in distant locations, but it is more difficult within the familiar culture.

To avoid deception, I had to inform the workers about the methodology and I engaged in what Goffman (2001, p. 155) calls “telling” practices, that means in
“providing a story that will hold up should the facts be brought to their attention.” I also had in mind Goffman’s other suggestions – the researcher should not become too friendly (to maintain one’s “strangeness”, especially in relation to the managers), but she/he has to open herself/himself up in ways not used in ordinary life (p. 157).

When creating my role as a researcher, I also considered how my personal characteristics could influence my work. For example, my nationality and cultural background influenced the nature of the research (see Spoonley 2003 [1999]). In previous postgraduate research, my nationality caused me some problems when studying the life stories of the Germans expatriated from Czechoslovakia (Prochazkova 2006). My Czech nationality was sometimes a barrier to access certain information or even to some informants due to unforgettable conflicting moments in the history. For example, in the previous research two people refused talking to me after they found out I was not German but Czech. In contrast, in this research my nationality actually helped me to be accepted by the participants, especially by those from European countries. My situation was similar to Lozanski’s experience with studying a backpackers’ group (Lozanski and Beres 2007), where the shared “foreigner identity” helped the researcher to access the social networks she wanted to study. Also in Motueka, social networks and friendships were common among foreign workers, but not so frequent between the New Zealanders and the foreign nationals. In the orchards, these people often constituted two separate groups.

3.3 Ethnographic methodology

I decided to use an ethnographic approach because of its effectiveness in the study of work culture. Smith (2001, p. 222 and 229) explained the unique role of ethnography in this area:

No single approach to the study of work has been more effective than the ethnographic in uncovering the tacit skills, the decision rules, the complexities, the discretion and the control in jobs that have been labelled routine, unskilled and deskilled, marginal and even trivial. Researchers working to this end have debunked hegemonic conceptions of the unskilled job, challenging the idea that the “truly” skilled job is an industrial or professional one, or that it is a job held only by a male worker. They have shown how assumptions about what constitutes an unskilled or routine job
have been socially and historically constructed, and that how managers
describe such jobs may have little relation to the skills the job in fact entails.

By engaging in the same social processes, confronting the same
organizational, technological, and administrative structures, and being
implicated in the same relations of power and control, ethnographic field
researchers have acquired a type of data that is simply unattainable using
other modes of enquiry.

Although the long-standing tradition of ethnography and sociology
carried out at workplaces manifested often in industrial work organizations
(Burawoy 1988, Pun 2005, Schwartzman 1993), ethnography can provide
priceless insights into the nature of non-industrial workplaces as well; insights
which would not otherwise be available from study methods that cannot go deeply
into organizations and which cannot listen for voices (Smith 2001).

Smith (2001, p. 221-222) also suggested that there is not a singular type of
ethnography of work and it is difficult to resolve what might constitute a “true” or
“best” ethnography. Smith rather used the terms “ethnographies of work” and
“ethnographic approaches of work.” What the social scientists who use
ethnographic approaches to study work have in common is that they cannot be
accused of being “armchair academics” because they engage in a spectrum of
work sites (for an overview, see Smith 2001, Wellin and Fine 2001).

The ethnographic value of learning skills and participating in informants’
everyday lives is well established in the anthropological literature, where the
authors refer to “embodied fieldwork” or “embodied ethnography” (Okely 2007,
“One’s inability to embody the labour certainly impairs full understanding, although
much can be understood through in-depth interviews.” I wanted to become a
researcher, who Turner (2000, p. 53) calls “embodied, sensing, acting and socially
situated participant.” I felt that learning the necessary skills and practicing them
provided me also an access to the social world of the participants and a
membership to their community. Working in the orchard also provided me
knowledge of the employers’ practices. For example, how could I understand the
problems with reportedly low piece rates offered by the employers, if I did not
know how much work I would be able to finish within a time-frame under a certain
rate?
During my fieldwork, I sometimes remembered Okely’s (2007, p. 55) suggestion to research the impact of work on the workers:

I suggest that for anthropologists researching labour and industrial production, scholarship on craft, apprenticeship, and the “inculcated” body provides a valuable approach for theorizing not only what work means to people, but also what it does to them.

My “embodied” fieldwork provided me knowledge about the impact of work on the workers’ body and about the hazardous nature of agricultural work. Yet, I must say that I do not like remembering several accidents which I witnessed or experienced by myself. These included a fall from the ladder, several minor tractor accidents and having a skin rash, probably as a result of spraying. Other ethnographic researchers encountered similar problems such as experiencing emotional reactions, bodily pains, injuries and personal humiliations. Although this usually constitutes only a small part of the shared experience, it has been described as “an important and unique source of insight and data” (Smith 2001, p. 224). To conclude, I chose ethnography as a methodology which could provide me such a shared experience and deeper understanding of workers’ problems. My aim was to draw vivid pictures of lived workers’ experience.

3.4 Participant observation

The typologies of fieldworkers’ roles vary. For example, the classic typology by Gold (1969) distinguished among complete participant, participant as observer and observer as participant. Adler and Adler (1987) use the terminology of peripheral member, active and complete member. Gobo (2008) simply writes about participant and non-participant observation. Observation is considered an important research strategy, a “pivotal cognitive mode” of ethnography (Gobo 2008). Yet, instead of asking which role should be adopted, anthropologist E. Graveling (2009) highlighted the multiplicity, ambiguity and fluidity of these positions. According to Graveling, the roles and the relationships between the researcher and the research subjects are constantly negotiated and constructed by both parties. Graveling (2009, p. 1) understands these relationships as determining the research outcomes:

Relationships, and specifically the relationship between the fieldworker and the research subjects, are at the core of the process of all anthropological
and ethnographic research and to a very large extent determine the outcomes of the research. In addressing the question of how far a participant observer should attempt to “become” a member of the group she is studying, we must also recognise the complexity of individual and social identities assumed or attributed to her.

In my research site, I adopted a role which Angrosino (2007, p. 56) calls “active membership” which is based on engaging in the core activities without committing to the group’s values, goals and attitudes. I lived in the common accommodation and participated in everyday activities, which had both advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage was the real insight into the life and activities of the participants. For example, I sometimes witnessed controversial activities which they would hardly admit to an unknown researcher such as working under the influence of “party pills” or drugs. My participants saw these drugs as making the worker faster or helping them be more concentrated. In comparison to similar research done by Lozanski and Beres (2007), unlike Beres who stayed in a bed and breakfast house, I chose to reside in the workers’ accommodation. As these researchers admitted, they either had problems with securing participants or felt that living with the seasonal workers would have helped to facilitate access to the participants and to establish social networks.

Lozanski and Beres (2007) supposed that working and living with the participants would make it too difficult to follow an interview schedule and work with the data, especially as the researchers were closely engaged with their subjects (p. 7). This was the main disadvantage for me, because the accommodation was sometimes disruptive. It was a long house consisting of cabins with a kitchen. There was a common area with tables and an outside barbecue. Often, the participants expected me to spend too much time with them outside. As a member of the group, I was supposed to behave in a certain way which could include participation in gatherings, complaining about work and managers, participation in a soccer or basketball match or just sitting outside and talking to people. So as not to be accused of “hiding” in my room, I had to handle situations like people knocking on my door and asking me: “What are you doing again? Come outside. You don’t like sitting with French people or what?” Therefore maintaining active membership was challenging my ethnographic role. I had a better approach to the participants, but I always had to make a considerable effort in order to maintain good relationships with all the inhabitants of the house.
The research was rewarding and informative yet also overwhelming and, at times, disappointing, for example when the informants were intoxicated and did not come for a scheduled interview.

The participants knew my role as a researcher, but were not always aware of all of my questions or what I might observe. For instance, I did not want to tell the participants that I was going to observe their strategies of resistance to the managers’ decisions. Yet, as the participants knew my role, my observation was based on the participants’ choice of what to disclose or suppress in my presence.

I selected two main locations for observation: the workplace and the accommodation building, but I considered this building more important because it provided opportunities to have an insight into the casual activities of the workers and to talk to them informally in a more relaxed atmosphere without the orchard supervisors being around. I was especially interested in their social activities where I could observe the relationships among various nationalities; for example I wanted to see who participated, who refused and who was excluded. I observed and shared the participants’ good times, but also their frustrations and achievements. I was granted, for the most part, full access to the workers’ activities, which enabled me to build lasting relations with many of them.

The interaction and contact with most of the participants was easy, as we lived together in one building and saw each other every day. Yet, I was also keen to include a group of ni-Vanuatu men into my research. This was more difficult, because all ni-Vanuatu were accommodated in hostels on the other side of town or in another town, instead of in my employer’s accommodation. The ni-Vanuatu usually worked at a different orchard and I knew them only briefly in comparison with other foreign workers living in our accommodation. Initially, the employers seemed to intentionally separate new-coming ni-Vanuatu from other workers. Therefore, I had to engage with the ni-Vanuatu in other contexts, for example while shopping, at a barbecue, or just simply talking to them on the street or at the market.

When involved in these activities, I did not take any notes and I only used what Tolich and Davidson (1999, p. 132) call “mental notes” – using memory to collect the data within a short time and recording them as soon as there was an opportunity. Writing field notes was not an activity which could be planned in advance; rather, my field notes were hand-written, composed day-by-day, open-
ended, with changing and new directions (Emerson et al. 2001). In time I reviewed these field notes looking for important categories.

### 3.5 Sampling in a transient field

Amit’s (2000, p. 1) notion of “constructing the field” made me view my research site as a transient area as opposed to a stable environment. For example, recent literature (Amit 2000, Caputo 2000, Gupta and Ferguson 1997, Turner 2000) pointed out that the traditional forms of participant observation concerned relatively stable groups and communities in often distinct, bounded and fixed spaces, where the researchers did not participate directly in all activities. Yet, Amit’s contemporary field can be fluid, mobile, disconnected from specific geographical locations and lacking a structure. According to Amit (2000, p. 6), the contemporary field cannot be discovered, because it does not simply exist, but needs to be constructed among the sets of relationships in the interconnected world. The researcher is understood as an active participant who is responsible for the active creation of the field (also Shrestha 2007, Turner 2000). Caputo (2000) protested against the traditional approaches, viewing research in a distant field as doing the “real” anthropology and demonstrated, that it is possible to conduct research “at home” (that is in one’s own culture) with informants unrestricted by place.

Conducting research among the guest workers is an example of this transient research because it means entering a field constituted mostly by mobile backpackers and seasonal workers who follow the harvest times (see Appendix 2: The harvest trails in New Zealand). Foreign workers in New Zealand are dispersed throughout the country.\(^\text{13}\) These people, especially the rural seasonal workers, do not constitute a coherent group that occupies a stable space and has a clear social structure. The only thing connecting the independent travellers is a certain “backpacker’s status” represented by appropriate dress and behaviour (Sorenson 2003, p. 856). As Lozanski and Beres (2007, p. 5-6) indicated, it was easy for them as researchers to move through the weak boundaries of the backpackers’

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\(^\text{13}\) In April 2009, there were almost 188,000 foreign workers in New Zealand (University of California 2009, online — no page number available); however, this number includes workers in all sectors of economy, not only those employed in agriculture.
and seasonal workers’ groups because of their assumed ages, dress, participation in appropriate social and recreational activities and their temporary transience in the same geographic space. Actually, the trust of the informants was founded on the basis of a shared identity of seasonal workers, which was the same in my case.

My “field” was actually dispersed, transient and encompassed thousands of possible participants of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds. Therefore, I used the so called “purposive,” “judgement” or “strategic” sampling, where the informants are chosen for a specific reason or purpose (Johnson 1990, p. 28). The sample was created along the lines of Angrosino’s (2007, p. 48) suggestion that it should reflect the heterogeneity of the group being studied. Purposive sampling was the only solution (see Disman 1993, p. 113). It was not possible to use a random selection, which is more important for the quantitative methods that provide the reliability and representativeness of the sample (Silverman 1993, p. 10). In contrast, representativeness (that is the equal chance of each person in the population to be chosen) is not required when using qualitative approach and samples are created by the deliberate or purposive selection of important units (Tolich and Davidson 1999, p. 34-35).

I focused only on the diverse agricultural sector and wanted the participants to be connected in some way. Therefore, I chose the people who met through working for Motukiwi in Motueka where I had worked before I started the study. Yet, my personal connection with this place was not the only reason; another important reason was that Motukiwi provided accommodation for the workers, where I could live and observe their everyday lives and interactions.

Observing and interviewing the foreign seasonal workers at one workplace does not mean that I describe only one particular area, because I preferred to interview people with longer and diverse work experience in different parts of New Zealand who could compare several workplaces. This was the first criterion for choosing the informants among dozens of employees coming to and leaving the workplace. The second criterion was the length of stay - I interviewed only people who had spent at least four months in New Zealand and at least one month working for Motukiwi. This means I was interested in interviewing people who had more experience with work and life in New Zealand - not backpackers who left their employer after a week and who spent most of their time travelling and
partying, not working. Third, I wanted various nationalities to be represented in the sample, and, most important, people on various types of visas from distinct cultural backgrounds.

Initially, I divided the participants into two main groups because of their different reasons for coming to New Zealand and the very different environments they originated from. I assumed that the ni-Vanuatu temporarily migrating for financial reasons would constitute a separate group from European and Asian workers coming mostly to work and travel. I later realized that this division was not useful, as some participants (mainly Asians) were between these groups (as some of them arrived for both financial reasons and to travel). Therefore, because the main focus of the research is on the policies and their realization, I created new, more flexible categories according to the different visa conditions under which the participants worked. This means there are not strictly defined groups of participants, but rather categories such as RSE (Recognised Seasonal Employer), WHV (Working Holiday Visa) and SWP (Seasonal Work Permit) holders. Some participants could provide information relevant for two or more categories, as they moved from one visa type to another one. An example is Brigita (Czech), who originally came as a tourist (undocumented worker), then later obtained a Working Holiday Visa and finally the Work Permit. Therefore, her name appears in many places as she was able to discuss these three categories.

Among the twenty-four foreign workers interviewed, there are more male than female participants because there were less female workers in the orchard and from these, not many would meet the above mentioned criteria for participants’ selection. The list of participants, provided in the appendix, shows the share of the nationalities: there are six ni-Vanuatu men (all ni-Vanuatu employees at Motukiwi were men), four Asian people, one person of African origin, one American, one Chilean and the rest are people of European descent.

Table One summarises the basic information about the interviewees. The numbers in the “visa” section show the situation when the participants were interviewed (December 2007-May 2008); however, some participants previously or later changed between the visa types.
Table One: The interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>origin</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>4 people from Asia</th>
<th>Europe</th>
<th>1 USA</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ni-Vanuatu</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>(2 Koreans, 1 Chinese, 1 Malaysian)</td>
<td>(4 French, 5 Czechs, 2 Germans)</td>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Chile</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>visa</th>
<th>total</th>
<th>5 Work Permit holders</th>
<th>Holiday holders</th>
<th>undocumented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RSE holders</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>gender</th>
<th>6 females</th>
<th>18 males</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>age</th>
<th>1 under 20 years</th>
<th>14 between 20-30 years</th>
<th>9 between 30-42 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous work experience</th>
<th>6 with no paid employment</th>
<th>4 students or unemployed after finishing school</th>
<th>14 with skilled employment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

In addition to these foreign workers, I formally interviewed two managers of Motukiwi, plus the local chairman of the growers’ association and the seasonal work coordinator. I also conducted informal unrecorded interviews with two orchard supervisors, labour contractors and with numerous other foreign workers who were employed at Motukiwi, but did not meet my criteria to be formally interviewed, mostly because of their short stay in Motueka.

3.6 Profile of the interviewees

The eleven WHV holders were mostly people intending to change their life direction or backpackers and travellers. The share of the nationalities working as seasonal workers at my workplaces was different than the share of nationalities among the WHV holders in New Zealand, as researched by the New Zealand Immigration Service. Although Britain and Japan are marked as the most important sources of working holiday-makers (New Zealand Immigration Service 2001, 2004b), only a few British and Japanese can be found doing seasonal rural work. Both nationalities probably prefer other types of seasonal work in different areas such as hospitality and tourism. Therefore, there are no British and Japanese participants in the sample. Rural work usually attracts French, Czech, German and Asian (mostly Korean, Malaysian and Thai) people. All Asian people
in my sample did probably not belong among the poor, because they also focused on holiday and travelling instead on working long hours and sending money home.

All these eleven informants were well-educated people. According to the NZIS study, education levels of WHV holders varied with nationality. For example, thirty-three percent of German respondents left study after secondary school (New Zealand Immigration Service 2004b, p. 24). This might lead to an assumption that Germans are less educated than the other nationalities that had a high proportion of university degrees. Yet, Germans working in the researched area were usually younger than other workers and intended to study later. As nineteen-year old Bernd explained, many Germans leave for New Zealand to have a gap year before entering university.

The eleven informants came from developed countries but from different environments: from small villages to large cities. This origin influenced these workers’ perception of the environment where they worked and also their perception of New Zealand. Those people coming from big cities were more likely to describe their workplace and accommodation as basic or dirty and New Zealand as quiet, boring, remote or underdeveloped. Those originating from small towns emphasized the nice landscape and pleasant workplace setting. Most of the WHV holders in my sample spent about one year in New Zealand and three of them applied for a visa extension. The majority of the WHV holders spent more than half of this time working.

The five Work Permit holders were also much more educated than the New Zealanders working in the same area.14 One of the managers commented upon this:

Educated people, probably far more educated then I am, are coming and the living conditions are very, very poor. I sometimes almost feel a little bit embarrassed, asking new people to work for us under the conditions we’ve got. And we can’t improve it at the stage. (Matthew)

These five participants had previous work experience, which could be described as professional and skilled. However, it is difficult to measure the standard of the job according to the pay because of significant differences between the countries of origin. When working in the orchards and vineyards, the

14 In 2001, immigrants (as the whole group) were almost twice as likely as the locally-born to have university qualifications (Statistics New Zealand 2004 in summary).
participants could not use any of their skills acquired in previous skilled occupations. Compared to WHV holders, Work Permit holders spent more of their time in New Zealand working (about eighty percent). This can be explained by higher age and different preferences, for example by the intention to settle and not to spend so much time by travelling and engaging in adventurous activities.

WHV and Work Permit holders could be described as “traditional” workers in New Zealand’s agriculture since WHV and Work Permit holders have been engaged in seasonal work for many years. In contrast, until February 2008, not many Pacific Islanders worked in Motueka except for a group of Tongans in 2007, when the RSE scheme was introduced. In 2008, Motukiwi employed six ni-Vanuatu under the RSE scheme, while the company Tasman Apples hired more than eighty (these two companies occasionally shared their workers). The arrival of almost one hundred RSE workers into Motueka, a town with population of 6,000 was a big occasion for the locals. According to the local growers’ association’s regional chairman Paul, about 400 Pacific Islanders arrived in the Nelson region at this time. The reason why so many Pacific workers in Motueka came from Vanuatu was a personal connection between ni-Vanuatu and one of the managers, whose relative worked as a missionary in Vanuatu. This was confirmed by ni-Vanuatu workers, who also talked about this missionary.

The environment where ni-Vanuatu workers come from needs a brief introduction because it is very different from the environment of the WHV or Work Permit holders in my sample. It is also important for understanding the RSE workers’ motivations to work in New Zealand.

Vanuatu is made up from more than eighty islands and its estimated population is 220,000. The conditions have been described by McKenzie et al (2008) as underdeveloped. Most of Vanuatu is rural, with about twenty percent of population living in the two towns of Port Vila and Luganville. The majority of the inhabitants are subsistence farmers (also see Douglas 1994). Ninety-nine percent of the workers selected under RSE produce their own food. More than half of them sell their products in the market. According to the Vanuatu National Statistics Office, thirty-eight percent of males are unpaid subsistence workers, compared to

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seventy-four percent of females (2009; data from last census in 1999). More than forty per cent of the population lives below the poverty level (Connell and Hammond 2009, p. 84).

The majority of the ni-Vanuatu working in Motueka came from the island of Epi. This is a volcanic and coral island with prevailing subsistence agriculture and rapid population growth (United Nations System-Wide Earthwatch 2009). According to Douglas (1994), Epi is a fertile island with numerous plantations, forty-three km long and seventeen km wide. The population was reported to be 3,628 (Douglas 1994) or around 4,000 (Waiwo 1995).

When asked to describe their homeland, the ni-Vanuatu men talked about a small island with several villages. They came from different villages but knew each other. They were all happy to talk about their home which they describe as simple houses and gardens. In most villages, no electricity, showers or machines are available (though some have generators) and there are only a few trucks in the island. They grow vegetables and different kind of potatoes in their gardens, raise pigs and cows. Although it was reported that two fifths of ni-Vanuatu RSE workers were employed before going to New Zealand (Gibson et al. 2009), none of my informants had any previous experience with a paid job. For example, Adam talked about making a living by hunting pigs, gardening and growing peanuts for the market. Plants like bananas, pineapples, and manioc are also cultivated. Also coffee used to be grown and now Epi has an important share on the national production of coconuts and kava (Vanuatu National Statistics Office 2007).

From this environment, ni-Vanuatu were brought to Motueka and they had to cope with very different living and working conditions. The nature of work was different - most of the men have never worked for an employer or with supervisors. The crops are very different in New Zealand and in Vanuatu and so is the way how they are cultivated.

At home, the men live with their extended families that share the house. Bislama is spoken, but most of the men learned English or French at school. The informants reported they learned English or French for a maximum of six years.

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16 In Vanuatu, about 105 languages are spoken; however Bislama (a form of pidgin) is the national language. Also English and French are official languages (Douglas 1994). Bislama in Vanuatu contains a number of French words. While formerly “Bislama” was a cover term for all Pacific contact languages, today the term Bislama covers a reduced area – predominantly the Republic of Vanuatu. Bislama represents a great threat for the indigenous languages. In Epi, there are six indigenous languages (Bonnemaison et al. 1996, pp. 179, 181, 298).
and attended only the basic school. Most of the ni-Vanuatu workers were about thirty-five years old. The gender share of ni-Vanuatu working in Motueka was not equal, as more men were employed. This and the higher age can be explained by using a similar example of Samoan workers. Annandale (2009) suggests that sending women and young men to New Zealand proved problematic because of gender issues and the youth getting easily distracted. Therefore, the Samoan leaders later chose only women and men who were in their thirties and who were usually married. All of my interviewees reported having children and this is another significant difference between them and WHV or Work Permit holders. The latter were either single or they travelled with a partner, but did not have any responsibilities towards children.

The profile of ni-Vanuatu workers was also explored by the Migration Research Group of Waikato University, Hamilton. Their study from June 2008 (McKenzie et al), based on research in Vanuatu, brought detailed information about the characteristics of the workers. Most participants were males in their late twenties to forties, usually married and with children. The majority were subsistence farmers who had completed less than ten years of schooling. As the researchers noticed, there were some characteristics, which predisposed the men to apply and to be chosen. Such applicants came from wealthier households, had better English knowledge, less health problems as well as less frequency of drinking kava or alcohol. In short, the selection process tried to choose applicants with better prospects in New Zealand. To summarise, my informants’ profiles resemble this typical worker’s picture mentioned in McKenzie et al’s study (2008).

3.7 Ethical considerations

There were many ethical considerations connected with my research. Birman (2006, p. 155) indicated that ethical dilemmas may arise for example in situations when researchers try to balance attention to humanitarian concerns with scientific rigour. This was one of the problems I had to face when coming across controversial practices such as underpayment, discriminatory practices and problems of undocumented workers.

My story was similar to Bell’s and Nutt’s (2002) experience with keeping apart what they conceptualized as two separate identities – an identity as a
researcher and as a practitioner. These boundaries proved fragile, especially in situations when the interviewees requested specific advice and information. Dilemmas occurred when these researchers recognised the need to acknowledge multiple responsibilities. Bell and Nutt demonstrated that it was practically impossible to separate the two worlds of researcher and social work practitioner.

My informants often asked for advice about some immigration issues, piece rates, wages and deductions. I felt obliged to answer, to talk about possible options or to explain where this information could be found. Once, one participant even expected me to help him create a short movie about reportedly mistreated Pacific workers, which I finally refused to do. I was not convinced that these allegations were true and I did not want the movie to interfere with my relationships at the workplace. I also viewed this movie as a deceit towards the managers, who seemed to be honest with me. I understood the movie as something which could do more damage than benefit the Pacific workers. I was particularly concerned that the informants could be identified in this movie. Yet, still feeling guilty for ignoring some controversial issues, I carefully mentioned this topic when talking to one of the managers to make him aware of the possible bad reputation of the workplace.

During the research, I experienced a strong inner conflict between the desire to help my informants and between the rules of ethical academic research. Tolich and Davidson (1999, p. 70) summarised these rules as five basic principles: 1) do not harm, 2) use voluntary participation, 3) provide informed consent, 4) avoid deceit and 5) take care of confidentiality and anonymity. I found principles two, three and four relatively easy to adhere; however, the general notion “do not harm” can be much more difficult to respect because what constitutes harm can be debatable. Moreover, our actions can have unintended consequences. This was one of the reasons I refused to help with the film: it was not possible to predict the consequences.

All interviews contained three important elements: explicit purpose, explanations and questions (see Spradley 1979). The researcher must make the purpose of the interview clear and must repeatedly offer explanations to the informant during the process of asking questions. I acted upon this suggestion and after explaining the project to the informant, I offered her/him the information sheet and the consent form as recommended by the third principle (Tolich and Davidson
Informed consent is required for autonomy and the well-being of the subjects (Wilkinson 2001). In practice, however, as Birman (2006, p. 165) remarked, this procedure can also discourage the participants for a variety of reasons, for instance it may create fear about loss of confidentiality. Moreover, the format and content of these documents can leave the reader confused. This happened with my informants, who often refused to read the whole information sheet and consent form proposed by the University of Otago Ethics Committee. They described these documents as incomprehensible, too scientific and boring, and usually preferred me reading and explaining these documents to them before they decided to sign. The insufficient knowledge of English probably also played an important role here. Finally, nobody refused to sign the consent form, but two people refused to be interviewed without explaining their reasons. Two interviews had to be re-scheduled because the participant simply forgot, or in the other case, the participant was too intoxicated.

Applying the fifth principle, I focused on securing confidentiality. The names of the participants were changed (except for the officials) and other information provided about the participants or their opinions depended on whether they agreed to share this. The participant’s will is understood as imperative and occasionally, parts of the interviews were concealed if the interviewees did not want these published. This happened eight times: six RSE workers, one WHV holder and one manager regretted what they had said and insisted on this part not being published.

The participants did not have a completely passive role, but had a choice to refuse an answer, to withdraw at any stage and to finish the interview another day if they considered it too long, which happened twice. Some of the interviewees even tried to change our roles and started asking me the same questions which I asked them before or requested my opinion on some interview topics. In this case, I postponed the answer in order not to influence the participants’ answers. For example, when asked what I think about the RSE scheme, I told the interviewee that we can discuss this after we finish the interview.
3.8 Interviews

I conducted twenty-eight formal and about thirty informal interviews with the workers of different nationalities and their supervisors in the areas where I worked. The formal interviews were recorded, but the six interviews with RSE workers were recorded as mental notes and later transcribed. By informal interviewing, I mean conversations lacking a structure or control. Such unstructured interviewing is based on a clear plan which the researcher keeps in her/his mind and on a minimum of control over people’s responses. In contrast, the semi-structured interviewing, which I used for a formal conversation with the interviewees, follows an interview guide, that is a list of questions and topics that need to be covered in an order (Bernard 2002). Nevertheless, these interviews were not fully structured and people were not expected to respond to an exactly identical set of questions. As Bishop (1999) recommended, even structured interviews are most rewarding when approached flexibly, supported by a script but willing to deviate from it. I designed a relatively flexible interview guide and refined it in the process of interviewing. After conducting several interviews, I could see the main topics emerging from the transcript, but I was always open to any new important category which may come from the next interview.

My interview guide contained a few introductory questions and then the main topics I wanted to cover. For example, these included the reasons for travelling to New Zealand, immigration issues, work, language, problems experienced and the relationship to other nationalities at the workplace. For each topic, I prepared several questions and later additional questions could be added, depending on the informant’s story and experience. For instance, one Asian participant did not mention any discrimination, whereas this issue together with cultural differences became the main topic for another Asian man.

I started interviewing the workers first and the managers later, inspired by Goffman’s (2001, p. 157) suggestion that starting fieldwork among the “higher” group can be dangerous:
There’s no way in which, if you’re dealing with a lower group, you can start from a higher group, or be associated with a higher group. You’ve got to control your associations. If you get seen in any formal or informal conversation with members of a superordinate group, you’re dead as far as the subordinate group is concerned.

This had happened in the beginning of my research and I did not want to be seen in conversations with the managers again until I felt accepted by the foreign workers as a member of their group.

The process of interviewing was the same for both groups of informants. The length of the interviews was usually around one hour. The majority of the questions were open-ended. I often used questions which Angrosino (2007, p. 43) calls “probes” - sentences designed to keep the interview moving in productive directions. These included, for example, asking for more information, for an opinion, clarification and repeating what has been said to make sure I understood correctly. I noted some of these questions (called “prompts” by Tolich and Davidson 1999), in the interview guide and used them every time I had a feeling the interviewee considered me passive, for example when he or she stopped talking, looked at me and expected some reaction. I always had on my mind that an overly passive approach of the interviewer can create a barrier for the participants to talk (Silverman 1993).

The interviews were mostly conducted in English, but also in Czech (the quotations are my own translations) and contain also some words in many different languages as well as grammar mistakes. In one case, the questions were translated into Malay by my Malaysian friend. Originally, a Malaysian participant (Achi) refused to be interviewed, claiming his English was too bad and there were more important people to be interviewed. Yet, as I discovered later, there was another reason for the refusal – it was probably Achi’s assumption that I was not seriously interested in his opinion and in his culture. As Achi indicated, not many “western” people talked to him and they ignored his culture. Yet, after Achi saw a picture of me and my Malaysian friend and after I suggested that this friend can translate the questions, Achi changed his opinion and finally agreed with the interview. This example shows how a small detail such as a photograph on the wall can influence people’s decision to participate in the research. The ni-Vanuatu were interviewed in English with a few French words. Ni-Vanuatu with limited
English were helped by Stuart and Adam, the best English speakers among ni-Vanuatu (they were also interviewed).\(^{17}\)

As noted, the ni-Vanuatu lived in a separate location and did not work with other foreign workers from our house. I only knew the ni-Vanuatu briefly and therefore I was concerned about how to contact them. My initial worries of how to approach ni-Vanuatu men resembled the greatest fear of novice researchers: that people will not accept them or speak to them, or that people will be offended by fieldwork (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002). Although I consider my worries ridiculous now, it took me a long time to ask one of the ni-Vanuatu if I could interview him. I was asked to come to the hostel, which appeared to be a very difficult environment to conduct the interview, in comparison to the workers’ accommodation where I lived and where the remaining interviews were conducted. In the hostel, it was impossible to interview an individual without other ni-Vanuatu entering, interrupting the flow of the interview, expressing their opinion or just watching curiously and then leaving. But, I respected the informants’ wish to be interviewed in their accommodation, even if this was disruptive and exhausting.

The amount of information gained from the informants was not equal. The main obstacle was a limited amount of information I was able to receive from ni-Vanuatu who refused to be recorded. When the first interviewed man, evidently respected as one of the leaders, refused recording, others followed his example. Fortunately, the ni-Vanuatu agreed with me taking notes. I was really disappointed that I could not tape record the interviews, and of course, I was unable to note everything I wanted to. Immediately after returning home, I wrote down all the remaining information I remembered but still, I could not recall exact quotations. Yet, I considered the opinions of ni-Vanuatu so important, that I could not just omit them in the thesis because of the fact that I had no recordings. Therefore, I do not use any quotations of ni-Vanuatu in this thesis, because these would not be exact transcriptions of the participants’ words. I was aware that this was a big limitation and I decided to use at least my field notes to illustrate the participants’ opinions.

There were probably several reasons behind ni-Vanuatu interviewees refusing to be recorded. First, the trust could not be founded on the basis of a shared identity, as perceived with the European workers who had a similar cultural

\(^{17}\) Although the men indicated they talked Bislama, I did not understand them because they mixed Bislama with their indigenous languages.
background and who could see me daily at work or at the house. Ni-Vanuatu worked and lived separately from me at this time and not knowing me very well, they were initially puzzled and unsure about my own relationship to the management. My experience is not an isolated one; also Bailey (2009b), conducting her research among ni-Vanuatu in Central Otago, reported the workers suspected she was the spy or boss of the company.

Most importantly, the interviews were conducted at a time, when all the workers coming under the RSE scheme had only a very limited possibility to change their employer. RSE workers felt dependent on their employers. All the ni-Vanuatu men refused to talk about their relationship to the managers, were cautious and too timid to reveal their opinions to a person who they knew only briefly. I assume that the reason for their refusal was because of insufficient trust and especially the fear of losing their job if somebody found out they complained about work and about the management.

I noted these missing topics, considering important not only what was said, but also what was suppressed. The issue “relation to the management” was the most important suppressed topic. When coding the missing or insufficiently covered topics, I considered it important to note if the participants were only unwilling or if they directly refused to comment on these topics. In this case, ni-Vanuatu were unwilling to talk about work; whereas talking about the relationships at one particular workplace was refused immediately.

During my fieldwork period (December 2007 to May 2008) I also transcribed the interviews. Later, I started coding them, looking for important categories. Finally, I applied the same process to my field notes, which also contained the notes on the informal interviews and remarks on the formal interviews which were recorded. As mentioned, I did not only look for information in the text, but also in the “gaps” or “missing text,” that is in topics that were not discussed by the informants for various reasons.

3.9 Summary

My research was based on two qualitative data collection techniques: participant observation and semi-structured interviews, followed by their transcription and analysis. The ethnographic methodology provided me with a
clear insight into the transient workplace. Participating in informants’ everyday lives and including the concept of “embodied fieldwork” proved to be a valuable component of this methodology.

I have illustrated how I created the sample in a disperse and volatile field lacking a structure, in a field which “needs to be constructed” (Amit 2000, p. 6). I also evaluated my role as a researcher and explained that I found it difficult to separate my two identities, to stand apart and not to interfere in some conflicting situations.

Returning to Van Maanen’s “confessional tales” (1988), I admit that I experienced several difficulties during my fieldwork such as being viewed as the company “spy” and being unable to record the interviews with ni-Vanuatu. However, I have also learned from these disappointing moments and I realized the importance of maintaining trust in the researcher-interviewee relationship.
Chapter Four: New Zealand’s Seasonal Work Policies: origins and overview

This chapter traces the origins and development of the seasonal work policies in New Zealand. It outlines the five policies that were at operation at the time of my fieldwork (December 2007 to May 2008). The seasonal workers documented in this thesis were mostly administered under two policies, the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) and Working Holiday Visa (WHV).

While this chapter is descriptive, in the following chapters I use evidence from interviews with the seasonal workers to access the success and limitations of these policies.

4.1 Background to New Zealand’s seasonal work policies

To understand the immigration policies of any country it is essential to have some appreciation of the history of migration and settlement in that country (Bedford et al. 2000). New Zealand was declared a British colony in January 1840. This was the same year the Treaty of Waitangi was signed, in which the indigenous Maori ceded the power of governance to the British Queen in return for the rights and privileges of British subjects (Sinclair 2000). The treaty guaranteed the chieftainship of the chiefs over their lands and possessions, which the chiefs understood as confirmation of their own sovereign rights; however, by the turn of the century, the chiefs were completely disempowered.

For the hundred years following the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, New Zealand immigration was characterized by arrivals from the United Kingdom. Roscoe (1999, p.41) argues, that the claim to be “an immigrant nation” would suggest that New Zealand has had a fairly liberal approach to immigration. Nevertheless foreigners (non-British subjects) had to seek permission to be allowed entry. Restrictions against immigrants were first imposed in 1881, aimed at the Chinese, who arrived in large numbers since 1866 (Ip 1995). Not only was the number of Chinese severely limited, but also a poll tax was imposed on each Chinese person entering New Zealand (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2006). Despite the long history of Chinese presence in New Zealand, Chinese migrants
and their children could not gain New Zealand citizenship until 1951 (Spoonley 1998). The Indians, who began to arrive during the late-19th century, also faced discrimination and exclusion (Leckie 1995) although most were British subjects and therefore were initially free to enter New Zealand. Until the Second World War, the New Zealand government continued its restrictive policies and adopted several Immigration Restriction Amendments, which prevented non-British subjects from entering the country (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2006).

The Second World War represented a change to this traditional pattern. The restrictions on non-British immigration from Europe decreased. With the arrival of refugees and post-war immigrants from non-traditional regions, assistance programmes were implemented. The assistance scheme introduced in 1947 brought over 100,000 people to New Zealand during the next thirty years (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2006).

Simultaneously, Pacific Islanders were recruited for work. Although temporary labour migration in the Asia-Pacific region has a long history going back to colonial times, New Zealand did not engage in 19th century forced employment of the Pacific workforce. In contrast, Australia has a less satisfactory history of involvement with Pacific islanders. This has involved the forced removal of Pacific Islanders to work on farms in Australia dating back to the nineteenth century. This practice is known as “blackbirding” (Macdermott and Opeskin 2010). Memories of blackbirding are a sensitive issue for many Melanesian countries and the history of exploitation have been used to raise concern over the wages, labour rights and working conditions for foreign workers (Maclellan and Mares 2006a, Mares 2007).

In contrast to Australia, New Zealand has had an active engagement over many decades employing Polynesians from its former territories. In the case of the Pacific Islanders, it is important to differentiate between the people who came to

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18 Blackbirding and indentured labour was organized by colonial authorities and the private sector (Hugo 2008). These practices occurred from the 1860s to the end of the 19th century, initially by kidnapping or inducing the Islanders. The labour trade became an institution of Melanesian life and “voluntary” migration, although still as indentured labourers, the norm. About 50,000 Melanesians migrated to Queensland. The first affected islands were the southern islands of New Hebrides (today Vanuatu), including the island of Epi. Polynesia was affected by the Peruvian slave trade. During 1862 and 1863, three and half thousand of Polynesians are known to have been removed from their islands (Campbell 1989). Forced removal was followed by the more orderly recruitment of labourers, for example i-Kiribati to the mines in Nauru and Melanesians to the sugar cane farms in northern Australia (Opeskin 2009).

19 For a comparison of the “blackbirds” and “guestworkers”, see Connell (2010). Connell found differences but also parallels between these two phases of labour migration from Vanuatu to Australasia.
New Zealand as citizens and between non-citizens who were often attracted by work possibilities. Cook Islanders, Tokelauans and Niueans are citizens of New Zealand as a result of the colonial authority over their islands in the 19th century (Appleyard and Stahl 1995, Loomis 1991). These Islanders were British subjects but officially became New Zealand citizens after the Second World War. Western Samoa, which was under New Zealand’s control during 1914 – 1962, signed a Treaty of Friendship with New Zealand in 1962, giving Samoans the opportunity for temporary entry. This was later changed to permanent residency under the Samoan Quota scheme introduced during the 1970s (Appleyard and Stahl 2007; Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2006). Most Samoans, Tongans and other Pacific Islanders except for those mentioned above came to New Zealand as “temporary” workers, not as its citizens.

The temporary work arrangements for Pacific Islanders in New Zealand have a long history starting after the Second World War. The period of economic prosperity for the next twenty years brought qualitative and quantitative changes in New Zealand’s labour market. There was a shift from skilled labour to unskilled manual labour in manufacturing and building industries that was accompanied by the need for unskilled workers. This need could not be satisfied by employing only New Zealanders. Ongley (1991, p. 17) commented on the changes: “The combination of boom conditions in the world economy and domestic policies promoting industrialization and full employment caused significant labour shortages which were felt most severely in the expanding urban secondary sector”.

At the same time there were similar labour market shifts in the world. Gibson (1983) compared the conditions in New Zealand’s economy to the conditions in Western Europe where was a massive migration of guest workers in the post-war period, mainly during the second half of the 1950s and during the 1960s (see “Gastarbeiter” in Chapter Two). According to Gibson, it is necessary to understand both cases from the perspective of post-war national and international economic developments. In New Zealand, several actions were taken to solve the accompanying labour shortages; one was attracting rural Maori into industrial areas, the other one was hiring migrating Pacific workers, who were brought to unskilled jobs and to economically inferior positions characterised by lower wages.
and poorer conditions (Ongley 1991, Spoonley 1990). Although accepted as “temporary” workers, many of the Islanders stayed in New Zealand as overstayers and were tolerated as long as the labour demand lasted (Ongley 1991 and 2004).

A growing economic crisis in New Zealand in the early 1970s saw the government’s attitude to Pacific Islanders change. In New Zealand, the crisis generated by the oil crisis and Britain’s orientation towards European markets was characterised by declining trade, economic stagnation, inflation and rising unemployment that coincided with record levels of immigration (Ongley 2004). Consequently, as Spoonley and Bedford stated, “Pacific peoples were racialised and seen as a threat: as competitors for jobs, as contributing to urban decline and as responsible for law and order concerns” (Spoonley and Bedford 2003, p. 312). The hostility towards immigration focused especially on Pacific Islanders because they were the most visible and seemed the most numerous of the recent migrants (Brooking and Rabel 1995). When the demand for labour decreased, “overstayers” who had been previously ignored were chased up and deported (Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2006).

During this period, some migrant Pacific Islanders were still recruited, but only for seasonal work. For example New Zealand operated a temporary rural work scheme for Fijians (1960 until 1987). This scheme contributed to the reconstruction of rural communities in Fiji that have been damaged by hurricanes in the mid-1970s (Lewick and Bedford 1988). Appleyard and Stahl (2007) described this Fiji scheme as successful because there was no overstaying. However, this “success” was achieved through controversial means such as withholding the workers’ travel documents. The employers took away the passports from the workers, so that these could not abscond.

The Fiji rural work permit scheme was restricted to employment in rural areas. Work permits were issued for a maximum of four months but workers could return after twelve months spent in Fiji. Workers engaged in scrub-cutting, gardening and tobacco picking (Trlin and Spoonley 1986). The notion of tobacco picking is important, because Motueka used to be a centre of tobacco picking in New Zealand and Fijians were employed here in the 1970s. After the New Zealand

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20 In 1986, Pacific Islanders were still heavily represented in the low income earning categories (see Larner and Bedford 1993). This inequality can be connected with barriers to social mobility imposed by class, racism and ethnicity (Ongley 1991).
Tobacco Growers Federation stopped recruiting Fiji labour, Fijians worked as scrub cutters and gardeners or in the meat industry.

New Zealand has also implemented a number of temporary work schemes for other Pacific Islanders: for Tongans in 1975 and Western Samoans in 1976. Later these schemes were amalgamated into the South Pacific Work Permit Scheme (Lewick and Bedford 1988). Lovelock and Leopold (2008) characterized this scheme as a move to formalise temporary worker movement and viewed it as a connection between temporary migration and development initiatives.

At the end of the 1970s, two schemes were implemented for workers from Tuvalu and Kiribati. The objectives were to provide participants with income, job skills, on the job training and work experience (Appleyard and Stahl 1995). These policies were understood mainly as a result of New Zealand’s colonial connections, and also because of what former Minister for Immigration, Kerry Burke described as part of New Zealand’s close cooperation with South Pacific countries and its “special responsibility to assist with their developmental efforts” (Appleyard and Stahl 1995, p.7). Yet, these schemes were also evaluated as unsuccessful due to high rates of overstaying (Appleyard and Stahl 2007).

Since the 1990s, a new understanding of Pacific Islanders emerged in terms of recognition by the New Zealand government. The large Pacific communities in New Zealand could no longer be overlooked and they gained more recognition. The Ministry of Pacific Island Affairs, established in July 1990 (Crawley 1993) took a more assertive stance as an advocate for these communities (Spoonley and Bedford 2003). The establishment of the new Ministry also represented New Zealand’s weakening links with Great Britain. New Zealand’s new orientation was towards the Asia-Pacific region. New Zealand ‘officially’ became a Pacific nation in 2006 (Ministries of Justice and Pacific Island Affairs 2000) when the New Zealand Minister of Immigration declared:

Things also have changed for New Zealand as a whole. This Government is passionate about building New Zealand’s national identity. That identity is, obviously, no longer as a far-flung colony of a distant empire. We are our own proud people; a Pacific people located in a dynamic Asia – Pacific region’ (Cunliffe 2006, p. 11).

In 2002, new quotas for Pacific Islanders were set by the Pacific Access category, allowing specified numbers of persons from Fiji, Kiribati, Tonga and
Tuvalu to become permanent residents if they met certain criteria (Appleyard and Stahl 2007). In recent decades, temporary labour migration within and between countries in the Asia-Pacific region has reached an unprecedented scale and diversity (Hugo 2008).

4.2 Policies available for seasonal rural workers

Table Two clarifies and briefly compares the policies available for the seasonal rural workers during the period of my fieldwork (December 2007-May 2008). The table outlines the duration, limitations and requirements. Further details of these policies are discussed in the next section. Within the period when my interviews were conducted, foreign rural workers in New Zealand could use the following schemes:

a) Working Holiday Visa (WHV) and Working Holiday Visa Extension
b) Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Work Policy
c) Transitioning to Recognised Seasonal Employer (TRSE) Work Policy
d) Variation of Conditions for Seasonal Work (VOC)
e) Seasonal Work Permit (finishing, no new permits issued) (SWP)

The following table provides basic information on each policy’s duration, limitations and requirements.
Table Two: Policies available for the seasonal rural workers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>WHV</th>
<th>RSE</th>
<th>TRSE</th>
<th>VOC</th>
<th>SWP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duration</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>7 months or +3 months possible extension</td>
<td>4 months</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>6 months</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renewable?</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number limit</td>
<td>Country specific</td>
<td>5000 (2007/08)</td>
<td>Depending on labour shortages</td>
<td>Depending on labour shortages</td>
<td>Depending on labour shortages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill and education level</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>unskilled and less educated only</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
<td>none</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other requirements</td>
<td>$4200 on account before arrival</td>
<td>Medical and police certificates. Pre-arranged employment</td>
<td>Pre-arranged employment</td>
<td>Pre-arranged employment</td>
<td>Pre-arranged employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although all the programmes in Table Two were viable, I focus mainly on RSE, WHV and SWP. WHV and the RSE scheme were the most important for my research, because most of the participants came either under WHV or RSE. The TRSE, VOC and SWP were less important because of their short duration, smaller significance for the employers and low numbers of workers coming under these policies. Moreover, some of the people working under these three policies originally worked under WHV.

4.3 The Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Policy

The RSE scheme was introduced in New Zealand in April 2007 and was aimed especially at the horticulture and viticulture industries to help solve their seasonal labour shortfall (which was more than 7,000 positions according to Schwass 2007, p.10-11). RSE was a special government initiative that involved three agencies: the Ministry of Social Development, the Department of Labour and NZAID (New Zealand’s International Aid and Development Agency). NZAID monitors the outcomes of the scheme (Ramasamy et al 2008, p. 177).
Since its introduction in April 2007, the RSE scheme has become a major opportunity for poorer Pacific workers who would otherwise find it too difficult and expensive to independently search for work in New Zealand.\(^{21}\) Borovnik (2009) welcomed the RSE scheme as a new option for people from Kiribati and Tuvalu, who were previously granted entry under the small schemes under strict conditions. Similarly, Macdermott and Opeskin (2010) appreciated the RSE as a new possibility for the Melanesian countries of Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands and Vanuatu, which have had little access to labour opportunities in New Zealand.

The RSE gives citizens of several Pacific countries preferential access because the policy was introduced in order to encourage economic development in the Pacific, as well as to match the seasonal labour shortages in New Zealand with the excess work force from some Pacific islands. The Pacific islands’ economies have considerable dependence on the export of labour and remittances and these countries can guarantee a steady supply of labour migrants (see Ongley 1991).

Employers were expected to recruit from all Pacific Islands Forum states; that is the Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji,\(^{22}\) Papua New Guinea, Kiribati, Nauru, Palau, the Republic of Marshall Islands, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Samoa and Vanuatu (Appleyard and Stahl 2007, p. 38). The majority of workers were hired from so called “Pacific kick-start states”\(^{23}\) – Tonga, Vanuatu, Samoa, Kiribati and Tuvalu. In the 2007/08 season, 83 percent came from these five countries (Department of Labour and IMSED Research 2009, p. 4). In the following season, this number decreased to 78 percent (Roorda and Ramasamy 2009). The highest number of workers came from Vanuatu (2523), followed by 1361 Tongans, 1234 Samoans, 48 Tuvaluans and 41 I-Kiribati (Bedford and Lima 2009). The New Zealand growers’ association “Seasonal Solutions” assisted with

\(^{21}\) For more information about the history of the scheme, see McKenzie et al, 2008.

\(^{22}\) Fiji was later excluded from the scheme for political reasons by both New Zealand and Australia. This came under criticism. For example, Hayward-Jones (2009) suggested that Australia’s response to development in Fiji should differentiate between political responses and economic responses, which need to take into account the economic crisis in Fiji. This is also relevant for the above mentioned “aid or business model” because it questions development aid as one of the main purposes of the RSE.

\(^{23}\) This term started being used by officials and scholars after Fiji was removed from the list (Ramasamy et al. 2008, p. 177). It was expected that the establishment of the RSE scheme would be facilitated in these countries and that more countries could be included later, if the implementation in the “kick-start states” was successful.
the implementation of the RSE scheme. This company brought hundreds of workers to New Zealand, especially ni-Vanuatu. In some islands of Vanuatu such as Epi and Tanna, New Zealand employers have recruited directly. In Tanna there has also been assistance from a non-governmental organization (Connell and Hammond 2009).

The rest of the workers were hired from other Melanesian and south-east Asian states, for example from Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines. Different total numbers of workers have been cited. Ball (2010) reported that the number of RSE workers had increased to 8000 by 2009. Ball probably referred to the limit, set by the Department of Labour, and not to the real number of workers. The Department of Labour and IMSED Research (2009, p. 4) counted that initially, there were only 2883 RSE workers employed by 126 employers. In the 2008/09 season, this number increased and reached 3169 workers. For the 2009/2010 season, 3554 applications were approved. From these, 1023 were for the Nelson/Marlborough region (Bedford et al. 2009, speech at conference).

Applicants who have an offer of employment from an employer with RSE status, and who hold an Agreement to Recruit (ATR) workers from offshore, can have this type of visa for a maximum of seven months (extended to nine months for the workers from Kiribati and Tuvalu because of higher travel costs: Hugo 2008). As Table Two shows, the same workers are allowed to return to New Zealand, but only if they have a job offer. Generally, only people with no professional qualifications are eligible. Employers can recruit workers directly or with the help of licensed agents and recruiters such as Seasonal Solutions. For example, in Vanuatu, there were six RSE licence agents acting on behalf of New Zealand employers. These agents also cooperate with the Vanuatu Department of Labour. This Department’s role includes administration and sanctions for the workers who break the rules of the scheme. In Vanuatu, such workers are blacklisted and not allowed to return to New Zealand (Kalmet 2009). Similar sanctions are used in Tonga (Fotu 2009), while in Samoa, the whole family could be fined (Annandale 2009).

In 2008, 92 companies had been approved as recognised employers (Edmund Rice Centre, 2008). New Zealand’s recognised employers must have the

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24 see http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/stream/work/hortandvit/rse/
“Recognised Seasonal Employer status” which means they must comply with the laws and specific requirements concerning minimum pay, airfares and pastoral care. For example, employers must guarantee a minimum payment to workers regardless of the availability of work. As many applicants from Pacific countries find it difficult to gather sufficient funds to travel to New Zealand, employers must pay for half of the return airfare (Hayward-Jones 2008). The pastoral care for these workers included, for example, arranging suitable accommodation, transportation, provision of necessary equipment, access to banking services and opportunities for recreation as well as for religious observance.

Connell and Hammond (2009) reported that the total cost of a ni-Vanuatu applying was as much as 80,000 Vatu ($925 AUD). The study conducted by McKenzie et al (2008) compared the earnings in Vanuatu and in New Zealand. The main weekly income per person in the ni-Vanuatu household of a worker later selected under RSE scheme was 3,694 Vatu (then $52 NZD). Despite high costs, there was a high interest of potential workers in applying. McKenzie et al (2008) identified these workers’ motivations as earning money for school fees, house improvement and to establish businesses. Other important reasons were to improve English, gain work skills and to experience a different lifestyle. When talking to Tongan RSE workers, Gibson (2008) and his research team noticed that most Tongans were asked to work overseas by their family. The second most important reason was to improve their English. Earning money for their children school fees was listed as the ninth reason.

The New Zealand government had many reasons for introducing the RSE. Temporary work arrangements were seen as important for economic development (Cunliffe 2006) and the RSE scheme was expected to become a triple win for migrants, their countries of origin and the destination countries (Ramasamy et al. 2008). Pacific Islanders returning every year under the RSE scheme were viewed as possibly a more stable and reliable workforce than randomly available backpackers (MacKay 2006, Misa 2008, Plimmer 2006). Opinions on the long-term success of the temporary schemes were contested; but generally, advantages were emphasised. For example, Plimmer (2006) argued that a well-managed temporary scheme means fewer social risks than permanent schemes or unmanaged temporary work.
There were many social forces driving the need for the RSE. Misa (2008) estimated that the Pacific’s unemployment was annually growing by 100,000 which could threaten social cohesion and regional stability. Until now, the permanent skilled labour movement from the islands predominated, which is the worst scenario for Pacific Island countries (Voigt-Graf 2006). Labour migration is often selective of the more talented and ambitious whose loss might have a negative impact on communities within the Pacific Islands (Appleyard and Stahl). In contrast, the RSE focused on unskilled workers with low incomes. Unlike the existing scheme, the Pacific Access Category, which attracted more educated applicants, the RSE opened the way for poorer workers with less education (University of Waikato 2008, media release at http://scoop.co.nz/stories/ED0806/S00038.htm).

The Pacific Islands’ governments have long been asking for access to temporary work in New Zealand and Australia. According to Opeskin (2009), the scheme must be seen as an additional means of providing development assistance to the Pacific region, as otherwise, the preference for Pacific countries is difficult to explain. This is an important notion which has implications for the discussion concerning the purpose of the RSE scheme and helps answer the question if RSE is an aid or business model.

A discussion about the advantages versus disadvantages of the scheme is important for the evaluation of its viability. Initial evaluations of the scheme described it as successful (Chand 2008, the Department of Labour and IMSED Research 2009 and 2010). The RSE scheme is also periodically evaluated by a research group at University of Waikato25 which presented similar positive conclusions (Gibson et al. 2008, McKenzie et al 2008) such as improving the living standard of the community as well as of individual households (also McKenzie et al 2008). Plimmer (2006, p. 7) highlighted that the work remittances sent to the home villages may provide direct benefits like improved education, better income distribution, reduced poverty and stimulation of business activities. Plimmer suggested that other benefits should follow, such as improving working

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25 For further information, see the project “Pacific Island – New Zealand Migration Study conducted by a combined group of researchers from the Waikato Management School, World Bank and University of the South Pacific. The group was established to study the impact of the migration on the migrants and also on their home communities. See http://wms-soros.mngt.waikato.ac.nz/Marsden+ Fund+ Project/Home/default.htm.
skills, gaining language competence and the experience of living in another country. Did this really happen to ni-Vanuatu in Motueka? This is a question which my research sought to interrogate.

There have been positive outcomes from the RSE scheme. Hayward-Jones (2008, p. 5) noticed a “transformational change” in the New Zealand horticulture industry as a direct result of the RSE. This change meant that: “Tax avoidance and use of illegal workers was diminishing, RSE employers have been reporting large productivity improvements, and employers were recognising RSE’s potential as a social sustainability brand.” The “transformational change” and reduction of illegal workers are another two topics which I wanted to study in Motueka. Have the RSE benefits prevailed over the disadvantages?

Advantages for the workers were the development of skills and for employers the elimination of the chronic labour shortages. The orchardists noticed a significant difference in the quality of the produce, which could be harvested at the right times. In brief, the RSE scheme has reportedly proved to be a win – win strategy, although the industry “win” has dominated during the first year of the policy (Department of Labour and IMSED Research 2009). My research wanted to explore if the industry “win” dominated also in Motueka and if there was any “win” on the side of the workers.

Despite a prevailing positive evaluation of the RSE, there were also some concerns about the potential costs of the temporary schemes for the sending countries. For example, the possible negative consequences of the loss of labour needed in the Islands have been debated (Appleyard and Stahl 2007). Also some employers admitted they were concerned about the social impact of taking the best workers from the villages (Rees 2009). For example, some communities reacted by imposing labour duties which the workers had to fulfil before departure for New Zealand (Annandale 2009). Yet, there were still concerns about potential disruption to the village structures and family units. Hayward-Jones (2008) conceived that limiting the duration of employment period abroad to five months would minimise the impact on the workers’ home environment. Other authors from the Edmund Rice Centre (2008) agreed that the length of time that workers were away from home was an important issue that needed careful consideration. Little attention has been given to the long-term social effects of significant absences of
people from their communities and families, nor to the best use of the remittances (Edmund Rice Centre 2008).

The debate about the social impact and the use of remittances was also relevant to my research. I wanted to find out if the RSE scheme had a negative influence on the workers or their families. For example, by going shopping with the ni-Vanuatu I could see what they spent their earnings on and what items they bought to take home. Yet I admit that this was a subjective assessment: what seems to be negative to the viewer may not be negative to the workers. An example of this is the use of remittances. The scholars expressed concern that money remitted home may create dependence in the Pacific countries. Smaller Polynesian states have been traditionally reliant on remittances from migrants or seasonal workers (Fairbairn 1993, MacLellan and Mares 2006). For example, remittances from migrant workers form over forty percent of the domestic product in Tonga and about twenty-five in Samoa (Hacket 2009). One of other negative consequences of remittances can be the competition between neighbours, as remittances create a pressure on other families to compete with their neighbours in possession of material things (Martin et al. 2006). Remittances also undermine traditional institutions and lead to a shift in distribution of incomes and power (Macpherson 2008).

Anthropologist Epeli Hau’ofa (1993) rejected the view that remittances constituted dependence and understood these as part of Pacific networks of interdependence and reciprocity. Other positive evaluations of remittances emphasized their contribution to an improved standard of living and economic development (Van Naerssen et al. 2008).

Although remittances are mostly viewed in a positive way, the opinions on the whole process of migration from the islands are ambivalent. There is concern that some temporary migrants will not return home (Voigt-Graf 2006). Some church members in Vanuatu and Tonga have expressed concern, that the workers might not return to their families, attracted by life in New Zealand. This worry was about the impact of family separation that may partially apply to Vanuatu. Unlike the Tongans, ni-Vanuatu working in New Zealand do not often send money home, which has a bigger impact on their families’ consumption during the time of separation (Rohorua 2009). The prolonged separation of spouses might lead to family break-ups, infidelity, psychological stress on children, loss of male role
models, changing gender roles and there could be a negative impact of Western culture on the workers (Maclellan and Mares 2006a). This made me think about the possible negative impact of working in New Zealand on the workers.26

These were possible negative consequences for the workers’ communities in their home islands. Besides being criticized for these consequences, RSE has been also viewed as causing too much dependence of the workers on their New Zealand employers and I wanted to examine if there was such dependence also in Motueka and how workers were controlled. Originally, all RSE workers could only work for one employer stipulated in the contract. During the second season, workers could move to another employer under specific conditions. This dependence and a lack of freedom for the guest workers who are on restricted contracts have been explained in several ways. Bailey (2009b) wrote that Pacific labourers need to be made ‘un-free’ if RSE should achieve its goals of addressing labour shortages in certain areas and promoting development in the Pacific Islands. A contract with one employer should ensure the workers can make as much money as possible during their short stay in New Zealand. Another reason for making workers ‘un-free’ is their easy controllability; therefore the tight employer-employee relationship can be understood as means of control (Ortiz 2002).

In reality, restricted contracts are used not so much because of stable and higher earnings for the labourers, but because of this easier controllability. As explained by Basok (2002, p. 222), guest worker policies are shaped by the governments’ interest in preventing “less desirable” migrants from becoming permanent residents. The paternalistic relationship between the employers and the labourers in the Canadian guest worker program made desertion unlikely, but absconding was a frequent phenomenon in the USA. The RSE was inspired by the Canadian program (see Chapter Two) and therefore it emphasized the relationship between a specific employer and the workers.

To sum up, the RSE scheme was mainly appreciated but also criticized, and opinions on its prevailing advantages or disadvantages differed, especially

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26 Much of the discourse on the influence of the RSE on the communities in the Pacific Islands is speculative and not based upon ethnographic research. Rochelle Bailey, a PhD student at the University of Otago is currently conducting such research but at the time of writing her results were unavailable.
during 2008. To evaluate if this programme is successful and workable, it is possible to refer to other authors who apply different measures. Ruhs (2005) supposed that the success of any temporary programme depends on the host country’s willingness and capacity to strictly enforce the law against all parties: recruitment agents, employers and migrant workers, who illegally circumvent the programme. The International Organization for Migration and Swiss Federal Office for Migration (2005, pp. 35-36) identified six key elements of a balanced temporary migration programme; however, these elements are vague: a temporary programme should be transparent, non-discriminatory, orderly, efficient, reliable and safe. According to Millbank (2008), the fact of guest workers’ leaving when the work is finished is what distinguishes program success from failure. Did all the RSE workers in Motueka leave? This is another criterion upon which to evaluate the success of the scheme in Motueka.

4.4 Working Holiday Visa schemes (WHV)

Most of the agreements about the WHV between New Zealand and many countries in Europe, Asia and both Americas were signed in the 1990s. The number of eligible countries is still increasing. Since July 2005, several changes have been implemented for working holiday schemes, producing a large increase in the number of young people coming to New Zealand to travel and take up short-term work.

WHV schemes allow visitors aged between eighteen to thirty years to work temporarily while on holiday in New Zealand. The conditions for working holidaymakers vary according to the country of origin. Usually they can spend up to twelve months in New Zealand and undertake work of a temporary nature. WHV also allows young New Zealanders to work overseas under reciprocal agreements.

At the time of the research, New Zealand had reciprocal agreements with twenty-seven countries (see Appendix 3). What is notable about this list is that these are mostly European countries, whereas all African and many Asian countries are not included. As Hugo (2008, p. 12) noted, the developmental implications of this type of labour migration are limited because youth from low income countries do not have access to WHV schemes. Hugo supposed that the
WHV programs in New Zealand and Australia may have an indirect impact in that they may delay these countries introducing large scale seasonal agricultural labour migration from low income countries (as has been established within countries such as Spain and the United States). The high numbers of WHV have to some extent met the demand for work in agriculture; otherwise, labour shortages would have perhaps led to the introduction of a seasonal labour migration scheme. Yet, because backpackers were not considered to be a reliable and stable workforce by the employers, RSE was finally introduced.

The number of visas available differs according to the country but for some countries, this number is not limited. For example, there were 1,000 places annually for Chileans, 1,000 places for Czechs, 1,500 places for Koreans and 5,000 places for French. In 2010, the list of eligible countries was extended to include Brazil, China, Latvia and Poland.

The visa conditions are generally the same for all WHV holders (see the websites of the Immigration service - www.immigration.govt.nz). Working holiday-makers cannot take a permanent job, unless they apply for and are granted an ordinary work permit while in New Zealand. Usually, they are allowed to work for the same employer for up to three months, but can have several jobs with different employers during their stay. Most of them spend the time travelling, volunteering or undertaking short-term employment contracts during their stay. They often take low-paid seasonal jobs in areas with large numbers of tourists (see Aitken 1999 for the links between tourism and subsequent migration). According to Newland (unpublished, cited in New Zealand Immigration Service 2004b, p.10), the main areas of work are in the hospitality and agriculture sectors.

Most young people can apply for the visas from anywhere in the world, but some working holiday-makers must apply from their home country. The applications can usually be made online and processed within a few days, while the application process of the RSE workers can take several months. To be eligible, applicants for WHV must meet the health and character requirements; however, the WHV holders usually do not need to undergo tuberculosis X-ray and other medical procedures that are required for the RSE workers. Further, applicants for WHV must have available funds to meet their living costs (see Table Two) and hold a return ticket or have sufficient funds to purchase a ticket. This can
be quite difficult for the applicants from some countries. Evidence of a minimum amount of 4,200 NZD, may be requested on arrival at the border. This requirement differs from the RSE scheme: RSE workers do not need this specified amount of funds and the employers pay for half of their airfare. Yet, the application costs are much higher for the RSE applicants.

The number of places available in the WHV schemes increased from 31,000 in 2004/05 to 36,000 in 2005/06, to 40,000 in 2006/07. In 2005/06, there were substantial increases in the number of working holidaymakers from Germany, the United Kingdom, the USA, and the Czech Republic. Most working holidaymakers usually originated from the United Kingdom, followed by Germans, Japanese, Irish and Americans (New Zealand Immigration Service 2005, 2006).

Young people (18-30 years) staying in New Zealand on a working holiday permit who are able to show they have undertaken three months or more of seasonal work in the horticulture and viticulture industries during their working holiday, may apply for the working holidaymaker extension permit. This permit is for an additional three months at the end of the twelve months.

While New Zealand’s publications on working holiday-makers are scarce, the Australian research is richer. The Australian Government's Committee on Migration (The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia 1997, p. xvi) described the working holidaymakers as an important source of supplementary labour for those industries requiring short-term casual workers, such as the horticultural industry, where their presence is critical at peak times. This publication also commented on the difficulties encountered and caused by working holidaymakers who are not aware of their entitlements or obligations because they do not receive, or make adequate use of, the material which is available on the requirements of the scheme. These findings can be compared with the situation in New Zealand; for example, I wanted to research if working holiday makers in Motueka had better knowledge of their own rights. Also other studies of Australian authors, for example Hanson and Bell (2003, 2007), were suitable for such comparison.

Hanson and Bell situated seasonal migration within the rising diversity of present-day mobility. They illustrated patterns of demand for seasonal labour;

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27 The Australian WHV programme imposes similar restrictions and an even higher account balance is required. Clarke (2004, p. 415) noticed that this particular form of travel is only open to relatively few people.
identified its movements and composition. In their view, seasonal work by WHV holders may be interpreted as a lifestyle choice, motivated in part by consumption-related goals in the form of tourism. Participation in seasonal labour is often only a supporting part of their travel. In the popular backpackers’ imagination there is a romantic vision of life on the road, which symbolizes freedom. Some WHV holders travel as couples, others work in small groups, often changing travelling and working partners at each location visited.

Hanson and Bell described and sketched the so called “harvest trail” and I wanted to compare this description with the harvest trail in New Zealand (see Appendix 2). They noted:

The concept of the harvest trail is firmly embedded in popular imagination, widely perceived as a series of growing locations visited on a circuit by travelling pickers. However, little is actually known about the intricate patterns of mobility and how workers make decisions about where to travel. (Hanson and Bell 2007, p. 108)

Hanson and Bell found out that the number of growing locations visited by WHV holders in Australia in a single year is generally small, usually only two or three. The number of locations where WHV holders work is constrained by access to major tourist spots. Also the length of a harvest season is an important influence on locational choice. Although some workers include different crops to their work circuit to avoid boredom, it is mainly the character of the location that drives the decision. The backpackers are also attracted by travel guides and internet resources. Localities with a harvest office are best positioned to attract migrating workers. While some are attracted purely by the financial rewards, for others seasonal work is simply a convenient way to finance a mobile lifestyle. WHV holders have an advantage, because they are more prepared to endure difficult conditions than local workers since they know this work would be only temporary. In contrast, Australian growers’ association Growcom (2006) highlighted the disadvantages of employing the WHV holders. Reportedly, many growers are reluctant to hire backpackers because they are a transient population who are permitted to work with one employer only for three months. Training them takes some time and when they are trained, they have to move on. To sum up, three months is too short period to invest into making the worker competent and productive. Because they are on a working holiday, they sometimes do not care
about the quality of work performed. This point also raises the question of how employers in New Zealand evaluated the WHV holders.

The New Zealand’s researchers also noticed that seasonal work often is not the main purpose of the WHV holders’ visit to foreign countries. The previous research conducted by the NZIS (New Zealand Immigration Service 2004b), focusing on the working holidaymakers, recognised many reasons recorded by the working holidaymakers to travel to New Zealand. The most important reasons were for a holiday, and second the desire to see New Zealand. Personal reasons such as a change in life direction and a recommendation by friends were the third and fourth reasons. The fifth response was a feeling that New Zealand was a safe place to visit. Looking for work was on the sixth place. The remaining important reasons were: being influenced by books and guides, visiting other countries in the region, obtaining professional work experience, visiting friends or wanting to study there.

Other international authors focused directly on the personal reasons and highlighted backpackers’ search for an alternative livelihood (Olwig and Sorensen 2002) a new identity (Gogia 2005) but also for a way how to expand career and life chances (Duncan 2004). Backpackers’ narratives describe “deep and profound personal changes as a result of the trip” (Noy 2004, p. 86). As Noy explained, backpackers' trips are presented as adhering to romantic imaginaries, as a quest of adventure and authenticity, as encountering the constructed “Other” and negotiating one’s identity. This includes focusing on authentic experience. The personal change is associated with the experience of geographical transportation and with constructed authenticity. Gogia (2005) argued that backpackers self-label themselves as adventurous, authentic and integrative in their style of travel. They build their identity in opposition to mass tourists who reportedly look for sensationalism. Young backpackers prefer ways of travelling which are understood as alternative and countering the conventional forms of tourism (Kontogeorgopoulos 2003).

Alternatively, backpackers look for an authentic experience, “borrow” elements from other cultures and create a cosmopolitan identity (Gogia 2005). Yet, backpacker identity also includes race and citizenship issues as markers of backpacker culture. Gogia supposed that references to this culture highlight a predominantly white, Western corporeality, whereas “bodies of colour” are
marginalised as objects to be photographed or as labour providing services for backpackers. A backpacking trip is typically undertaken by Western youth into the Third World (Noy 2004). Also Huxley (2004) noticed that travelling and taking a “gap year” is a popular activity and recognizable trend of Western youth culture.

A. Sorensen (2003) and E. Sörensson (2008) viewed backpackers as individuals who are at a crossroads in life, between education, temporary jobs, a ‘proper’ job and family life. Backpackers would fit into the group called ‘ego-tourists’ who want to accumulate as much cultural capital as possible. While constantly searching for authentic experiences, this group simultaneously constructs host communities as the primitive other (E. Sörensson 2008).

4.5 Work permit

My informants who held a work permit were either Seasonal or General Work Permit holders. Seasonal Work Permit (SWP) was a favourite possibility for people older than thirty years or for those with an expired WHV. SWP could be granted for six months and renewed. This policy was abandoned during the introduction of the RSE and I wanted to examine the consequences of this change for the workers. In 2009, a similar policy, the Supplementary Seasonal Employment (SSE) was introduced again.

General Work Permits are not issued for temporary unskilled work but they can be granted to workers who take more skilled positions, for example supervisors or technicians working in agriculture; however, their employers must demonstrate that they cannot find any skilled or qualified New Zealanders to do this job and none can be trained. Two of my informants, originally SWP holders, later obtained a General Work Permit. One temporarily moved to more skilled work in the packing shed and another obtained this type of work permit because of his partner. Work permits can be issued to partners of New Zealand citizens or residents, partners of work permit holders or student visa holders, and people applying through the work to residency policies.

In 2005/06, over 99,500 people were issued with work permits, which was an increase of twenty-one percent since 2004/05 (New Zealand Immigration Service 2005 and 2006; OECD 2007). The United Kingdom was the largest source country with nineteen percent of all labour market tested work permits in 2005/06,
and China was the second largest source country with twelve percent (New Zealand Immigration Service 2005 and 2006). Yet, these numbers included all work permit holders, not only people working in agriculture.

4.6 Variation of Conditions for Seasonal Work (VOC)

To manage possible labour shortages during the implementation of the RSE, two other short-term policies were introduced: the Variation of Conditions for seasonal work (VOC) and the Transitioning to Recognised Seasonal Employer (TRSE), which replaced the Seasonal Work Permit (SWP).

The VOC represented new options for the visitors to New Zealand. Previously, people on tourist visas could not take employment here. During the time of my fieldwork (Dec 2007- May 2008) people on a visitor permit could apply to have the conditions of their permit varied, which made seasonal work possible. Although granted only for six weeks (see Table Two), visitors were given the possibility to work in the horticulture or viticulture industries in regions, where the seasonal labour shortage was declared during certain periods.

4.7 Transitioning to Recognised Seasonal Employer (TRSE) work policy

The TRSE, created in 2007, concerned only foreign nationals who were already in New Zealand and intended to work in the horticulture or viticulture industries. The places available were limited and permits could be granted for up to four months, provided that the applicant has not held work permits totalling more than seven months in the previous year. Before obtaining this work permit, applicants were expected to have an employment agreement with an employer who had to comply with specific requirements. The TRSE policy was replaced by the Supplementary Seasonal Employment (SSE) in July 2009 but this was after my fieldwork had finished.
4.8 Summary and implications

This chapter introduced five policies for seasonal workers that were in operation during the time of my fieldwork (December 2007-May 2008). It mainly focused on the two most important schemes: the RSE and WHV. The seasonal workers mostly utilised these two very different policies. These programmes attract different workforces: the WHV brings in predominantly well educated and relatively wealthy backpackers, while the RSE is aimed at less skilled and less educated workers from poorer communities within several Pacific countries. The WHV holders’ way to New Zealand is easy, constrained only by the age limit and by the duty to have certain funds on the account. In contrast, the RSE workers need to overcome numerous obstacles (securing employment in advance, travel to their country’s capital, medical and police certificates, fees payments) to be accepted for work in New Zealand.

The academic discussion about the RSE scheme that took place at the time of my research was full of contrasting opinions that made me consider the following questions: How did RSE work in Motueka? How did the employers, workers and the local community react to the arrival of ni-Vanuatu? Overall, how was the experience of the RSE workers in Motueka? Did the RSE benefits for the ni-Vanuatu employees prevailed over the disadvantages? My research wanted to explore if the industry “win” dominated also in Motueka and if there was any “win” on the side of the workers. I also hoped to find out if working in New Zealand had a negative influence on the workers or if some of the expected benefits followed (improving working skills, gaining language competence).

As with the RSE, the discussion on the WHV holders is heterogeneous and I wanted to research how the employers evaluated the WHV holders. Did the employers feel that WHV workers’ presence was “critical at peak times” (The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia 1997) or that WHV workers took the jobs of the students and unemployed (New Zealand Immigration Service 2004b, see Chapter Two)? What story had the WHV workers to tell and how did they experience working in New Zealand? I will deal with these issues in the following chapters.
Chapter Five: Policies and Perspectives in Practice

This chapter mainly focuses on workers’ experience with the main labour immigration policies. Before I examine each policy, I describe the local labour market in Motueka from various perspectives explaining how labour supply uncertainties created the RSE scheme and why it was so attractive to growers and to those employed under the RSE scheme. I also explore how the local labour market was affected by the changes in the policies and how the local community welcomed resulting changes in the “traditional” workers’ characteristics.

Later, I evaluate these labour policies from the employers’ and informants’ perspectives. I focus on three main groups of informants: those coming under the RSE scheme, workers under WHV and those who obtained SWP. The informants discuss their motivations to work in New Zealand, the visa-related problems they encountered and some highlighted the relationship between temporary and permanent migration. The last issue became an important topic for seven of my participants. In the final section, I present my findings gained mostly by observation and I reflect on the previous statements and views of the informants.

Because this chapter is aimed at the policies, I do not include undocumented workers as their employment is not regulated by any policy. The issue of undocumented workers will be addressed in Chapter Six that explores how visa conditions (or no work visa) influence employers’ treatment of the employees.

5.1 Motueka Labour Market Perspectives: growers, locals and foreign workers

The labour market in Motueka

Some sectors of New Zealand’s economy, such as horticulture, suffer labour shortages at various times of the year. For example, the Nelson – Tasman region needs 6,000 workers daily during the harvest period. In Bay of Plenty the number is 12,000 (MacKay 2006, p. 16). Throughout the country the expanding horticulture and viticulture industries need approximately 50,000 workers during
the peak times (Ramasamy et al. 2008, p. 173). However, this demand does not match supply. A long-term shortage of working age populations is forecasted as a result of the ageing population in New Zealand (Pлимmer 2006). This dilemma was also confirmed by the managers interviewed for this research. In this section, I discuss how the orchard owners perceived the labour shortage and their reasons for hiring foreign nationals.

The reason why both Motukiwi and Tasman Apples employ numerous foreign nationals every year is, according to the managers, not because foreign workers would represent a significantly cheaper labour force than the locals, but due to a small local labour market which is unable to provide a sufficient number of seasonal workers. In 2008, the seasonal coordinator Anne Riley commented on the local labour market:

> We do see some Kiwis, but they are usually referred to our work programme, to common work. Unemployment in Motueka is actually very low. And that’s why we can offer so many jobs to tourists who come in. We see very few local people.

According to Riley, there will be a steady need for foreign workers. The unemployment rate in the region was under three percent (May 2008). That is to say, certain unemployment levels coexisted with labour shortages (see Mares 2005). The managers Greg and Matthew further described these unemployed people as “not worth to try to employ.”

Jana: So how important is it for you to employ the foreigners?
Matthew: Very important. Because there is not enough Kiwis.
Jana: Yeah that’s another question... about the local work market. Probably...
there are some unemployed people...
Matthew: Yes in New Zealand the unemployment rate is very low, for Nelson Tasman is about 2.7 percent, and I would suggest to you, that those two point seven percent of people are probably people who are not worth to try to employ. In fact, all of our seasonal labour has to come from offshore.

Greg: most unemployed in Motueka, they are on sickness benefits. Yeah they have bad back; they can’t lift (smiling). You know, there is a lot of work problems... There are not fifty young people in town, sitting and having nothing to do. We need foreign workers. Young people are at school, once they come from school, oh, what I’m gonna do, I can pick apples for a season. No!

Despite these allegations, I noticed that Motukiwi employed several New Zealanders every year. This means that the employers were either willing or
coerced to do this (as they have to show initiative to employ New Zealanders first). Although some of the domestic workers were very hard-working, many others did not last, as documented by my field notes:

11. Nov. That NZ cook from Wellington left after a week of work. He didn’t say anything, didn’t say bye and called the manager two days later.

12. Apr. J. said she needed a week’s holiday to go to court. It has been three weeks and she hasn’t come back. Her stuff is still in my room and I don’t know what to do with it. I asked supervisor D. but he said she hasn’t called and I should throw it to the rubbish. I don’t really want to do it, I said, maybe she’ll be back. D. doesn’t think so.

15. Apr. The NZ woman who was in programme (addiction treatment) left her stuff in the caravan and vanished after two days of picking. Nobody knows where she is.

There was not only a lack of New Zealanders willing to work in agriculture, but the industry had long-term problems with the unreliability of some local workers, as observed by me and as perceived by the managers as well. This can be compared with a similar situation in Australia.

Mares (2005) documented that Australian growers were generally opposed to labour policies which forced them to take on unemployed workers, who were regarded as lazy and unmotivated. Some of these unemployed people, forced to work against their will, would deliberately go slow, spoil produce or break machinery in order to be dismissed (Mares 2005). I noticed that these strategies were also practiced by some New Zealand workers. For example, four young men forced to work by their parents, worked too slowly and caused problems at the accommodation. They did not seem to be sad when finally dismissed by Motukiwi.

The managers I interviewed said the work ethic was an important factor behind the decision to employ the foreign workers:

Matthew: We don’t like employing young Kiwis, seventeen, eighteen years old, straight out from school, we didn’t have good luck with them. (...) Back in the 1960, 70s, we used to have a lot of Kiwis coming down, doing seasonal work, ... now we had a few enquiries from the Kiwis, just left the school, the college, and filling in before they start university or... Some of them are very good; some don’t have any work ethic.
Jana: Work ethic? What exactly do you mean?
Matthew: Being conscientious people. Arriving at work on time, working eight hours, because the job isn’t a very good job, and can be very hard,
they are not coming back next time. We found a lot of Kiwis strong at school but not tough enough at work. Picking... it’s boring, it’s hot, hard, you got to have motivation, motivate yourself. Some of those young kids haven’t worked. They sit down on the bottom of the ladder, have half an hour rest, or decide: we don’t want to do this work any more.

Matthew recalled the situation in the 1960s and 1970s, when the company had a sufficient influx of New Zealand workers. Yet, Matthew did not factor in how the orchard area had increased following the boom in kiwifruit and vine growing in the Nelson-Tasman region. For example a large vineyard established close to Motueka had increased the demand for workers. I had also noticed the increase of the orchard area belonging to Motukiwi while I was working there. The supervisors told me that only one orchard originally belonged to Motukiwi but by 2008, they owned three orchards with four others rented.

Matthew’s complaint about the weak work ethic of the local workers was not an isolated opinion. New Zealand growers interviewed by Lovelock and Leopold (2008) also raised concerns about the work ethic, complaining that many of the young New Zealanders did not want to work or were unreliable. Before the RSE up to 80% of growers admitted to being forced to employ illegal seasonal labour. Rural labour shortages were identified as a long-lasting problem. But were local workers that bad? Why were locals no longer prepared to labour in these sectors?

The locals’ work ethic: The growers’ perspective

The manager Greg gave three reasons why there were not many locals to be found doing this job. In Greg’s view, “it’s all about money.” First, the social system is “too generous,” that means, it does not force unemployed people to look for any employment.28 Second, horticulture is not really seen as a long-term industry for young people and those who want to do rural work prefer the dairy industry which has better wages. Very few locals want to work in the orchard, because they do not get paid enough money and because this is considered hard manual work. Greg expressed his concern that there will be no young people

28 Exactly the same opinion about generous social security system and the unemployed not being motivated was expressed by Australian growers interviewed by their association Growcom (2006).
interested to work in this area and asked where the next generation of pickers would come from. As he stated, the company would not be able to raise the wages to attract more local workers, because most of its produce is for export, as Motukiwi has to compete in international markets. For example, it has become more difficult to sell kiwifruit to Europe, where the Italian farmers can offer their produce to the supermarkets at lower prices. Third, Greg also complained that New Zealand’s supermarkets were unwilling to pay more for local produce. Therefore, the growers can hardly invest in physical plant to attract more New Zealanders such as improving the physical conditions of work, timing of work or offering better job benefits (as recommended by Findeis 2002).

The managers also thought social and cultural factors contributed to labour shortages (see Mares 2005). These factors resembled the opinion of the Australian growers interviewed by Growcom (2006), who identified several issues such as an increased focus on education, potential workers moving towards higher paid industries, a generous social security system and a decreasing motivation for physically demanding labour.

Employing foreign workers was thus described as a necessity for Motukiwi. Paul Heywood, the regional chairman of Seasonal Solutions emphasised the total dependence on offshore workers: “That is very easily said. We are totally dependent on offshore people to help to harvest our crop. Full stop. Totally dependent.”

When I asked the managers and supervisors if the high numbers of foreign workers could be reduced by introducing better mechanization and labour saving methods like the “dried-on-the-vine” method (see Krikorian 2004, Martin 1998 in Chapter 2) they rejected it as unsuitable. Supervisor Peter who worked in the vineyards said:

Who came up with this? Those people think that vine grows like parsley. Good vines take longer. I should cut it and then wait for a long time for it to grow again? Maybe huge vineyards can afford it. They cut a part and they still have other areas uncut. But it’s not good for small vineyards. Definitely not.

Peter added some other constraints. He said vineyards in New Zealand, especially smaller family ones and those in steep hills, still need manual harvesting because it is difficult to keep and run expensive machinery. These
machines would damage table grapes. Peter could not imagine how apples would be harvested by machines and emphasized, that apples do not ripen uniformly and only the pickers can recognize if apples were ready to be picked. To conclude, the managers and supervisors did not come up with any suggestion as to how the number of foreign workers could be reduced at that time and did not consider mechanization a solution either in the orchard or in the packing shed, where the apples have to be checked for bruises or other damage.

In the employers’ perspective, manual labour, especially foreign, is necessary for the orchard. Yet different groups of workers pose different dilemmas. The non-RSE workers, especially backpackers with WHV visas, represent less effort for the employers, and also less initial expenses, but have some disadvantages such as instability and unreliability. They often leave soon to travel or to look for another job. Young New Zealanders are perceived as even less reliable owing to insufficient interest and a weak work ethic. In comparison to them, ni-Vanuatu represent a reliable workforce which is supposed to stay the whole season; however, they require high initial expenses and more effort with pastoral care. The paradox of this situation is evident: the reliable workforce was expected to cause problems.

In the employers’ view, Pacific workers can create problems for the growers including laziness, alcohol consumption and too much effort needed for pastoral care. The office manager Greg and the retired owner Matthew explain:

Greg: So we have to make sure that if they want to go to church on Sunday, they can get to church, and all these things... these guys don’t have washing machines, don’t know how to use a shower, lots of things... we have to get to basics, really, provide them the training and expertise (?), everything, we have to worry about clothing for them, in wintertime, for the pruning, it’s going to be very cold.

Matthew: I am a little bit scared about the Pacific Islanders.
Jana: Why?
Matthew: Alcohol. Alcohol and control. They can get on alcohol... they can go out of control (?). We employ about sixty, seventy casual workers. If we got sixty Pacific Islanders, I can’t... we can’t.... The government requires us to have pastoral care. (...) But we probably have to do more, the entertainment... weekends, when they are not working. What can we do for the Pacific Islanders to keep them a little bit more occupied? If they have nothing to do, they’re gonna go down to the hotel and get themselves drunk and we get problem.
The physical appearance of the Pacific Islanders and their cultural differences were seen as a problem by some employers. For example, the physical size of Tongan men was considered threatening by Greg, who described ni-Vanuatu and Tongans in the following subjective way:

They have trouble with social, school problems, interaction with people, you know... it's like this with the Tongans in the area. You know, they are big guys, when you see them on the market or walking on the street, six of them, you move to the other side of the road...29

The employers in Motueka viewed the Pacific workers as potential drinkers and kept comparing the Pacific Islanders and “normal” foreign workers (this expression was used). They saw the main difference in the social life, where the “normal“ workers travel, make friends and organise parties, but can control themselves, whereas the Pacific Islanders stay together, will try drinking and finally might cause social problems. Regardless of these subjective views, the ni-Vanuatu were regarded as good workers six months after they arrived.

The local workers’ perspective

Despite the managers’ expressions about total dependence and about a sufficient space for local workers, some locals I talked to felt threatened by the influx of foreign workers, capturing this “popular antipathy to cheap foreign labour from Asia and the Pacific” (Maclellan and Mares 2006b, p. 27). Sometimes, I would hear expressions such as “foreigners are coming to steal our jobs.” This was especially maintained by older New Zealanders, who idealized the time when most of the rural workers were locals. For example, a local worker disrespectfully talked about foreigners working in Blenheim; however, he did not mention that the area of vineyards in Blenheim and the need for labour had increased significantly since that time.

Esses, Dovidio, Jackson and Armstrong (Esses et al. 2001) explained this perception of competition by using an “instrumental model of group conflict” approach. They suggested that attitudes toward immigration are shaped by

29 A similar perception of ni-Vanuatu was recorded by Williams (2010). Williams described the experience of ni-Vanuatu workers in Te Puke, where ni-Vanuatu workers were initially seen as a threat. Williams’ informants supposed that the local New Zealanders were scared of them because of their dark skin and because they walked in groups.
perceptions that foreign nationals compete with members of the receiving society for resources. This perception of competition generates strategic efforts to remove the source of competition. Similarly, Miles (1982) supposed that this perception and racism were generated by material relations. The perception of competition was strong among some local workers in Motueka who feared dismissal because of a “cheaper” foreign workforce.

Findeis (2002), writing about the foreign farm workers in the USA, explained that many farm workers are willing to take jobs that others in the community are not prepared to do. This was relevant for Motukiwi. As the managers confirmed, working in the orchard or vineyard was not seen as a career by many local New Zealanders. Greg had strong views on foreign nationals taking rural jobs from the locals:

Jana: Sometimes I hear that the foreigners just come and take the jobs.
Greg: That’s rubbish. Absolute rubbish.
Jana: Some Kiwis told me.
Greg: No, no, those Kiwis are wrong, OK? Well, the first place, where I have to advertise work, is Motueka. I advertise here, it’s free. The bottom of the labour market, that’s what we are looking for, the unemployed people.

Employing foreign workers was viewed as a necessary solution for Motukiwi, but these workers could be also understood as convenient labour because the employers were not forced to raise the wages, to improve working conditions and the accommodation. These changes would have to be undertaken in order to attract the locals. Similar to Basok’s findings (Basok 2002, see Chapter Two), Motukiwi as a large company would be able to offer higher wages to the locals, but they do not want to invest in the local workforce who they perceive as incapable of providing a full commitment and/or a reliable and productive work ethic.

The Motueka community’s perspective

Pacific and non-Pacific seasonal workers were seen by locals as being different for various reasons. This perception stemmed from previous economic and social experience with Pacific workers. Anne Riley, the Seasonal Coordinator said Fiji Indians and Fijians used to work in Motueka in the 1970’s at the time of tobacco growing and allegedly “caused social problems.” In contrast, O’Shea
(1997, p. 170) described the Fijians as “most courteous, well – behaved visitors”. The growers reportedly found such workers reliable and more likely to stay for the whole season. About three hundred Fijians (including Fiji Indians) arrived during every season from 1971 to 1981 and they were appreciated for more than just their work ethic, such as for their music performance. The main reason Pacific workers were not as welcomed by locals is how they spent money. “The majority of Fijian workers came to the area with the intention to send their earnings home to Fiji and this was not appreciated by the local community. Accustomed to the more free spending local workers, retailers felt threatened by the possibility of a workforce which spent little locally” (O’Shea 1997, p. 170). The reasons for spending little money locally were obvious – the Fijians were expected to contribute to the home community projects (Appleyard and Stahl 2007, p.37) and also the Pacific Islanders intend to bring as much money home as possible.

Similar to the Fijians, ni-Vanuatu spent only a minimum in the local shops and they were forbidden to visit local bars. The big difference between Pacific workers and the backpackers is that the latter spend a considerable part of their earnings for travelling, entertainment and activities in nearby national parks and therefore supported local retailers, hostels and rental shops.

The Tongans in Motueka also faced prejudice. Although there was no obvious evidence that Tongans in the past had caused any problems, they were still described by some locals as scary. In contrast, Gibson et al’s (2008) study of Tongan workers does not support this stereotype. Gibson et al suggest that there are high expectations from the sending community, where the men are supposed to represent their village and not to endanger further opportunities for other people in the community (p.3-4). Among the Tongan workers approved by May 2008, one man was accused of rape and there have been isolated incidences of alcohol abuse resulting in nineteen workers returning home. The majority of Pacific workers have not experienced any problems and there were reports that the employers were impressed by the Tongans’ hard work (Gibson et al. 2008, p. 18).

The stereotyping of Pacific workers in Motueka can be compared with the hostility towards Pacific workers recorded in Marlborough (Department of Labour and IMSED Research 2010). Articles in The Marlborough Express mentioned the racial intolerance, racism directed at seasonal workers (The Marlborough Express 1997, p. 170).
2008a, Williams 2008) and anonymous flyers describing the Pacific workers as a threat to the value of the properties or as potential disease disseminators (Howie 2008b, Van der Heide and Daly 2008). Some locals also expressed their concern about overcrowding, drunkenness and infectious diseases (Williams 2008a, 2008b). They also pointed to the previous experience with Pacific workers, who used to work in Blenheim in the 1970s and who were allegedly put in substandard accommodation, started drinking and causing trouble (Williams 2008b).

These and similar stereotypes have been studied by many disciplines. In anthropology, the concept of stereotyping refers to the creation and application of standardised notions of the cultural distinctiveness of a group (Eriksen 2002, p. 24). Eriksen viewed the stereotypes as functional categories (also Barth 1969); they help the individuals to create order in a complicated social reality, they provide simple criteria for classification and make the division of the social world possible. They do not have to be only negative and it depends, how they are used – if to a simple categorization or to justifying privileges and differences. Similarly, Brislin (2000, p. 232) described stereotypes’ functions and understood them as shortcuts to thinking, which allow people to make decisions without a great deal of mental effort. Esses, Dovidio, Jackson and Armstrong (2001) argued that the root of negative attitudes against foreign nationals and their perception as a competition for resources is their economic success.

The perception of Pacific Islanders as a threat and as competitors for jobs is not a new phenomenon in New Zealand and cannot be simply described in terms of hostility or xenophobia. From the view of the political economy of migration, this approach to the Islanders was explained as the result of a specific situation and connected with the economic recession (see Ongley 1991, Spoonley 1990, 1990b, 1991; Spoonley and Bedford 2003; Walker 1995). Nevertheless, not all authors focus on the influence of economic conditions and some publications still relate resistance to the importation of labour to cultural differences and xenophobia (United Nations’ 1998) or to the size and composition of the workforce (Findeis 2002). Therefore, it might be useful not to focus just on one theory in New Zealand’s case, but to consider all these approaches. The ni-Vanuatu were not the first Pacific workers to work in Motueka but negative attitudes towards them were strong. To explain this negative reaction, we have to consider that: ni-Vanuatu arrived at the time of an economic recession, their group of almost a hundred
people was highly visible in the small town of Motueka and some locals responded by a xenophobic reaction that could help them to create order within a new social reality.

To counter prejudice, Seasonal Solutions published an article explaining why the ni-Vanuatu were coming to Motueka. The chairman Paul Heywood said: “I had articles written in the newspaper, so that the local people knew that they were coming. So we had those articles so that the locals understood what was happening.”

**WHV and SWP holders’ reaction to ni-Vanuatu**

News releases to pacify local residents angered some backpacker seasonal workers. An article in *Nelson Mail* (19 February 2008) mentioned ni-Vanuatu and Tongans coming to the Nelson-Tasman region: numbers, accommodation, and their potential employment. The public was informed that these workers would replace unreliable backpackers and the readers were made aware that the Islanders’ English ranged from good to poor. Ni-Vanuatu were described as “very keen and eager to work” (Smith 2008). The non-Pacific workers did not greet this article favourably. The main reason was not the notion of unreliable backpackers, but the criticism targeted that the community was “warned” against ni-Vanuatu but not against other groups of workers. One of the informants disagreed with publishing such an article in the newspaper. He even expressed his anger about this situation:

Anthony (USA): Why do they write such article? So they have to explain the locals... like a warning: watch out, women! Some monkeys are coming! Why don't they warn us when those crazy Kiwi kids come who have drug problems? Just because they are Kiwis... Or that crazy German... Chinese cutting people with knife... There were people who were much more dangerous than those Vanuatu guys...

Some other non-Pacific workers initially held stereotypical views and prejudice towards ni-Vanuatu, concerning their alleged laziness. For example,

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30 Risa was later moved from our house, after he threatened and cut two people with a knife because of an assumed pestering. The following week, Risa attacked a supervisor who criticized his work. Yet, Risa was not dismissed and spent several more weeks working in the orchard. Some of my informants were scared of him, but Risa always talked to me in a friendly way. The reasons for his strange behaviour as well as for the employer’s reaction remained unclear.
Dina (German) seemed to be surprised that somebody would employ ni-Vanuatu; she talked about her travels in Vanuatu and described the inhabitants as lazy. Dina thought that employing ni-Vanuatu was not a good idea:

Dina: Oh I don’t know if that’s a good idea.
Jana: Why don’t you think it’s a good idea?
Dina: I’ve been to Vanuatu. And I don’t think they have very good work ethics. Eh I don’t think apple picking would be a job for them. I think they pick two bins a day hehehe.
Jana: Why?
Dina: They are too relaxed. And because it’s a hard work...

The alleged laziness of Pacific Islanders was questioned by those, who have previously worked together with them. According to Nico (French), Pacific Islanders are really lazy, but only on their islands, where (as Nico supposed) there is nothing to do anyway. Many of them are very hard-working in the vineyards of Blenheim:

The people I was talking with, they told me, when they are at the Pacific island, they do nothing, there is no job, so they have nothing to do, but I think it’s not the peoples fault, it’s not only the people, it’s also the government, and so on, and so on. Maybe... when they are in the Pacific Island, they are lazy, but I saw them work here, and not all of them, but most of them work good, sometimes works better than anybody, and some of them, of course, work just to work, and sing all the time.

Brislin’s (2000) analysis is useful here. He found that marking certain out-group members as lazy and unable to hold down good jobs serves an adjustment function, because it helps people to obtain rewards in their culture if the out-group members are not considered for better jobs. This was exactly what happened at Motukiwi, as I noticed that the European workers were scared to lose their traditional privileges and position in the labour market.

The perception of the Pacific Islanders as a threat was not caused only by the fear of a job competition, but also by the lack of suitable accommodation and other facilities, especially in Blenheim. The massive expansion of the vineyards together with insufficient facilities for the workers, especially for the large numbers of Pacific Islanders, can be viewed as the main problem. Several newspaper articles have reported overcrowding problems, accommodating the workers in unsuitable houses and lacking housing and recreational facilities for the hundreds of seasonal workers (Howie 2008a and 2008b, *The Marlborough Express* 2008b, Van der Heide 2008, Williams 2008a, Young 2008). These non-academic sources

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were in agreement with several of my informants, previously working in Blenheim, who talked about their troubles to secure a suitable accommodation after the arrival of the RSE workers.

In 2008, the Motueka labour market changed considerably when the first ni-Vanuatu workers arrived in this town where employers favoured foreign nationals and where foreigners were viewed as competition by some locals.

**Before entering Motueka’s labour market: Ni-Vanuatu motivations**

Ni-Vanuatu viewed the Motueka labour market as a space for gaining high earnings and did not fully understand why all the jobs in agriculture are not taken by New Zealanders. To understand ni-Vanuatu perspectives means exploring their motivations for coming to New Zealand. Like Gibson (2008) and McKenzie et al. (2008) I found that the RSE workers came to New Zealand for financial reasons as there were significant disparities between the income in their own country of origin and the possible income in New Zealand. As illustrated by my notes, there is an immense difference between the possible earnings in New Zealand and earnings in Epi:

Adam claimed, he can earn approximately 200 NZD per month in Vanuatu; and some men earn even less. In New Zealand, he can make up to ten-times more, so this is a big difference for him. Those who work in the packing shed are on minimum wages; that was 12 NZD, so they should be able to make at least 96 NZD per day without tax. Those working outside are on piece rates, so they can earn less or more. After taxes and deductions for accommodation, for possible loans, airfare and other transport costs, it might be just five times more in the beginning. But as soon as the loans are paid and the men become faster, they can make decent money. Some of them could occasionally make about 200 per day. So that’s huge difference, if you make 200 per month or per day. (Field notes, 2008)

Comparing Adam’s original income of 200 NZD with the placement costs I realized that Adam would have to save an equivalent of four to five months earnings to cover his expenses. The expenses to apply and fly to New Zealand included half of the airfare, local transport, boat fares to the capital Port Vila, fees for passport, police certificate, medical expenses, and visa fees. Often, the
applicants had to borrow money either from relatives, from special loans offered by
the National Bank of Vanuatu or from the growers’ associations in New Zealand.

Adam was concerned that the loan repayments could take a long time and it
would be a further few months before he could send money home to his family.
Not only did Adam’s family have high expectations but so did the whole
community, as Adam was supposed to contribute to communal projects. He saw it
as a scandal if he returned with no money.

Adam’s loan repayments were forcing him to work as fast and long as he
could as he could not leave this orchard before the loan was repaid and some
extra money could be earned. This situation encouraged him to work as fast as he
could and it also forced him to stay with the company which loaned him the money
necessary for the RSE application. Therefore, the loan could be understood as a
form of bondage and a means of control; yet, at the same time, many ni-Vanuatu
workers would not be able to meet the application costs without loan provisions.
These loans were usually repaid during the first few months in New Zealand:

Because the loans had to be repaid from their wages, they didn’t save
much money during the first few months. In the beginning, they weren’t
sure if it was really worth coming to NZ, but their earnings improved after
three or four months. But, as they think, it doesn’t have much sense to
come to NZ for a shorter period of time. A worker who comes for less than
four months can’t make much money because of high initial expenses and
deductions taken from the pay. (Field notes 2008)

For some ni-Vanuatu workers, it took three months before they had paid off
their start-up loan (Connell and Hammond 2009). Therefore, limiting the workers’
stay to a maximum of five months, as proposed by Hayward-Jones (2008) would
significantly reduce the earnings of those workers, who have to repay their debts
during the first few months of their stay in New Zealand with less money
repatriated.

The participants’ reasons for coming were similar to those found in the
University of Waikato study (McKenzie et al 2008). Yet, informants’ priorities
differed from the studies of other Pacific workers, especially those of the Tongans
(Gibson et al 2008). The ni-Vanuatu wanted to earn money for school fees for their
children and this was always placed as the main reason for coming. Most men
were married and had children. This was similar to the findings of Connell and
Hammond’s (2009) study of workers from the Vanuatu island of Tanna. Most of
the Tanna recruits listed school fees as their first priority. The other principal material objective was house construction. None of the recruits expressed any interest in developing more extensive agricultural schemes at home, which, according to Connell and Hammond, reflects land shortages. Correspondingly, my informants mostly talked about school fees and improving their living standard, except for one who also dreamed of establishing a chicken farm:

All of them talked about school fees and numerous things to improve their households such as solar panels and generators. Some of them started thinking how to make their work easier or even how to establish their own businesses. They wanted to get sawing machines, chainsaws, and tools. Maybe even a truck. One wanted to have a small chicken farm. (Field notes, 2008)

As Adam and others indicate they were expected to contribute a part of their earnings to the community, so that villages can benefit from RSE. There was a limited space for individualism as the majority of decisions were made at a household level. This was not surprising since a household is the primary economic unit in most Melanesian villages and the relations in the family are the principle relations of production in society (Leckie 1990).

There was a significant community involvement in the recruitment of the workers in Epi and the men working at Motukiwi were approved by the chief. Several criteria for selection were used:

An ideal applicant should have these properties: no significant health problems, be a good worker, can speak English (at least a bit), will respect the leader, doesn’t drink too much kava or alcohol, doesn’t smoke much, has sufficient amount to cover at least a part of the expenses and is considered responsible. (Field notes, 2008)

Ni-Vanuatu had a very close relationship with their extended families and emphasised their responsibilities and obligations towards them. This was similar among other RSE workers employed in the Tasman region, who felt obliged to their kin. These obligations meant that the workers were supposed to share money they earned not only with the extended family, but also with the broader community and with their church. The men understood contributing money to the community as a matter of course; however, they also talked about their own plans and primarily sent money to their families:
They all think of home all the time and send money there. Tani said he had sent money twice during last three months. Even if they are maybe sometimes happy to be far away, they still think of their families and save money from their own budget to send it home. They mostly buy the cheapest food, so that there is more money left for their families. (Field notes, 2008)

This strong community involvement was confirmed by other researchers (Annandale 2009, Bedford and Lima 2009, Gibson 2008) as common in other islands of Vanuatu and other Pacific countries. There was a strong expectation that workers would contribute money for the community but Gibson (2008) expressed concern how this community-based selection might lead to a patronage system. In such a system, the workers are selected on the basis of familial, social and political connections as well as on their potential contribution to the community, not just to household needs. Nevertheless, as Gibson noted, there has been little evidence supporting this concern. My informants always started talking about their and extended family’s plans first.

In comparison to other foreign workers, ni-Vanuatu had much less freedom to act as individuals. Most of the workers were chosen by the households and approved by chiefs or other authorities. Further, there were huge expectations from the families, church and communities. Freedom to move to another employer, to drink alcohol and to buy goods was restricted, either by employers or by the families’ expectations. Breaking these rules could blacklist the whole village and a certain kind of behaviour was expected by both the home communities and by the New Zealand employers.

Although ni-Vanuatu workers are restricted with a limited area for individualism, they would still be understood as persons making individual decisions. For example, for Demuth (2000), any kind of migration is an action of a single individual, because it is only the individual person that will decide to migrate or not. This may happen within a family or a group context, but it is an individual’s decision to accept the family decision. In brief, to migrate is an eventual individual decision, whatever is context.

From my conversations with ni-Vanuatu I cannot support this argument. I did not see much space for a choice, because a refusal to follow the leaders’ decision was something unimaginable for ni-Vanuatu men and it was presented as
something which would cause the loss of their status of reliable and respected men. Being chosen by the leaders actually meant that they were honoured.

The personal motivation theories were not really useful in this case, but the new economy of migration with its emphasis on families and households (see Chapter Two) is applicable to the RSE workers when considering the immense ties between Pacific workers and their extended families, communities, schools and churches. In the case of ni-Vanuatu, individual decisions were secondary to the thoughts of the whole community as it was the chief who typically approved the individual applicants.

_The polite, nodding head, one sided induction_

The induction of some ni-Vanuatu into the RSE scheme was not a success. The chosen applicants were supposed to attend a pre-departure orientation in their islands. Yet the results of the survey conducted by University of Waikato (McKenzie et al 2008) show that not all but only seventy-three percent of the RSE migrant workers from Vanuatu attended an orientation at the time of the work interview. For example, there they were supposed to learn about the weather in New Zealand, lifestyle, social aspects and the employers’ requirements. Nevertheless, many potential workers did not get the chance to attend such seminars.

Weaknesses in the induction process can be identified from three sides – from the approach of some Pacific islands’ authorities (Bedford and Lima 2009), from employers relying on getting “ready-made” workers and from some private agents who possibly have provided poor information seminars to the workers. The local Seasonal Solutions’ chairman Heywood did not blame only one agent, but suggested that more effort should be made by both the islands’ governments

and the employers:

The people in Pacific islands themselves have to improve their systems, and the (issuing?) of passports has to be quicker. They just have to do some things better. Some of the islands have been very good, some not.

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31 This was confirmed by the Vanuatu Department of Labour. Kalmet (2009) admitted that this department had a lack of capacity and resources and its staff was overloaded with work. The screening process has to be strengthened to select the right applicants.
And I think the employers have to do more in terms of recruitment, they really need to go to the islands.

There was no consensus among the employers on the effectiveness of the information seminars. A company representative interviewed by Bailey (2009b, p. 64) described the seminars as an “absolute waste of time,” and supposed that “these boys don’t learn by being talked at, they learn by doing.” This is debatable because even if some employers suppose these seminars are useless, they were appreciated by Pacific leaders. Annandale (2009) has remarked that more attention is needed for pre-departure preparation in order to reduce problems such as culture shock. Because the Pacific seasonal workers are unlikely to have a full understanding or knowledge about their legal and human rights to protect themselves from possible harm and exploitation, the government regulation is necessary and unions should be involved (Edmund Rice Centre 2008).

Ni-Vanuatu from Epi were informed about RSE by a missionary, who is a relative of a manager from Tasman Apples. The men mentioned the missionary’s name several times. He explained the working conditions and they signed the contract, but as they revealed, they did not really understand it:

The workers were told basic information about NZ. That is about the weather and the place where they would work. Then about the nature of the work, about the orchard, packing shed and system of payment. All of them remembered, they should bring warm clothes, but they didn’t have many. They saw the employment contract and “someone explained.” But, as they admitted, they actually didn’t understand everything and didn’t know the details of working conditions. As they didn’t have any job before, they haven’t seen such a contract before. But, they understood the sense of “agreement.” They thought they understood the contract, but later they found out that everything was a bit different than they expected. It was difficult to imagine the amount of work they can do, if they have never done such kind of work before. (Field notes, 2008)

The applicants often did not know what they had signed and supposed it would be easy to learn about New Zealand when they arrived. But they later found out that this was not easy.

My research took on a dual role as both a researcher and an advisor. This reminded me of Bell’s and Nutt’s (2008, see Chapter Three) experience with the difficult separation of the identities between researchers and practitioners. I realized the relevance of Nutt’s remark, that an interview is always a social
interaction, where the researcher might be expected to actively contribute (p. 77). When questioned, I started thinking about the reasons, why ni-Vanuatu asked me and not their supervisors or managers. As one person connected with Tasman Apples' management stated, ni-Vanuatu never ask questions:

There are a number of problems here. Firstly, Vanuatuans will NOT ask questions. You can ask them "Do you understand this?" and they will answer "Yes" even if they have no idea what you are talking about. You can sit there and give a whole speech and encourage them until you are blue in the face about how important it is to ask questions so that they understand the training that you are giving them, but they still won't ask!

I don’t support this assumption. Ni-Vanuatu do ask questions, but only to certain people. The interviews discovered three other possible reasons as to why the applicants did not ask questions during the training:

They (ni-Vanuatu) think there are three reasons behind the fact that they didn’t know much about the conditions: first, they suppose they weren’t really explained all the details. Second, some of the men didn’t pay much attention; they just thought of work and supposed they would learn everything in NZ. Third, they didn’t ask much about the things they didn’t understand fully. NZ employers maybe think the workers should ask more questions but they didn’t want to. Why? Some of them didn’t want to look stupid and ridiculous in front of the employers. And, they said something like this: "you know, how can you ask questions about something you have never seen? How can you ask about ATM if you have no idea what it is?" (Field notes, 2008)

As the informants put it, they felt ashamed to ask about some topics. I realized that this could be also the matter of respect for the boss, a senior or an educated person. It could also result from the living in a former colonial society with strict racial hierarchies applied by European coconut planters.

At least, these ni-Vanuatu workers were provided basic information and had a partial knowledge about the conditions. Because the RSE workers can be hired by different organisations as well as by private agents, the level of the training and information received might be very different. A United Nations’ publication (1996, p. 5) explained why private agents might manage such migration in a less efficient way:

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32 This quotation is a part of an online discussion between me and a person, who wished to remain anonymous.
Where official employment services assist in managing migration flows, there is a better chance that migrants will receive the minimum preparation for life and work abroad than if recruitment and placement are left in the hands of private agents.

The lack of information made many Pacific Islands workers’ adaptation to New Zealand’s working and living conditions difficult. For example, RSE workers from Kiribati, were publicly described by their employer as ill prepared, disrespectful, lazy, uneducated and not motivated (New Zealand Press Association 2008, Young 2008, 2008b, 2008c). Other examples were from my interviews with ni-Vanuatu, who claimed that some of their friends did not attend any information seminar. These workers still appeared to have limited knowledge about their rights or where to go for assistance (Department of Labour and IMSED Research 2010). Moreover, some agents cheated ni-Vanuatu or gave them unrealistic expectations (Connell 2010).

The emotional departure

When finally accepted for work in New Zealand, my informants started planning their departure. Leaving home was an important occasion because not only did the family temporarily lose a mother or father, but also the whole household as an economic unit lost a member. A lot of thinking had to be done by the whole households to solve possible problems. These concerned mainly two issues: disruption of work (see Appleyard and Stahl 2007, Rees 2009) and child care. Men who were chosen to leave for New Zealand were considered good workers who were selected because they would represent the community and because they were expected to earn more money than others who were not so hard-working. A departure of several good workers could cause disruption, because others had to take on the work which was previously done by the leaving men. Some admitted worries:

Some people in the villages were worried about this and supposed that there might be not enough people for communal work. Some probably thought, the men might stay in NZ and they would never see each other again. Most of the men said they tried to do as much as possible before departure, especially in the gardens. So this time was very busy and they felt nervous, excited and confused, because they didn’t know what to expect. (Field notes 2008)
McKenzie and others (2008) reported that the community leaders in Vanuatu expressed concern about the problems caused by the separation of husbands and wives and with not enough people available for community work. There was also concern about the foreign lifestyle entering the home community. In the second season of RSE, these dangers were diminished by choosing older, more responsible workers, who had to carry out certain tasks before they were allowed to leave for New Zealand. For example, the Samoan RSE workers could only leave if they used their earnings from the previous season for meaningful purposes, if they were approved by a chief and if they planted a certain amount of taro (Annandale 2009).

My informants tried to do as much work as they could before they left, but they were not asked to plant an exact number of plants. The chosen applicants indicated that they were a little bit worried about the future of their gardens:

Albert talked about his worries that his family would have to work longer in the garden because he would be unable to help with the harvest. He finished some work before he left but he still had a bit bad feeling that he didn’t do enough. (Field notes, 2008)

The men explained they lived in extended families, so the child care and garden work could be shared by remaining members of the household. This corresponded with Hayward-Jones’ findings (2008) about long-established extended family and village networks that provided social safety nets for the affected families.

Ni-Vanuatu described leaving home as very emotional. There were many expectations, hopes but also worries. The men felt proud they were approved by the chief and did not want to make anyone disappointed. An essential part of the farewell was a visit to church with relatives present to wish them good luck. The main purpose was to say goodbye to the community, which is very religious and meets at church regularly. Then they started a long journey by boat to the capital Port Vila and flew to New Zealand.

Arrival in New Zealand was not viewed as really warm because ni-Vanuatu had minimal Pacific community support as few ni-Vanuatu lived in the Nelson-

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33 It was not specified what was a meaningful purpose, only what was considered to be a waste of money. The Pacific workers were especially discouraged from buying DVD players and similar things not related to household improvement.
Tasman region. In Nelson, the support even proved to be distracting for Ni-Vanuatu workers, because some members of the Pacific community encouraged them to visit local bars (Department of Labour and IMSED Research 2010, p. 41-42). In Motueka, the most important involvement in the wider local community was through the church:

Their social life isn’t really rich. They spend most of the time just among themselves. Actually, they don’t have too much free time. Tani said he often went swimming. They were also talking about their trips to Golden Bay; they went there with the supervisor. On Sunday, they go to church. The people who are accommodated in Tasman go to Nelson. In the church there, there is a service for Pacific Islanders.

Ni-Vanuatu also met local Maori, who organized a welcome event for the RSE workers and highlighted the bond between the Pacific nations. Yet, I noticed that Ni-Vanuatu later preferred making friends with other Pacific Islanders and not so much with Maori.

5.2 Growers and Workers’ Narratives: Policies in Practice

Employers and workers commenting on RSE

This section describes the development of the RSE scheme in Motueka during the first few months after arrival of Ni-Vanuatu. I mainly discuss the view of the employers and the WHV holders and I also touch on the question if RSE can be considered a “triple win” or if the Pacific workers should be viewed as a cheap labour (as the WHV holders considered).

The initial prejudice and xenophobia towards the Pacific workers did not vanish during the first few weeks after the arrival of Ni-Vanuatu. Possible improvement was hindered by lack of contacts between the RSE workers, other foreign workers and the local community. In the case of Ni-Vanuatu, there was separation which was created by the employers when accommodating Ni-Vanuatu workers in hostels. Because the local and non-Pacific foreign workers met Ni-Vanuatu only at work, they usually did not develop as deep a friendship with Ni-Vanuatu as they did with other guest workers. Ni-Vanuatu reported having friends from other Pacific countries and none of them mentioned any New Zealanders as friends:
They spend most time just among themselves and don’t have any Kiwi friends. When asked who they worked with and which people they met at work, they usually mentioned people from Asian countries. It is surprising because there aren’t so many here and I know that at M, they worked mostly with French. When asked about friends, they were talking about people from Tonga, Cook Islands and Fiji. (Field notes, May 2008)

It took about two months for the WHV and SWP holders to realize that their initial stereotypical views and prejudice were not well-founded. They started viewing ni-Vanuatu as hardworking. For example, I received this message from an informant Anthony (American):

Anthony's message: We are about twenty-five people at work. Various nations. Ten people are digging, ten are planting trees. Five people are just standing and watching. Who are those people?
Jana: I don’t know.
Anthony: The Kiwis.

The relationship between the growers’ prejudice and reality is shown here, because this example concerns the people who were afraid of ni-Vanuatu being lazy. This citation also contrasts the obsolete assumption about the better work ethic of some groups. For example, Nedd and Marsch (1977, p.3) supposed that “Pakeha see themselves as under a social, moral or personal obligation to work. Display a stronger work ethic. Feel to a much greater extent that one should work in order to contribute to the well-being of one’s country and community.”

Employers also realized the advantages of employing RSE workers. Although the employers did not seem to welcome the RSE and initially feared the Pacific workers as possible problem makers, they changed their opinion. Three months after the arrival of ni-Vanuatu, Seasonal Solutions’ chairman Paul Heywood described the RSE as “totally successful.” His evaluation resembled the theories about viable, workable programmes which can possibly lead to a “triple win” result for the migrant, the origin and the destination countries (Abella 2006, Basok 2000 and 2003, Hugo 2008, Ruhs 2002 and 2005). Heywood explained that

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34 At this time, the RSE workers’ involvement in the community activities was probably better in other parts of New Zealand. A worker David (Czech) confirmed the greater engagement of the Pacific Islanders in Central Otago and remembered playing soccer with them. Fortunately, the involvement improved during the following seasons. An important role was Pacific workers’ interaction with the church members. In the following season, ni-Vanuatu working for Motukiwi were accommodated in the buildings owned by the employers and they interacted more with other workers and with local residents, especially during sports games. They also had a friendly relationship with one of the supervisors. Yet, most ni-Vanuatu working for Tasman Apples still stayed at a hostel and lived a separate life.
employing New Zealanders and the WHV holders had one disadvantage. These workers often left soon, but Pacific Islanders represented a more stable and reliable workforce.

It was evident that both employers and the Pacific workers were interested in the continuation of the scheme. The workers made an extensive effort to be accepted for employment in New Zealand and there was a high interest among the growers to solve possible labour shortages, as remarked by Heywood concerning the outcomes of the first season:

[RSE] It has been very successful not just in itself, but it has helped the employers who were not involved in the RSE scheme. They have been advantaged. Because everyone had sufficient labour this year. So it does not help just those who are involved, it helped other employers as well. It has been very successful. To ensure that we can harvest our crops.

In Heywood’s view, the RSE scheme was “absolutely crucial,” “totally successful” and “absolutely essential for the horticulture employers.”

Despite the prevailing opinion about mutual advantages of the scheme expressed by Heywood and the managers, my non-Pacific informants were sceptical of these perceptions and articulated possible negative aspects. I realized that these participants’ criticism was based on mostly naïve assumptions that I will explain. The main concern was the possibility that the RSE could damage the “traditional” culture of ni-Vanuatu, coming from remote villages. This partly resembled the concern of some community leaders in Vanuatu that accepting foreign lifestyles will have a negative impact on the home community (McKenzie et al. 2008).

Similar concerns about the negative influence of a western lifestyle have also been expressed in the academic literature. For example there are the notions of “frustrating modernity” in Melanesia (Foster 2005, p. 207) or to Marshall Sahlins’ “so-called benefits of so-called civilization” and modernization bringing humiliation (2005, pp. 27 and 39). These authors also noticed that there have been prior transformations of “traditional” cultures, which were described by Sahlins (2000, p. 49) as “in fact neo-traditional,” that means already changed by Western expansion.

The view by the non-Pacific workers on the traditional life in Vanuatu was romantic, simplistic, idealistic and resembled the early ethnographic writings
criticised by Jolly (1992). Jolly mentioned some of these writings, describing the alleged timeless, closed and unchanging world of Tannese women, but not taking into account the dramatic transformations caused by trading, missionary activities and colonial influences. The non-Pacific workers’ opinions were close to Jolly’s (1992, p. 41) notion of an inappropriate view of tradition as a persistence of the past in the present. These workers supposed that no showers and electricity in ni-Vanuatu houses meant Epi was “traditional” and untouched by western influences. They did not realize that the “traditional” life has been transformed. Miles (1998, p. 84) described Vanuatu as a product of a dichotomous imperialism and claimed: “There is no indigenous, anthropologically conceived identity in Vanuatu that subsists apart from French and British, Catholic and Protestant influences and affinities.”

Also Epi has been changed, first by the missionaries, and second by the open conflict between the European settlers and the local people after large tracts of land came under the control of the European planters in the nineteenth century (Aiwa 1995). Young (1992) writes about the inhabitants of Epi as decolonized and virtually de-customized people, who engage in modernizing associations such as village cooperatives, sports clubs as well as women’s and youth groups. Therefore, the non-Pacific workers’ assumption about the possibly spoiled traditional culture is problematic because it does not take into account that this culture has been altered and modernized already.

Apart from the assumption about spoiled “tradition,” the non-Pacific workers viewed ni-Vanuatu as cheap labour. For example, Anthony stated: “New Zealand imports cheap labour and attracts people, who can be easily exploited.” In Anthony’s subjective view, the European backpackers were no longer the favourite option for the employers, because working in New Zealand in the time of economic recession was not so desirable for them. Anthony also assumed that the backpackers were not preferred any more, as they tended to complain more than the Pacific Islanders, who were too scared to complain and risk possible dismissal. In other words, the backpackers are not so much unreliable as described by the employers, but they are less exploitable.

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35 Tanna is one of the southern islands of Vanuatu.
The employers partially confirmed the assumptions of my informants. For example, manager Greg described the orchardists as always striving for money and for the cheapest labour. Owner Matthew answered the question about the reasons for employing workers under RSE scheme:

Matthew: Because we need staff. So we have to use all the opportunities to pick up casual... seasonal workers. And... you know, it can happen, that the European countries can decide, that New Zealand is no longer a desirable country to travel to. (...).. We will have to find people elsewhere. That’s why we are quite happy with the Responsible (sic) seasonal employer.
Jana: So what do you think about the Recognised Employer Scheme?
Matthew: Political game I think.

The argument about the cheap labour force cannot be simply rejected as irrelevant, because migrant labour can sometimes provide a cheap alternative to local labour (see Castles 1985, Ongley 1991, Miles 1986). Miles (1986, p. 62) described this cheap “ready-made” worker as a person, whose sending country has invested into his “rearing, feeding and educating.” It is debatable, if a worker from a remote island, having basic education and no experience with working for an employer, can be really described in this sense. In reality, employing Pacific Islanders under the RSE scheme was a costly decision for Motukiwi, especially during the first years of implementation. The employers were required to pay half of their workers’ airfare, to provide pastoral care, accommodation and employers risked being fined, if their workers absconded. In sum, the RSE scheme is not a cheap alternative to employing New Zealanders (New Zealand Government 2008). The RSE places a great amount of responsibility and accountability on employers and is not about making the work easier or cheaper (New Zealand Fruit Growers Federation 2007).

The workers were not so “costly” for the employers in subsequent seasons, when not much effort with training was necessary. Heywood explained the whole strategy in a following way:

Jana: But can they (employers) afford it? They have to pay like half of air fare...
Paul: We can’t afford not to have our crop harvested. And we regard it as an investment. It’s win – win. And the benefit of that scheme is next year, the year after, getting the same ones back.
Also the manager Greg commented on the benefits:

I must say I’m a fan of it. Not many orchards are, but in long term, it’s gonna have some very good social benefits. For the workers, their countries, their villages, there’s a lot of things.

The picture of Pacific Islanders as exploited victims of the system, maintained by some non-Pacific workers and journalists, was not fully acceptable (although some cases of controversial treatment by employers are described in the following chapter). The important thing was that ni-Vanuatu did not think they were cheap labour:

They did not consider themselves cheap labour and none of them used these words, but they felt dependent and disadvantaged in comparison to other foreign workers. They felt ripped off because of deductions they did not fully understand. (Field notes, 2008)

Neither the Pacific workers nor the employers thought that the Pacific labour was cheap. The employers’ statements suggested that the RSE benefits for Motukiwi employees prevailed over the disadvantages. Yet, according to the report issued by the Department of Labour (Department of Labour and IMSED research 2009), the industry “win” has dominated during the first year of the policy over the “win” of the Pacific workers and their countries. In despite of this industry “win”, the RSE employers in Motueka did not employ significantly more of the RSE workers in the following season, but they continued hiring WHV holders. The following section will show the reasons for these practices.

Employers’ and workers’ comments on WHV

Although the employers viewed working holiday-makers as a less reliable and more transient workforce than the Pacific Islanders, they were still interested in employing WHV holders. Manager Matthew commented on the difference between these two workforces: “Still... we will try to bring as many Working Holiday Visa as we can, because you guys tend to look after yourselves.“ This means that WHV were still welcomed by employers as they did not require pastoral care. For example, the employers did not have to arrange transportation for shopping or visiting a church, provide any working clothes and worry about
providing recreational opportunities for WHV holders. Most WHV holders were experienced backpackers who did not require much help with transportation.

The disadvantage of WHV holders was their lower interest in long-term employment, because of their visa conditions and personal preferences. Seasonal work was not the primary reason of their travel, but it was mainly a means to earn money for further travelling and to obtain cheap accommodation that was provided by the employers. The reasons for coming to New Zealand were vastly different from those of the RSE workers. Personal motivation theories (see Chapter Two) proved more useful here. In the case of the WHV holders in my sample, many personal reasons could be seen behind the decision to travel and work in another country. The informants’ statements partly corresponded with the research results of the Australian and New Zealand authors described in Chapter Four (Hanson and Bell 2007, New Zealand Immigration Service 2004b and 2005, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia 1997). Yet, most of my informants indicated that the most important motive to travel was for personal reasons rather than a holiday (New Zealand Immigration Service 2004b).

The most discussed personal reasons were dissatisfaction with the life experiences, focus on a “new life” and looking for a new identity. Nine out of twelve participants revealed they wanted to escape their lifestyle. Five interviewees also admitted they left after they broke up with their partners or after they lost their jobs, which corresponds with Sorensen’s (2003) and Sörensson’s (2008) theory that most backpacker tourism belongs to transitional periods of a lifecycle. As Brigita (Czech) indicated, many foreign workers hope for “a new life” in New Zealand: “The most people solve their problems with their lovers and so on by leaving for New Zealand, by taking it as escape, simply the beginning of a new life.” This statement corresponds to Clarke’s (2004, p. 416) finding that “Boyfriends and girlfriends are regular and problematic features of working holiday makers’ tales.”

Eva, Tomas and Iveta (all Czechs) reported they left their jobs and came to “take a rest,” to enjoy “nice nature” and “freedom.” Some of the WHV holders decided to leave their home country, even if their salary was higher in their home countries than in New Zealand, as illustrated by Anthony’s example. As an American he could have earned a better income in his home country, but he was
looking for a more relaxed atmosphere with freedom and a peaceful place to live within:

Anthony: No I don’t like it at home because… where I live, it’s very poor, and it’s very violent, and the way of life isn’t very good in United States, especially where I live, it’s very hard life, it’s very competitive (...). Everyone says that to me, like... you can make more money in the States. But, money is anywhere you know...
Eh [I want] freedom of... just to express yourself, to live your life, the way you want to.

Some common characteristics among these participants were their life priorities, where they attached more importance to a simple lifestyle in a nice environment (referring to landscape, cleanliness), to freedom and safety than to an economic betterment. Iveta explained she could be happy despite having “just the backpack with few things:"

(I realised)...that I have a job which actually does not make me satisfied, and makes me exhausted as well. (...) I wanted to pick apples, because I was looking forward, that I can switch my head off, I will not have to use my brain, I will be able to work manually. (...) Suddenly, I actually didn’t have to do anything. Suddenly, I had no such bureaucratic duties. There was no frame, system that would liquidate me here. I could simply go where I wanted, it was just about earning some money, I met pretty nice people here. Suddenly, I found out how little can be enough for me, just the backpack with few things, and a place to sleep, and it made me pretty satisfied.

I have interpreted Iveta’s comments as an example of a backpacker’s narrative about changing life direction, connected with the romantic imagination of an adventure, freedom and life “on the road” (Noy 2004) with a simple piece of a backpack. Wearing casual clothes was characteristic for the so called “road status” of the backpackers (Sorensen 2003). As Sorensen explained, the worn equipment and clothes may appear shabby to the outsider, while among the backpackers the worn look stands for experience and endurance (p. 856). I noticed that the criteria for exclusion from the “backpacker status” were never related to nationality, gender or religion, but to an alleged “posh” lifestyle, snobbery and non-acceptance of the unpretentious accommodation.

Although a backpacker’s trip to New Zealand does not mean entering a “Third World” (Noy 2004) it is still understood as “exotic,” “distant” or an “adventurous” enterprise by some participants. As Lee (Korean) and Nico (French)
admitted, they had romantic expectations from travelling to New Zealand and imagined it as a tropical Pacific country with palm trees growing at the beaches and with Maori living a more "traditional" way of life.

My participants did not deny looking for adventure and for an authentic experience, but they especially highlighted negotiating their own identities and trying to find their life direction. For example, Jean (French) revealed that he came to “find myself,” even if he also hated this expression. Bernd (German) explained he needed some time to decide which discipline to study at university. Another German, Dina, who just finished her studies, was unsure about her career and decided to leave for New Zealand for a simple reason:

And I thought New Zealand has better landscape and it’s not so hot and no poisonous animals and that stuff hehe. Yeah that’s why I came here, just to get away for a year.

This is to say that most of the WHV holders appreciated the possibility to simply “get away for a year” provided by this visa type and did not really think of their future work in New Zealand. Their narrations confirm the sometimes naïve notions of romantic visions of freedom (Noy 2004). The participants mostly chose Motueka because this town was a tourist spot with nice environment (see Hanson and Bell 2007, 2008 in Chapter Four).

Not all the theories concerning backpackers mentioned in Chapter Four were confirmed by the informants. For example, according to my participants, Gogia’s (2005) “bodies of colour” are not only “objects to be photographed” but also people to learn from. The backpackers on WHV did not perceive themselves as constructing a “primitive other” (Sörenssson 2008) but as trying to get rid of own ignorance and primitivism. Nico (French) and Iveta (Czech) mentioned open-mindedness and personal development as a result of their travels:

Nico: I think in any way, just to travel change people, because you meet a lot of different people from different culture, I think you get in, you became more open-minded.

Iveta: New Zealand gave me a lot, personally. To me personally, pretty much. Professionally, I don’t know. I took a lot from it. If somebody returns from another culture after a year without developing, he’s a Neanderthal to me. [I mean] such person who didn’t get anything, or didn’t take anything from it, or who says: our place is the best.
As these participants have indicated, the meeting of other cultures changed their values and made them reconsider their own cultures. They explained, that the WHV provided them with a chance to travel and work temporarily, which made them more independent, individual, self-reliant, courageous and decisive, because they were forced to adapt to new situations. The meeting of diverse cultures at the workplaces made the participants feel more tolerant, open-minded, wiser and relaxed. This was similar to Duncan’s (2004) findings about backpackers in Canada, who emphasised that they became more experienced and self-confident during their travels. However, other findings of Duncan (2004) did not correspond with my research results because of different workplaces where the backpackers were employed. Duncan’s informants, having more skilled employment in a ski-resort, supposed that their work experience could affect their future careers. In contrast, most of my informants doubted experiencing any professional development, as exemplified by Iveta, and they did not suppose they could use the skills gained in New Zealand later if returning to their home countries. They only appreciated the “life school” which they were undergoing and which broadened their horizons. They did consider their improved English as an advantage in their future job applications.

Learning English played an important role in the case of two Korean participants and one participant from Chile. The Koreans Lee and Phan viewed themselves as bounded by their families’ expectations and complained that they were expected to bring a certificate or another proof of their English knowledge. Originally, Lee wanted to escape his parents’ authority:

Jana: So your parents want you to learn English here.
Lee: Yeah. But... I don’t want.

Later, Lee had to undertake seasonal rural employment in order to pay for an English course and both Koreans explained they had to respect their parents’ authority. Therefore, Lee and Phan could be hardly described as backpackers and it was evident, that their main reason for coming was not to travel, work or learn English, but to please their parents. In contrast, Paolo’s arrival was based on his personal decision:
Paolo: Because... I know you can work here, and you can learn English, my first time, I didn't learn in Chile, and hm... just coming. My reason is for learning English, yes.

This difference in motivations indicates that some foreign seasonal workers’ reasons for work migration, are not based on their own decisions, but on their families’ expectations and their engagement in rural work is not completely voluntary (as exemplified by Lee and Phan).

In contrast to specific purposes such as obtaining a certificate, some participants’ motivation could not be explained. These people tended to present leaving home as an individual decision, as their own enterprise or adventure with insignificant consequences for their families and home environment. Several French participants in my sample ended up in New Zealand incidentally. Coincidence or just “having fun” was described as the main “reason” by four participants, all of them French. This can be explained in connection with their employer’s effort to attract French workers. Manager Matthew explained that the employment in the orchard was advertised in France. All of his French workers probably saw this advertisement and decided to work in the orchard, even if they could receive higher earnings at home. For example, Jean stated he wanted to leave France and escape university. Originally, he did not intend to travel to New Zealand, but then he noticed a flier by chance. It was a paper with an idealized picture of a smiling girl picking apples:

I saw the flier, like everybody. With the girl on the ladder, with the big smile (laughing). I said: fuck! That’s like a pretty nice face to go there!

It was surprising for me, how a small detail can influence people’s decision to work in another country. I found out that the backpackers were not only attracted by travel guides and internet resources (Hanson and Bell 2007), but also by relatively insignificant things (such as this picture of a smiling girl or “no poisonous animals”-see Dina’s above quotation). The idealized picture probably also attracted Nico, another French man, who was in a similar situation to Jean. Nico explained he decided to go to New Zealand after he saw an advertisement:

Nico: Yeah, it was mistake, it was like ... I didn’t really want to go to New Zealand but ... I don't know... there was another (reason?)... I just wanted to leave from France... and ...
Jana: Just anywhere?
Nico: Just anywhere.
Jana: So why did you choose just New Zealand?
Nico: Because of the work. Because I saw an advertisement on internet.
And I say to myself: why not?

Two French women, Pommeau and Aporo, were unemployed when they
found an advertisement on the internet. Pommeau explained why she chose to
work in the orchard:

And we didn’t speak English very well at this time, so it was necessary to
do this job first time, just to do training about New Zealand, about people,
about job, about usual things.

Aporo talked about having fun:

Aporo: It was like a joke.
Jana: Joke?
Aporo: Not joke, it was fun, first it was job, but the main idea was to travel
after. And it was just for six months. And we are... first time, we wanted to
stay just six months, until August, but we are still in New Zealand.

There were only minimal limitations for the WHV holders (unless they
wanted to obtain skilled employment). These participants had few problems
obtaining their visa. Correspondingly, the NZIS study (New Zealand Immigration
Service 2004b) reported high satisfaction of WHV holders with the whole process.
It was described as being efficient. Iveta evaluated this process as easy and fast:

It was easy. Easy to get these visa. I was thinking about other countries as
well, but if you have the possibility to work and live somewhere for one
year, just for sending your passport and money to London and waiting few
days, so it’s worth it. So New Zealand because it was easy and because
the nature here is beautiful, it always attracted me.

In general, nobody really complained about the application process. The
main obstacle was the amount of NZ$ 4,200 which each applicant must have on
their account. Those participants who did not have this amount came to New
Zealand as tourists and worked as undocumented workers. For example, Brigita
regretted she did not have a “proper” visa to avoid the stress on arrival. However,
her financial situation did not allow her to apply for another visa type than that of
tourist. As a tourist, she did not have to prove that she had sufficient funds in her
account.
To sum up, only this amount of NZ$ 4,200 and the age restriction were criticized by the WHV holders. For example, thirty-two year old Dina argued that the WHV should be available for older people as in Canada, where applicants up to thirty-five are eligible. The employers expressed a similar opinion and suggested that the Government should increase the number limit of potential WHV holders and allow an equal chance for the extension of WHV (for example, British citizens can stay twenty-four months and the French a maximum of fifteen months, which both managers and workers considered unfair). Seasonal Solutions’ local chairman Paul Heywood talked about the need to increase the WHV period and wished for better cooperation with the government:

First, it’s important, that government accepts and realizes and knows, that we are dependent on off-shore people to harvest our crops. They just demonstrate it by an increase of the allocation for countries with the Holiday scheme. One of the things we must do is to increase the period, of that holiday period, I think there is need of extension of that.

All other complaints concerning WHV were not related directly to the policies, but to the customer service provided by the Immigration Service. David complained about the immigration office in Dunedin because of their insufficient help and an uninformed officer. Dina and Brigita were also dissatisfied with this impersonal approach. In a conversation about the approach of immigration officers, Dina complained:

I noticed, when you ring the Immigration, and you talk to five different people, everyone will tell you something else, hehe. I don’t have to do it now, but when I was waiting for my work permit, it was really frustrating. They always sounded like they don’t wanna talk to me. They always sounded like not really polite...or rushed or... they would have hung up because they are busy with something else...

Similarly, Brigita complained about the information telephone. She indicated that she missed a personal contact with an officer, as she was always redirected to an information line, where “they don’t know anything.” Nevertheless, Brigita recognised some good points of the policies. Despite describing them as “tough,” she assumed it was necessary to “strain” the migrants, because a benevolent approach would reportedly cause social problems.

It was obvious, that the participants mixed various topics together and did not distinguish between the policies and the customer service, but gathered
everything under the term “immigration.” This was an important topic for each of them and they usually spent a long part of the interview talking about this issue, putting together their opinions on the policies and, sometimes, expressing their disappointment with their failed aspirations. These were the participants, who intended to spend more time in New Zealand or even settle there.

It was surprising for me that the WHV holders and even those who talked about their intention to settle often had very limited knowledge about life and working conditions in New Zealand. Only two informants claimed they knew a lot about New Zealand before arrival (Bernd and Brigita). Others admitted, they did not know much about New Zealand, especially concerning the working conditions. Typical knowledge before arrival was “that there are more sheep than people.“ Some participants also discussed the symbols of New Zealand – rugby (Nico, Aporo), kiwifruit and kiwi bird (Pommeau), nature (Dina, Iveta, Bernd). The participants answered the question “What did you know about New Zealand before you came here?” in the following ways:

Not much, just this island near Australia, and... hm... and here need people for work and... just this. (Paolo, Chile)

Nothing. I just knew about All Blacks (laughing) and about some New Zealand movies. (Nico, France)

Honestly, not so much. Just... It was a small country, very peaceful, and there is more sheep than people (laughing). (Ben - intending to settle)

An United Nations’ publication (1996) expressed concern that vast numbers of foreign workers are uninformed and ill prepared to cope with life and work in a foreign country. Moreover, most of them are not familiar with their rights, human rights protection and fundamental freedoms, which they should be guaranteed. Although my participants did not really feel disadvantaged because of their insufficient knowledge of New Zealand, they admitted that the missing information on working conditions occasionally caused them problems such as misuse by the employers.

Many of the reported problems can be described as results of the workers’ own naivety or passive approach. Most the European and Asian participants reported having at least one job, where they did not sign any contract. Moreover, half of the WHV holders who signed a contract admitted, they did not really understand it, which can be illustrated by the following quotations:
Jana: And... you signed the contract. Do you think you could understand everything?

Eva (Czech Republic): To be honest, we didn’t really explore it...

This passive approach by workers sometimes gave the employers an opportunity to exploit this ignorance. This corresponds to the findings of Australian authors (The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia 1997). As with the Australian WHV holders, the WHV holders in New Zealand did not have a good knowledge of their rights and were not fully aware of their entitlements or obligations.

*Seasonal and general work permit*

During interviews and casual conversation, work permit holders often complained about immigration policies (more than WHV holders), because they were concerned about the changes which were in progress. The main concern was the cancellation of the SWP, which forced many workers to return home. The informants criticised the constant change of the policies which was understood as aggravating their life situation and planning. For example, Achi (Malaysian) often expressed his worries about the future and asked me for advice with his visa situation several times. Achi was worried mainly about the uncertain future and blamed the policy:

[I] don’t know about the future. Stay here long time also headache. [too much thinking] That’s why I think better is go back. First time, I planning, three years. I see want to stay three years very hard. [this means: I was planning to stay for three years. But I can see that it is very difficult to stay for three years.] That’s why I short my time. Maybe 2008 I go home. Tax is no problem. [It] is the immigration. The policy. That’s why [it is] very difficult. Want to stay here very hard. [If I want to stay, it’s very difficult] Yeah. I don’t know how long.

Achi’s note about going home in 2008 referred to uncertain development during that year. Until 2007, applying for a SWP was a favourite possibility for people older than thirty years or for those with an expired WHV. This
scheme was often used by European, Asian and South American workers. The SWP was usually granted for six months and could be renewed again. In 2007, this policy was gradually replaced by the RSE scheme and no SWP were granted in the second half of 2007.

The implementation of the RSE policy caused a significant change in the workers’ characteristics. Because the RSE scheme aimed to encourage development in the Pacific countries and preference was given to their citizens, it broadened the possibilities for these workers (especially poorer, less skilled and less educated ones). Simultaneously, possibilities for seasonal workers from other countries became more limited. People who did not meet the criteria for a WHV could obtain only short-term employment. In contrast to the WHV which could be applied for before travelling to New Zealand, newly established TRSE and VOC policies did not guarantee to travellers that they would really obtain their visa after they arrived. Applying for TRSE was dependent on the agreement with a future employer and the recognized employers filled many remaining unskilled positions with Pacific workers, who replaced “traditional” foreign workers, mostly European and North- or South American backpackers.

I also have observed that the cancellation of the SWP scheme caused a temporary increase in undocumented workers. For instance, Brazilian nationals led in the number of Seasonal Work Permits issued in the 2005/06 season. According to Appleyard and Stahl (2007), there were then 773 Brazilian SWP holders. This raises the question: what happened to the hundreds of Brazilians and other foreign nationals unable to apply for WHV, when the SWP was cancelled? This question was partly answered by some of my informants, who reported meeting numerous undocumented Brazilians and other nationals working clandestinely.

There were no Brazilians working for Motukiwi at the time of my fieldwork and the work permit holders were mostly people of European or Asian descent. They were older than thirty and chose this visa option as they were not eligible for WHV because of their age. Although having a temporary visa status, these work permit holders could be often characterized as potential migrants and not as backpackers or travellers; therefore, they could provide some information about the relations between temporary and permanent migration.
Personal reasons played a significant role also in the case of the work permit holders when planning their stay in New Zealand. Dissatisfaction with participants’ previous lifestyle was mostly connected with time consuming employment. Achi complained about his exhausting job as a technician, about being tired and wanting to change his environment. Ben (Congolese French) talked about an “escape” and “new life”:

Ben: Basically I used to work there, as project manager. And I’ve been doing that, working that for fifteen years, and then I just decided to quit and do something else. (...) It’s always a kind of escape anyway. When you travel from one part to another sometimes just like a ... new life, there’s many reason for people to move on, and to reach other countries. So I’d say, somehow it’s mainly the same reason, but just presented differently. (...) I think maybe there are several people who are thinking about leaving the situation, leaving everything, but just don’t do it. Because they don’t dare. (...) Just [having] some dream, some hope, and I settled here for a few months, and I say myself, this is the place where I want to be.

Ben mentioned people, who “do not dare.” In connection with this, Ferro and Wallner (2006), exploring the factors influencing migration, looked at the role of “personal predispositions.” Ferro and Wallner supposed that on an individual basis, these predispositions should be understood as “if they are prepared to take risk, their thirst for adventure, whether they are nonconformist” (p.10). Yet, I realized that in Ben’s case, the external influences could be more important than these “personal predispositions.” Ben was a potential migrant who came with the intention to settle. He commented on his reasons to migrate to New Zealand:

I wanted to change my life, and try to settle here, and I would say that this is the main goal of my coming here (...) [It is a] quiet place, quite safe and I’d say, rather good place for kids to grow up, yeah, I think it’s important, important.

New Zealand’s lifestyle is considered one of the key motivators for the migrants in deciding to apply for residency (New Zealand Immigration Service 2004a). Skilled migrants in New Zealand often look for a “new life,” less stress and personal safety (Spoonley et al. 2009). Ben’s reference to the safety and his later remarks about “less racism” in New Zealand partly explains his decision to leave his better-paid occupation. As Talcott (2000) noted, there are cost-benefit judgements behind the decision to migrate. Even if the migrant normally considers factors such as wage rates, employment opportunities and the cost of living, often
other factors are more important such as the feeling of physical security and values like human rights. This was what Ben was talking about, although he did not admit he came for this reason.

Fenton (2003) argued that in many instances, personal and family betterment is an underlying motive for migration. This betterment, in Ben’s case, was not financial. The findings of the NZIS qualitative research corresponded with Ben’s statements. As the researchers discovered, “both recently approved residents and work permit holders expressed generally similar rationales for applying for residency. As summarised earlier, in addition to lifestyle, participants applied, or wanted to apply, for reasons of convenience, for certainty and to maintain established networks“ (New Zealand Immigration Service 2001, p. 25).

I found that most of WHV holders who were potential migrants had thought of obtaining residency even before they arrived to New Zealand; however, like the RSE and WHV holders, work permit holders’ knowledge about life and working conditions in New Zealand was weak. For example, Risa (Chinese) who dreamed about establishing a business in New Zealand admitted that his ideas were naïve and that he did not know anything about the situation in New Zealand:


Not surprisingly, other work permit holders either did not sign any work contract in New Zealand, or signed without understanding it:

Ben: Once in the field, just make your way, and that’s it. Honestly, I signed it, but I didn’t get it, so...

Jana: And did you understand the papers?
Achi: I think understand.

In sum, most of the participants were not really informed and, except for ni-Vanuatu, came to New Zealand with smaller or greater ambivalence concerning their intentions. Even those who intended to settle did not have accurate information about New Zealand or look for economic betterment and did not have any relatives there. They found most of their information on the internet or in travel guides.

A high number of participants (seven from eighteen who could, according to their visa conditions, be allowed to settle if they obtained a skilled employment)
intended to apply for residency. As explained by some scholars, the link between temporary and permanent migration is strong and while most countries of destination expect the temporary workers to return home, it is likely that some temporary migration will become permanent (Balaz, Williams and Kollar 2004; Khoo et al. 2008). Yet, this high number of people who expressed their interest to settle did not imply that temporary programmes inevitably lead to settlement (Castles 1986). I followed my participants’ further steps and I realized that only two of these seven people finally managed to stay in New Zealand. In my participants’ view, there were several reasons behind their unsuccessful attempts to settle.

First, as the participants assumed, their age disadvantaged them. Thirty-five year old David connected his age with the problems he had experienced with obtaining a visa. David supposed that older people were not welcomed in New Zealand:

Why is it so complicated for me? Because I’m an old idiot (laughing). When you are more than thirty, you are simply dead here. Nobody is interested. I was just lucky, when we were at that construction company, that they gave me that job offer, so that I arranged at least for some visa. Because it was so shaky...and always it’s like fall out of the frying pan into the fire... then you just fork out the money there [to Immigration Service].

Second, the “would-be” migrants expressed their frustration with their current visa conditions, which did not easily translate into “better” (that is non-seasonal) employment that could lead to the general work permit and later to residency. The participants considered themselves as having to overcome numerous obstacles if they decided to settle. They tended to blame the conditions of their visa and reported ignorance of the employers for their unsuccessful attempts to obtain a “better job.” Dina who had studied commerce described her problems with obtaining skilled employment and she blamed her employers. Dina went through several interviews with potential employers, but they were sceptical about her obtaining a work permit and therefore were not interested. In the end, Dina gave up looking for “better” employment and has been working in the orchards for four years, even though she was well educated.

The informants described the employers as not only ignorant, but also as discriminating. For example, former tradesman Anthony (USA) highlighted how disappointed he was when he was always asked about his nationality first, instead
of about his work experience. He was rejected when he explained he was not a New Zealand resident or citizen.

The participants who tried to obtain qualified employment, explained employers’ ignorance as an insufficient knowledge of the practices connected with employing foreign nationals and lack of will to deal with immigration issues. Again, this would be comprehensible if the participants were looking for employment where there is a sufficient number of New Zealanders interested, but my informants wanted to obtain employment in areas which are on the skills shortage list.36

In some cases, the reported ignorance was connected with non-recognition of foreign qualifications. In 1979, Wallman argued that there was discrimination against foreign workers in New Zealand, stemming from a failure to recognise non-New Zealand qualifications (see also Ongley 2004). This was also found in nursing and teaching professions. Brigita had experiences with reported discrimination in teaching. She had a university degree and needed to complete a one year teacher’s course, in order to become a school teacher in New Zealand (this profession is on the skills shortage list). She expressed disappointment not being able to afford this teacher’s course, because the international fees were much higher than the price for New Zealand citizens or residents. Brigita could not get a loan or scholarship from her institution for the same reason – being a foreigner. Brigita compared her situation to a “vicious circle”:

It’s a vicious circle. They won’t give me the residency, because I’m not the teacher now. If I was, I would get the residency; I would get through the point system. Because the teaching is on the list of needful occupations, work shortage list.
But I can’t become a teacher until I’m a resident and can pay those fees. So it is simply... they don’t have enough teachers, but should there be any advantages for the people, who want to work here and stay here, that just does not exist. I don’t know; it seems to me that they make something more from New Zealand, than it is. That they simply make an inexpugnable fort from New Zealand. And people simply don’t live here in luxury, it’s not a golden cage, is it?

Brigita supposed that there was a discrepancy between the officially declared need for skilled professionals and the unresponsive approach of some officers and institutions that do not support these professionals in obtaining skilled

36 http://www.immigration.govt.nz/migrant/general/generalinformation/review.htm
employment. Ben also assumed that New Zealand did not make it easy for qualified people to settle, although there was a declared lack of certain professionals. In Ben’s view, New Zealand pretends to welcome skilled professionals but later discourages them from settling. Similarly, tradesman David experienced problems with his visa and supposed that there was insufficient help for skilled people wanting to settle. Corresponding to Ben’s notion of “pretending” and “hiding,” Risa accentuated “hiding” and compared the immigration policy to a rock which he had to carry on his back all the time:

Risa: Like example, you want to run fast, but at back, you have a lot of rock. Hiding rock.
Jana: so you think that the immigration policy is like the rock?
Risa: Like the rock, yeah. Carry on the back. They can’t do something, because... New Zealand can’t make a lot of big change. They can’t improve themselves. They try, they all the time try to hiding something.

Risa was similar to the Asian migrants that Ip (1995, p. 187) called “reluctant exiles.” Instead of being economic refugees in search of a higher standard of living, these people leave their homelands with ambiguous feelings and do not belong among the poor. Risa revealed his plans about having a business in New Zealand, but did not want to live here permanently. Ben also commented on his ambiguous intentions:

Like I say, I’m a citizen of the world, yeah. I don’t know my next step. I don’t say that I’m gonna live here forever.

When asking Risa and Ben about their further intentions, I found out that the plans of these people were quite vague and they were not sure if they really wanted to stay in New Zealand permanently.

Even if Risa and Achi admitted they would like to stay, at least several years, they actually never thought they could feel like New Zealanders because New Zealand’s lifestyle was strange to them. Also the feeling of acceptance by local communities was missing. Risa considered himself discriminated against and presented New Zealand as a country unsuitable for Asians, but gave primarily economic reasons why he did not want to stay:

Jana: Can you imagine staying in New Zealand?
Jana: Why not?
Risa: Because this country is not suitable for Asian. Maybe some people think to stay here; they will go back to China. Because of the tax, is too high here. There is no chance, opportunity, to have a ... trading. For trading. Export and import.

The reported discrimination against Asians was presented as another reason for failed aspirations.

5.3 Policies in practice – my findings

The RSE scheme

This section summarises my findings gained mostly by observation and aims to answer some of the questions outlined in Chapter Four. One of the questions was if the RSE scheme had more benefits than disadvantages? Was there any “win” on the side of the workers and what was the influence of the scheme on the workers?

The main advantage was that the RSE scheme could be considered successful in terms of its goals as a temporary scheme, because only one percent of Pacific workers became unlawful in New Zealand in the 2007/2008 season (Department of Labour and IMSED Research 2010) and none of the workers in Motueka overstayed. I noticed that the number of undocumented foreign workers in Motueka decreased, as the large employers involved in the RSE had sufficient labour available and the rest of employers could hire backpackers on WHV who were previously employed by these large recognised employers. Moreover, as the employers admitted, they could expect to be checked by the Department of Labour more often after they obtained the status of recognised employers. The RSE really caused a “transformational change” (Hayward-Jones 2008, p. 5) in horticulture industry in Motueka.

This success of a low overstayer rate was achieved by the RSE scheme’s specific design which was similar to the Canadian programme CSAWP. The design was based on imposing control on the workers (Bailey 2009b, Basok 2000) and on a relationship with a single employer. Also in Motueka, the mobility of the RSE workers was restricted and I noticed that there was a high dependence of the
workers on one employer. This dependence and the ways how it was used by the employers will be described in the following chapter.

I viewed the high dependence of the workers as the main disadvantage of the RSE scheme and as a field for potential mistreatment. Initially, I supposed that the second main disadvantage was the discriminatory nature of the scheme, but I changed my opinion after talking to ni-Vanuatu. The question of if the RSE can be considered non-discriminatory (The International Organization for Migration and Swiss Federal Office for Migration 2005) was easy to answer for me after I saw that there were clear preferences: the employers mostly employed married men in their thirties. Also Hugo (2008) noticed that RSE favoured married men, because they were seen as being more stable and reliable and less likely to abscond than single men who did not have families at home. Hugo was also concerned that denying single young men access to work can create problems at home. This is possible; however, I found out that it was also in the workers’ communities’ interest to choose married applicants who were likely to return to Vanuatu. All ni-Vanuatu men who I met in Motueka had children and as they explained, they were considered more responsible by the chief who was concerned that young single men could be easily distracted by the different lifestyle in New Zealand. I realized that the RSE can be viewed as discriminatory, but this happens for a good reason. It is not only the New Zealand Government which wants to discourage the “less desirable” (Basok 2002) labour migrants from settling, but it is also the workers’ community that does not want to lose its members. In this case, discrimination means also protection of the home communities from the loss of their members.
The RSE scheme could be also considered to discriminate against women. Only three Tongan workers who arrived in New Zealand in 2007 were women, with more recruited in 2008 (Gibson et al 2008). Between October 2007 and January 2008, all workers hired in Vanuatu were male. From February to May 2008, females comprised 22.3 percent of ni-Vanuatu workers (McKenzie et al. 2008). According to Hammond and Connell (2009), many ni-Vanuatu women would become somewhat independent for the first time in their lives, but they had less familiarity with the outside world, were more conservative and were viewed as having a crucial role in community life.

I realized that the low number of participating women can be also explained by their insufficient interest in those jobs that were not really profitable. I could see that the women were usually employed in packing sheds, which was a short-term job in comparison to opportunities offered to the men. The women could usually not earn the same amount of money as the men, as documented by my notes:

Some of them can stay just three months, some of them seven. It depends on the job. People employed in the packing shed can usually stay just three or four months, people working outside longer. They start with picking apples, then they pick kiwifruit, later they can do kiwifruit pruning. But three months of work is not enough. It’s not really worth coming because of high expenses and deductions. That means, mainly women are disadvantaged, because women work in the packing sheds and the outdoor workers are men. (Field notes, 2008)
In sum, the scheme on its own did not really discriminate against women, but there was a lack of suitable long-term positions offered by some employers such as Tasman Apples, who distinguished between “typical” men’s and women’s positions.

Except for the supposed discrimination, I also changed my opinion on the negative influence of the new environment on the workers. For example, I witnessed that ni-Vanuatu were often interested in buying things, which I did not consider really useful for them, such as DVD players:

R. explained that the Vanuatu government tries to discourage them from buying stuff like DVD players. But, they seem to be fascinated by these things. All the men are very interested in cars, all kind of machinery, electronics and tools. When I went shopping with Stuart, he spent a long time exploring the DVD player and intended to buy it although he claimed that there was no electricity in his village. Maybe it is for his sister. One of them reportedly got too fascinated by computers and bought a laptop. The chief got angry that he spent money on a laptop instead of bringing it home and now, the man is forbidden to come back to NZ (source – M.). (Field notes, 2008)

This experience with “useless” shopping led me to an assumption that in this case, remittances lead to higher consumption, instead of investment. My opinion changed after visiting the workshop “Pacific Seasonal Workers in New Zealand: Early impacts on workers, families and communities” held at the Canterbury University in Christchurch. At this workshop, David McKenzie from Waikato University presented the results of his research in Tonga. The team of researchers did not find any significant change in consumption in RSE households. Other authors, reporting on their findings on Tanna, Vanuatu, claimed that there were income gains, which appear to be focused on a development agenda (Connell and Hammond 2009).

I stopped being critical towards the use of the men’s earnings, but I noticed that their stay in New Zealand had some negative impact on the workers and possibly also on their families. Similar to the Mexican workers in the USA studied by Grzywacz (2006), ni-Vanuatu confronted opposing family norms. Both Mexicans from Grzywacz’s study and ni-Vanuatu workers in New Zealand were

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encouraged to leave their families to gain economic security for them, but they also knew that leaving rendered their families vulnerable. Before the worker is able to send money home, his wife and children are forced to rely on the extended family to obtain basic necessities. This ambivalence sometimes caused anxiety which, in the ni-Vanuatu case, was aggravated by worries about how to repay loans as soon as possible. They also experienced isolation that was exacerbated by the limited possibilities of how to contact their families:

All men said that now they sometimes miss their families and are homesick. Their families miss them as well, “but they understand.” Stuart said that he calls home often, while others regretted they couldn’t call home, because there was no phone available.

(My comments: That’s crazy; they are so isolated and can’t even talk to their families. This is so different from the backpackers. Those people can call or skype home, they can write e-mails. And some of them even don’t, even if they can. They just write an e-mail once a month and that’s it. The Ni-Vanuatu would probably spend all their money on phone cards, if they could. When they call home, they go to phone box. Not just one, the phone box is full of them, or they stand around, and want to know what’s going on with their families.) (Field notes May 2008)

Even if the men talked about how much they missed their families, they also had ironic comments on being far away from their wives. Some of them revealed they sometimes appreciated having a “holiday.” Being away from their partners and children provided more space for individualism. The men were not woken up at night by their children and did not have to help with their upbringing. They had more time for themselves as well as for collective sport activities in their free time. The individual decisions were reinforced by the system of payment where each man had his own account and own pay, which could differ from others (such as the slower workers). This was initially considered incomprehensible and unfair and the workers indicated that they would prefer hourly wages with an equal amount of money being sent to everyone’s account, because they came as a compact group.

In addition to the changing space for individualism, I noticed that ni-Vanuatu experienced a significant change in their lifestyle. As Hayward-Jones (2008) wrote, a degree of cultural shock for the RSE workers was inevitable. This was also relevant for ni-Vanuatu in Motueka. For example, the men felt lost in the supermarket and as they explained, they cooked mostly rice in the beginning.
because they did not know most of the products that were sold there. The men regretted that most of the food they usually ate in Vanuatu was unavailable:

Another problem and a big difference is the food. They talked about their vegetables, taro and various kinds of potatoes that they can’t get here or the find them too expensive. All of them think that the food here is too expensive. They mentioned the problems with cooking, they had to get used to and change their habits. They often cook rice, that’s easy. (Field notes, May 2008).

Although my informants talked about cooking various meals, later Bill (ni-Vanuatu) told his co-worker Anthony (American) that the ni-Vanuatu men did shopping in the pet section of the supermarket as they could not afford to buy expensive meat. This could not be verified, nevertheless when visiting my informants at their hostel, I noticed they cooked simple meals (for example only rice). Because of their obligations at home, many Pacific Islanders want to save as much money as possible to send to their families or communities. In Courtney’s article (2008), an orchardist’s wife reported, that their Tongan employees did not eat enough, as they spent only twenty dollars a week on food. This woman supposed there was a huge pressure on the workers from their communities and churches to save money.

My findings were similar to Gibson’s (2008) and Rohorua’s (2009) research results concerning the negative influence of the absent money-earners on the consumption of their families in Vanuatu. Gibson (2008) explained that many Pacific workers find it expensive and complicated to transfer money from New Zealand to the Pacific and prefer bringing most of their earnings home in person. Consequently, this has an effect on lower consumption among some families in Vanuatu, who are unable to use the earnings before their absent member returns (Rohorua 2009). Also my informants reported having difficulties with transferring money to Vanuatu. The men were worried that their families lowered their consumption or did not send children to school when waiting for the father who worked overseas.

Learning to cook unknown food is just one example of numerous encounters with new things, which ni-Vanuatu had to handle at the backpackers’ (showers, kitchen equipment) and at work (tractors, machinery). Yet, the workers did not seem to have significant problems with becoming accustomed. In contrast,
they were interested in everything new and enthusiastically explored this. The men were especially fascinated by the machinery:

The main thing is learning new things. Although the work was described as hard and manager tough, the men think that working in NZ is a good experience for them. They appreciate learning and meeting new things and seem to be really interested in everything new. At M, they have to drive the tractors at work. I didn’t notice they had big problems with it. Some of them told me they weren’t so good, L. was described as “very good in driving.” They all seem to be pleased to learn new things. And fascinated by some technical gear. They enjoy everything connected with light and electricity. (Field notes, May 2008)

Ni-Vanuatu seemed to become accustomed to life in Motueka without major problems and later started talking about how much they liked supermarkets being so close to their accommodation and full of goods. Yet, they were reluctant to answer what they liked in New Zealand and claimed they would not like to live here. Every step towards a distinct New Zealand culture was followed by the return to the safety of the familiar, to the reminders of their own culture. Religion was probably the most important connection with the familiar world and ni-Vanuatu appreciated there was a Presbyterian church in Motueka. Most of them belonged to the Presbyterian Church at home. As Aiwa (1995) explained, the Presbyterian missionaries were the first to arrive in Epi during the nineteenth century and established the dominant church on the island. The workers in Motueka were very religious and did not like working on Sundays, even if they still could attend the evening service. At home in Epi, the men would not work on Sundays.

Except for the significant change of the lifestyle, ni-Vanuatu experienced a (probably temporary) transformation of their leadership.38 As Kernot and Sakita (2008, p.11) noticed, some chiefs in Vanuatu were disadvantaged because of their

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38 The nature of leadership in Vanuatu is not homogenous. Societies there have become known for their graded rituals of status acquisition (Strathern and Stewart 2002). However, there are other regimes of hereditary ranking and the Vanuatan political systems have long presented a puzzle for Melanesian ethnographers (Jolly 1991). Traditionally, two broad types of political power and leadership were found in Vanuatu. In the northern islands, chiefdom was founded on a hierarchy of grades; the “big men” gained prestige through grade-taking ceremonies and through competition of an economic kind. In some of the central islands and in the southern islands, chiefdom was either hereditary or elective, based on titles rather than on achievements (Bonnemaison 1996, Kernot and Sakita 2008, Lindstrom 1997). Jolly (1991) called the southern leaders “great men” (in opposition to the “big men” of the northern islands) and characterized them as respected men not relying on the accumulation and exchange of wealth.

The nature of leadership has also changed. As Lindstrom (1997, p. 213) suggested, traditional systems described by ethnologists in the 1910s and 1920s must be read in a historical context of two generations of massive social conflict and disruption. The sacerdotal hierarchy imported by the missions must also be considered. According to Bonnemaison’s typology (1996), Epi lies on the border of the northern and southern system, although the northern type of leadership prevails.
lack of education and skills in dealing with organisations and institutions outside their village. This leaders’ disadvantage was greater in New Zealand and RSE challenged the traditional leadership in a way not experienced before. The strength and ability of a leader suddenly proved inadequate, especially if the leader could not communicate in English, could not drive a vehicle and was unable to handle everyday challenges of his group in a satisfactory way. People with different characteristics obtained the chance to become leaders, even if this was probably temporary and limited to the stay in New Zealand. For instance, the insufficient knowledge of English was the most important reason why Tani, the oldest man and the leader of the group approved by the chief, was replaced by Stuart, who was younger. Stuart could communicate with the managers and supervisors in a more efficient way and soon he became the speaker of the group and acted as a leader in interaction with other nationalities. Stuart’s and Adam’s abilities to communicate with the management were appreciated at home and the following year, both these men returned to Motueka, while Tani did not and other new workers were chosen by the chief.

In contrast to my findings, Bailey (2009a and 2009b) conducting research among ni-Vanuatu in Central Otago, did not find any significant change in leadership and supposed that prior leadership was confirmed in New Zealand. With this in mind, the leadership among ni-Vanuatu in New Zealand should not be considered necessarily undergoing changes, but the changes should be understood as depending on the characteristics of the leaders and on the particular situation and on the work requirements. Ni-Vanuatu in Central Otago were not required to drive a tractor, but they had to do this in Motueka. The driver’s abilities were important and valued by the workers. This can be illustrated by the interview with Adam, who connected “being a good worker” with “being able to drive:"

Adam described Lakale as a good worker, because “he is good at driving.” He also talked about some friend working in New Zealand and supposed, that this friend was chosen from so many applicants because of his previous work experience as bus driver. (Field notes, May 2008)

Tani did not seem to be angry or disappointed by the changing character of his role. Even if it is argued that only a few people are willing to follow a person who is not of mature age (McLeod 2008), Tani respected the younger
Stuart as a person taking over some of his responsibilities and as a leader in relation to the external world. This can be explained when referring to the creative potential of contemporary leadership in Vanuatu, where almost any man of ambition can call himself a chief in some circumstances (Kernot and Sakita 2008). Lindstrom (1997, p. 211) commented on the flexibility of the leadership:

There is considerable flexibility and creative potential within Vanuatu’s local leadership systems – a flexibility that has underwritten the recent evolution between chiefs and state. These local systems vary among Vanuatu’s islands and cultural groups. In general, however, almost any ambitious and capable man, in some contexts, with a straight face, is able to call himself jif.39

The system of leadership, prevailing on Epi, is especially open for social mobility and any man can be a candidate for the highest grades if he has sufficient support and shows enough energy and talent. Not only is wealth important, but also personal qualities (Bonnemaison 1996, see appendix 4). Stuart’s quality was the ability to clearly communicate in English, whereas Tani lost his role as a speaker and consequently partly lost his followers in Motueka. This was not surprising because when something changes either with the style of leadership or with the qualities of the leader, naturally there are changes in the attitude of the people towards the leader (Molisa 1995).

As I mentioned, only two of the six men working for Motukiwi returned, followed by several new workers. The research conducted for the Department of Labour reported, that fifty-five percent of RSE workers who had worked during the 2007/08 season returned for the following season (Evaluate Research 2009, p. 9). The low number of workers who returned to Motukiwi cannot be simply explained by the men being dissatisfied. The chief made the final decision and rejected one of the applicants, who had earned enough money for the community but did not behave as expected. Nevertheless, the Evaluate Research’s report revealed that despite a number of satisfied workers, the Pacific nations also had to manage the problems of unfulfilled expectations among workers and their communities. Again, the expected triple win of the policy (for New Zealand employers, Pacific workers and their States) turned into the dominating industry “win” during the first year (Evaluate Research 2009).

39 “jif” means “chief” in Bislama.
My informants also had some unfulfilled expectations concerning the amount of earnings. As Albert said, he was not sure if it was worth coming to New Zealand because of high costs. Most ni-Vanuatu (especially the men working for Tasman Apples) claimed they would like to work in New Zealand again, but for another employer. They agreed that they had encountered new experiences, improved their English and gained new skills, which can be very useful if the workers return to similar workplaces in future. The men were sure that if they did not return to New Zealand, they could still advise and help new applicants in Vanuatu. But they were unsure about the transferability of the skills gained in New Zealand to Vanuatu. The expected advantage of RSE, an improvement in working skills (Plimmer 2006) has been questioned by later researchers. McKenzie (2008) pointed out that most of the skills which ni-Vanuatu gained in New Zealand might have limited transferability to their villages because of different crops and other natural limitations, different equipment and minimum employment opportunities. The benefit of the scheme to the Pacific Islands was questioned by the Tongan Advisory Council’s chairman M. Maka (cited in Hacket 2009). These skills will provide benefits only if people can find employment at home (Warner 2008). When asked about the future use of their new skills, ni-Vanuatu workers mostly replied “I’m not sure” or “Who knows?”

The skills and work experience of ni-Vanuatu which they gained in New Zealand can be only partly transferable to their homeland with regard to a different environment and limited work opportunities. This is analogous to the European “Gastarbeiter” (see Kritz and Keely 1983, in Chapter Two). The similarities between the “Gastarbeiter” programme and the RSE scheme included the difficult transferability of the skills gained and the selection of workers who were not among the poorest in their communities, at least not in Vanuatu. Yet, Kritz and Keely’s (1983) finding that temporary labour programmes such as the “Gastarbeiter” scheme have done nothing to change the development status of the labour sending countries does not correspond to the initial evaluation of the RSE programme by the researchers and New Zealand authorities (Chand 2008, Department of Labour and IMSED Research 2009, Gibson et al. 2008, Hayward-Jones 2008, McKenzie et al 2008, University of Waikato 2008).
In contrast to the RSE, WHV can be viewed as a scheme with little or no development consequences, because it prefers applicants from relatively rich and developed countries. Among these, it favours certain nationalities that are advantaged concerning the length of their stay. I noticed that not all the working-holiday makers can be described as backpackers and there are sub-groups among these people who come for various reasons. Learning English and enjoying a holiday was not considered as important as the results of a study by the New Zealand Immigration Service (2004b) reported. For my informants, the most important reasons for coming to New Zealand was not seasonal work, but personal reasons such as changing life direction, acquiring experience and also what they called “cultural capital” (learning foreign languages, about foreign cultures, and how to deal with different customs and habits). My informants emphasised that they experienced a “personal development” (Clarke 2004). Nevertheless, the New Zealanders usually did not think of the backpackers as of people looking for development. For some local residents in Motueka, backpackers were a suitable labour force or just tourists and consumers (as opposed to the RSE workers who were only perceived as labourers).

Sometimes, the WHV holders’ choice of New Zealand seemed to be coincidental. Yet, a variety of factors contributes to these cases. I discovered that there were other reasons behind the participants’ decision to leave for New Zealand, which they did not mention. Similar to Clarke’s (2004) findings concerning backpackers in Australia, New Zealand’s backpacker industry depended on the decisions of many politicians, civil servants and immigration officers. Massey (1997, p. 263) supposed that there was an important role of the programmes of recruitment that attract the low-wage workers. The existence of these programmes and specific visa types that are relatively easy to obtain together with the possibility to secure employment before departure probably influenced the participants’ choice of New Zealand.

Some WHV and work permit holders regretted that their visa did not easily translate into more skilled and long-term employment. The relation between seasonal and long-term migration was the core of the work permit holders’ stories, where most of the participants could be called “would-be migrants” in contrast to
the RSE workers who were not allowed to settle. One debatable area emerged from this discussion: it was the assumed contrast between New Zealand’s need for skilled labour and the reality. Some employers’ reluctance against employing foreign nationals, their ignorance of immigration policies and the possible discrimination against foreign applicants were viewed as the main obstacles forcing the foreign workers to stay in unskilled rural employment or to leave New Zealand.

As mentioned in the previous sections, some participants felt disadvantaged by their age. David’s reference to being “dead” after thirty was debatable; however, older applicants do lose points in the points system that could potentially lead to residency. David also admitted that he did not make a sufficient effort to obtain residency. This was the second reason for my participants’ unsuccessful attempts to settle in New Zealand; nevertheless, most of them did not realize their own deficiencies and blamed the New Zealand employers, government and the immigration system. The “would-be” migrants’ choice of New Zealand was not well considered and it looked more like a coincidence, where these people wanted to obtain residency and if not successful, they intended to move to another country.

These ambiguous intentions reminded me of Balaz’s, Williams’ and Kollar’s (2004, see Chapter Two) hypotheses on the relationship between temporary and permanent migration. I realized that for my participants, especially the fourth hypothesis was relevant, as they were looking for more employment and residential options, even if they were not sure if they wanted to stay permanently.

All Asian participants could not identify with New Zealand’s environment. Hostility towards Asians can be considered the third reason why many “would-be” migrants (those of Asian origin) do not finally stay in New Zealand. Ip and Pang (2005, p. 174) quoted a Chinese poll-tax descendant who asked: “Could I be a New Zealander when in reality my family and I lived in a lowly, regulated, outsider position?” Although this has changed and Asians do not necessarily live in a lowly position, for most New Zealanders, ‘Asian’ is still synonymous with ‘migrant’ and therefore not with ‘New Zealander’ (Butcher 2008). Ip (1995) explained the New Zealanders’ wariness towards Asian immigrants as a manifestation of their own unease about their identity.
In contrast, Brigita (Czech) and Ben (Congolese French) felt accepted by the locals in the places where they worked. The relationship of the locals to the foreign workers indicated who was likely to be accepted as a prospective New Zealander and who could be excluded. As Zolberg (1981) puts it, the real or imagined qualities make certain people suitable for their role as workers but unsuitable for membership in the receiving society. As an example, African Ben seemed to be a more suitable candidate for the community than the Asian participants who were mostly viewed as a fast and skilled, but temporary workforce. Although New Zealand has been described as a multicultural country (Bell 1998, Fleras and Spoonley 1999, Ministry for Culture and Heritage 2006, Trapeznik 1995) the criteria for New Zealand-ness seem to change slowly and might reproduce old patterns of certain groups’ exclusion (on the exclusion of the Asians, see for example Brooking and Rabel 1995, Ip 1995, Ip and Pang 2005, Leckie 1995).

Risa (Chinese) felt he was being discriminated against. I did not notice the employers discriminating against Risa, but he still felt unwelcomed. I realized that Risa included subtle forms of hostility and non-acceptance by the locals in the term “discrimination.” The lack of acceptance by New Zealanders was also very important for all foreign workers in deciding whether or not to settle in New Zealand. When exploring the participants’ reasons to consider themselves future New Zealanders, I recognized two main components. The first was the above mentioned feeling of acceptance; the second was the identification with some aspects of the lifestyle and culture in New Zealand. Those participants who decided to stay in New Zealand usually identified with the lifestyle and economic reasons did not play any significant role for them. Similarly, research among Australian immigrants conducted by Khoo and others (2008) discovered that temporary workers who did not have an economic reason decided to stay because they liked the Australian lifestyle.

Similar to Risa’s feeling of discrimination, other participants’ perception of discrimination by potential employers was sometimes not fully justified. Employers’ questions about the nationality were comprehensible as the employers are required to try to employ New Zealanders first; however, other reasons for dismissal were less intelligible. For example, the informants were reportedly rejected because they were not from the town where the company was located,
because they had “insufficient work experience” to work in areas which required no special skills, and because “you would not be able to get work permit anyway.”

The frustration of these skilled and educated informants resulted from the confrontation between their dream to obtain a skilled job and the perception of a reality full of obstacles. Yet, this view was slightly one-sided and subjective. The “would-be” migrants preferred viewing themselves as victims of a hostile environment, which was similar to the results of Oliver’s study (2000). My informants did not consider other possible reasons for their perceived failures such as those identified by the Centre for Applied Cross-Cultural Research of Victoria University in Wellington. All these factors, described in the literature review, can play a role in the case of my informants. This is especially relevant for those coming from different cultural backgrounds, where the language skills and cultural differences seemed to be more important than the assumed discrimination. The cultural differences were obvious obstacles among all Asian participants and were connected with an insufficient understanding of the local culture as described by Graeme (2007). This led to a disadvantage in the labour market (Rainer 1998). I also viewed some participants’ limited English and communication skills as one of the main barriers to skilled employment. Nevertheless, I also witnessed that the “would-be” migrants faced a lack of recognition of overseas qualifications and they experienced negative employers’ attitudes and often a lack of employers’ knowledge about employing foreign labour.

5.4 Summary

The first two sections of Chapter Five discussed how the orchard managers perceived the labour shortage and their reasons for hiring foreign nationals. In the employers’ perspective, manual labour, especially foreign, was necessary for the orchard. The employers often perceived local workers as having a low work ethic and preferred investing in a more reliable workforce. The employers did not think that the numbers of foreign labour could be reduced by mechanization as it had a limited use.

Other sections of Chapter Five have demonstrated that the experience with working in New Zealand was very diverse for different groups of workers. Their reasons for coming to New Zealand were different, and also their welcome and acceptance varied. The way they were influenced by their work experience in New Zealand was heterogeneous, as were their future plans.

The non-RSE workers, especially backpackers with WHV visas, represent less effort for the employers, and also less expenses, but are viewed as highly mobile and unstable. The reliable RSE workers were perceived as possible problem makers. Also some local residents and non-Pacific foreign workers held stereotypical views on ni-Vanuatu. Stereotyping and prejudice was an important issue for the RSE workers as they were perceived as competitors for jobs.

The experience of the RSE holders with working in Motueka was influenced by this initial stereotyping and thus their arrival was not really welcoming. I viewed the above mentioned stereotypes and prejudice as subjective assumptions maintained mostly by people who had not worked with the Pacific Islanders before. The occasional negative approach to the Pacific workers was probably caused by a variety of reasons such as economic (workforce which spends little locally), social (competition for insufficient local services, healthcare and accommodation) and cultural (connected with insufficient knowledge and xenophobia, especially in relation to people from very different cultural backgrounds).

The RSE workers’ experience was shaped by strict conditions of their work permit, especially by the tight employer – employee bond. The scheme was not perfect and should not be understood just as an aid model, but also as a business model (Rees 2009, p. 9), where the employers had power to make the scheme a success or a failure. The employers’ statements suggested that the RSE benefits for Motukiwi employees prevailed over the disadvantages. This was possible, but the employers talked prevalingly of economic benefits and except for the danger of alcoholism, they did not think about any other potential disadvantages for their employees. I have recorded several weaknesses of this policy, for example a high dependence of the workers on their employers. At the time of my fieldwork there were also limited possibilities for women to participate in the RSE and a lack of adequate information was provided to the workers before and after arrival to New Zealand.
In sum, the experience of the RSE workers included a limited choice, being perceived as a threat and problem makers, the different experience of men and women, anxiety and worries concerning the loan repayments and family well-being. Ni-Vanuatu had to deal with a very different environment (both naturally and culturally), with a growing space for individualism and with changing institutions such as leadership. The possible negative influences on the family life of the Pacific labourers needs to be explored in a longer perspective. Even if the non-Pacific workers’ notion of spoiled traditional life was debatable, it was unlikely that ni-Vanuatu workers left New Zealand unchanged and that their absence in their home villages did not have any effect, for example on consumption. It was too early to answer the question concerning how RSE was beneficial for its participants. A more accurate answer will be known in future years and there can be many indicators of success, such as better educational possibilities, improved household equipment, opening of own businesses and development of the whole community.

In contrast to the RSE workers, those coming under WHV did not experience any significant problems concerning WHV policy. These workers were still welcomed by employers as they did not require pastoral care. Being perceived as a “traditional” workforce, WHV holders did not mention any xenophobic reaction of the local workers and residents. Yet those coming under SWP had a different story to tell. This story included worries concerning SWP being replaced by the new RSE scheme. Many of these people, mostly over 30 years old and of Asian origin, intended to obtain a general work permit for more skilled employment in order to stay in New Zealand. Most SWP holders felt discriminated against by their potential employers and also constrained by the immigration policies. The policies were viewed as a false gesture, pretending to welcome skilled applicants but in fact discouraging them from settling in New Zealand.

I viewed the difficulties that my participants experienced when wanting to obtain skilled employment as caused by several factors, not only by outer influences such as strict policies or discriminatory employers. Although the discriminatory practices of some employers play an important role, the difficulties can be also related to the worker’s characteristics, where factors such as age, experience, education and abilities should be considered. I could see that the participants of Asian origin lacked a common cultural and institutional background
(Rainer 1998) which further disadvantaged them in the labour market. This was similar to the RSE workers but RSE workers did not consider this a serious disadvantage because they would not be allowed to stay in New Zealand permanently.
Chapter Six: Control, Resistance and Compromise at Work

6.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I want to research how a specific work visa (or no work visa) determines the potential problems that foreign workers encounter and how this influences employer-employee relationships. The WHV holders were mostly concerned about pay issues and piece rates, whereas ni-Vanuatu experienced more controversial treatment. Dependence and inequality were the most important issues connected with ni-Vanuatu. Undocumented workers were a vulnerable group that was easily exploitable by dishonest labour contractors. Undocumented workers can be considered powerless, but not RSE and especially not WHV and SWP holders who utilised numerous strategies to resist the employers and to achieve their goals.

The employers also used strategies to economise and to exert labour control on their employees. These strategies are partly dependent upon workers’ visas and articulated according to all-pervasive categories of gender and ethnicity. These three variables influence the employer-employee relationship.

This chapter starts by describing of the scene for employers’ and employees’ strategies - the workplace, where all groups of workers met and interacted.

6.2 The workplace

Multi-national environment

Seasonal rural jobs in New Zealand are often taken up by foreigners of different nationalities and ethnicities. In Motueka, the foreign workers were not exposed only to one different environment (New Zealand culture), but to many cultural differences. Some of my informants found themselves in a different cultural environment than they expected, as exemplified by Iveta (Czech) who felt lost among the Asians and the Pacific Islanders who she met at her workplaces,
and Nico (French) who admitted he had actually not encountered New Zealand’s culture despite spending seven months in New Zealand:

Iveta: There were Vietnamese, I didn’t understand any word in their English. And they looked at me like at an exotic. Wherever I moved, everybody followed me. There were Maori; I didn’t know how to behave. So I just smiled like an idiot. I didn’t understand the Samoan English, I didn’t understand the Maori at all.

Nico: I was surprised, and really disappointed, because I’ve been here for seven months, and actually, I just don’t know anything, or not a lot, about Kiwi culture, and especially, I was really disappointed with that, but... about Maori culture, I just read a lot of things in the books. But from the real things, from the people, you know, I don’t know anything. I think I know more about Czech people than about Kiwi people. Really. It’s true. And maybe more about Fiji island, Tonga people. All I know about New Zealand is from books.

Nico’s notion of Czechs refers to the situation at Motukiwi, where Czechs and French prevailed among the foreign workers, followed by Germans, Asians (mainly Malaysians, Koreans, Chinese), Irish, Chileans, Slovaksians and many other nationalities, and later by ni-Vanuatu. All these different nationalities, except for ni-Vanuatu, shared common accommodation. Usually, two workers lived in each room with basic kitchen equipment provided. There were always very few New Zealanders living in the employers’ accommodation. Ironically, the English-speaking workers were often placed in a position as a minority in an English-speaking country, which generated feelings of exclusion (Anthony, American).
New Zealanders dominated among the supervisors and all the owners were New Zealanders. This was a hierarchy similar to most big orchards. The owners and managers employed four to six supervisors who were in daily contact with the workers and they occasionally did the same work as them. One of my research questions concerned the position of foreign workers within the organisation. I was interested, if some of these workers could reach better positions such as supervisors. Although the manager Greg claimed that foreign workers usually did not reach such positions, I noticed that some promotions were available for foreign workers who stayed for a second season. This hierarchy resembles the characteristics of an internal labour market, where firms recruit from outside (the external labour market) for certain fairly low positions and then fill higher – level vacancies by the promotion of existing employees. Internal labour market systems can contribute to greater labour stability. Among minority groups, it might especially minimise the possibility of discrimination (Macrae 1979, p. 156-7). In general, higher positions for foreign workers were only available for people who have already worked for Motukiwi for some time, as well as for locals who were considered reliable. Yet, it was debatable if this internal labour market led to less discrimination against foreign workers. Although some promotions were offered to foreign workers after one year, they were also available to a suitable New Zealander after a much shorter time. Therefore, skilled positions in agriculture were limited and foreign workers entering this sector risked being unable to move beyond their unskilled positions.

Work in the orchard

In orchard work there can be big differences in wages. Some tasks such as kiwifruit thinning are paid hourly where the casual worker receives the minimum legal wage. Most other work, such as picking and pruning is contract work, which means the workers are paid according to their output. In these jobs, neither formal qualifications nor practical skills have an important role, but it is mainly physical strength that is needed to maximize pay.

41 The adult minimum wage was $11.25 an hour. Since April 2008, it rose to $12.00 per hour and since April 2009 to $12.50.
Piece rates, used in the orchard, are also common in various occupations in many countries. They are associated with easily measurable tasks and they simplify seasonal recruitment (Ortiz 2002). They also stimulate productivity and create a competitive spirit (Peña 1997). Yet, they can also be disadvantageous for the workers. Burawoy (1988) explored the system of piece rates within socialist industry, which he described as dictatorship of the fixed norm (p. 216). When working in a Hungarian factory, he was strictly paid according to production; that means when completing only fifty percent of the fixed norm, he was also paid fifty percent of the fixed pay. Viewing the norms as a decisive power, Burawoy later realized that he was willing to risk injuries to make the rates.

Fruit pickers in New Zealand are also usually paid according to production. This means they are paid according to the number of bins or boxes they have filled with fruit meeting specific size, colour and quality standards. If the supervisors indicate the quality was low, the picker can receive less money per bin. Therefore, pay depends mainly on the workers’ abilities or tacit skills, which are simply defined as “to be fit and have good vision.”42 In reality, this means the worker must be fast and strong enough to climb the ladder with up to twenty kilograms of fruit in the bag and responsible enough not to bruise the fruit. Of course, other factors must be considered such as the crop, size of the trees, different prices for different varieties and the weather. Rain has a big influence on crop harvesting. Apples

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42 See a seasonal work website www.picknz.co.nz
cannot be picked in heavy rain and kiwifruit cannot be harvested during light rain. When it is raining, and there is no work available, the casual pickers stay at home and are not paid.

A seasonal worker Tomas (Czech) described the important influence of the weather conditions, with the example of cherry picking. He compared two seasons and explained that while cherry picking was considered the best job during one season, another season was spoiled by rain:

Like with those cherries. Somebody said: we were there last year; they were at the same place, on the same field. But there was different weather, so the cherries were cracky. So they could take two out of ten [the rest is too bad]. So they said: it was fucking job, we didn’t make any money. But I went to the same place the following year, it was good season, the cherries weren’t cracky, the supervisors didn’t check us so much and I could earn some money and I said: it was the best job.

Tomas and other WHV holders tended to emphasize the physical aspects of rural work but the opinion on the difficulty of rural work differed among participants. The different approaches to work become an important issue within a locality, where people from various cultural backgrounds worked together. The same activity can be described in diverse terms, as happened in the case of my informants. How can these different views be understood?

Wallman (1979b), an anthropologist studying labour relations, explained that the meaning of the word “work” differs across cultures and the component parts of work appear in different combinations, having different significance (Wallman 1979b, p. 1). “Work” is an expression with multiple meanings. From a sociological point of view, these meanings are not fixed or universal across time and space; work is a socially constructed phenomenon with meanings limited by the cultural frame where it is practised. In view of this, Grint (2005, p. 42) noted: “Some cultures do not distinguish between work and non-work; others distinguish between work and leisure; still others by reference to employment as a particular activity, but what counts as work depends upon the social context within which that transformative activity occurs.”

All informants distinguished between work and leisure, but their understanding of work differed. Many WHV holders, especially those who could be characterized as backpackers, left the job after a few days, dissatisfied with the “hard” work or with the working conditions. Those who stayed often said they liked
the job; but they were more likely than Asians on SWP to describe this labour as difficult, tough, tiring and demanding. This coincided with the employers’ view, who acknowledged to the demanding character of work in the orchard. The common view of the European workers can be illustrated by the example of Aporo (French woman) who described three types of rural work in the following way:

Apple picking... what is it... it’s hard job, you must be very courageous, because every day, it’s the same, you work with ladder, you must drive tractor, with trolley [sic] (...) (kiwifruit) it was harder. For this job, to do the same money like apple picking, you have to be faster. (...) So it’s not good for your body, you are tired... So it was three months very hard, but not so good money. (...) Olive picking, it was so hard job, because it was very heavy stuff, we need to run sometimes, to carry heavy charge, and it was sometimes cold in the morning....

Aporo mentioned the impact of rural work on the workers’ bodies. Following Okely’s (2007) suggestion that researchers should look at the impact of work on the workers, I observed that all workers were tired during the first few days of apple picking and many had become sunburned despite applying sun lotion. During the first week of contract work, I felt so tired after work that I could only rest and do nothing else. I did not pick enough apples, I was disappointed and wanted to leave the orchard. My skin was red, full of bruises and scratches from the branches. Later I noticed that my body got used to the demanding work. I did not feel so much pain, although I experienced occasional muscle cramps. By then I could pick two or three tonnes of fruit during eight hours, which I had considered impossible when I started working in the orchards.

Most of my co-workers had similar experiences. The opinion of the Europeans and ni-Vanuatu coincided in the evaluation of rural work as demanding, as documented by my notes:

Although ni-Vanuatu did not describe the work as really hard, they talked about long hours and indicated they would like to have longer breaks. First, they stated “work is OK,” but later, Albert noted in a low voice: “Yeah it’s OK... eh... it’s just to make money, so we don’t mind...” (Field notes, 2008)

In contrast, ni-Vanuatu participants of Rochelle Bailey’s study (2009a, 2009b)\(^{43}\) found the work in New Zealand easy in comparison with work in Vanuatu.

\(^{43}\) This research, as a part of a Master’s thesis, was focused on a group of ni-Vanuatu working in Central Otago.
The disparities in evaluating work can be explained by different environmental and working conditions. Ni-Vanuatu in Central Otago usually worked eight hours a day in a vineyard, whereas ni-Vanuatu men in Motueka sometimes spent eight hours picking fruit (which can be viewed as more physically demanding) and later four more hours in the packing shed. As the men disclosed, they thought the work in New Zealand would be easier:

They admitted their expectations were maybe too high. They imagined they would be the best workers and everything would be a bit easier. They wouldn’t question the piece rate before coming to NZ, because they didn’t know how many bins they could pick. So some of them expected they could earn more money and were disappointed in the beginning. (Field notes, 2008)

What makes the workers stay and accept work, which they describe as hard and demanding and when they may earn often less than in their home countries (especially European backpackers)? According to Wallman (1979b), work controls the economy and the identity of the workers and the extent of identification with one kind or aspect of work depends on the structure and the values of the society of which that work is a part. The association can be greater, if the worker can identify with several dimensions of work – with the product or with the personal satisfaction or the social rewards he or she gets for performing. An alternative may be to identify with a lifestyle or with a generalised status.

Economic necessity, status or rewards had little significance for the Europeans or Americans, but the notion of identification with a certain lifestyle was important. When describing what they liked about rural work, these participants often talked about the relaxing aspect of working outside in nature, with the birds around (Aporo, Iveta, Pommeau). Others appreciated the reported flexibility of the seasonal work, comparing it to the strict rules of a “normal” job (Dina, Paolo, Tomas). The pay or the social rewards were not as important for these people as the feeling of “freedom” connected with the possibility to leave when they wanted, with minimal responsibilities and low pressure. This can be illustrated by the examples of Ben and Dina, who commented on their reasons to choose this kind of employment:
I am very close to nature; I think it’s a reward for me. Quite a change from working in the office, yeah, sometimes twelve hours a day, or just yeah, working in a busy business, yeah, rushing, no time to spend your money, no time to be with your wife, our family, yeah, I think I’m pretty happy with this situation. (Ben)

And now I’m like... oh, I actually quite like what I’m doing. Like... working outside and having the flexibility. You feel more freedom than if you sit in the office. From eight to five. (Dina)

These participants emphasized the importance of a relaxed lifestyle, making them satisfied. In contrast, Ronco and Peattie (1988) looked to factors influencing job satisfaction in the work experience itself rather than in the work environment, focusing on factors such as a sense of meaning of work, personalization of work and intellectual stimulation. In the case of the rural workers, the work environment played a considerable role; especially the notions of nature and working outside in the fresh air supported my conclusion that both work and its environment needed to be considered.

There was a sharp contrast between the WHV and RSE holders regarding the identification with work. For ni-Vanuatu, the lifestyle and status were unimportant; work was simply an economic necessity. Not only did these workers want to earn money for their families, but they had other commitments such as sharing earnings with their extended families, church and the village community. Working in New Zealand was both a voluntary and involuntary decision as the workers were approved by the chief and their home community had immense expectations of them.

The Pacific workers found the supervision and relationships at the workplace quite confusing. Ni-Vanuatu men explained that they had no previous experience with employment and supervisors:

None of them has had a paid employment before. The only way how to make money is selling their own produce. Only several women can obtain an employment as a teacher, otherwise there are hardly any opportunities in their island. This means, that for most of the workers, the seasonal labour in New Zealand is their first experience of working for an employer! They had hardly any idea, who is a “supervisor” or a “manager.” Of course, they know the concept of leadership and authority, but this is a bit different. A leader is like a model; he works together with other people and shows them what to do. He stays with other people; he doesn’t just come three times a day to say what they have done wrong. (Field notes, 2008)
Nevertheless supervision was not described as completely incomprehensible by ni-Vanuatu. This relates to changes within the Pacific Islands as a result of migration and globalisation. Labour movements have had a massive impact on the Pacific (Maclellan and Mares 2006a). The lack of previous experience with paid work does not necessarily mean that ni-Vanuatu workers or their ancestors have not encountered other work styles than subsistence farming. For example, in Epi, European planters took large tracts of land under their control during the nineteenth century (Aiwa 1995). My informants’ ancestors had an experience with this type of farming.

There was one difference between ni-Vanuatu and other foreign workers concerning their opinion of management. Ni-Vanuatu understood supervision as something like “it’s like that in New Zealand” and rarely questioned their managers’ authority or professionalism. In contrast, many non-Pacific participants agreed that the New Zealanders, especially the managers, were unprofessional workers. This opinion was maintained by participants from Europe, Africa, USA and Asia. The participants explained this perceived unprofessional approach of the employers who they had encountered as a lack of managerial skills and lack of forward planning. However some informants also suggested that the New Zealanders’ relaxed approach to work had positive effects. The most important advantages described were less pressure and stress on workers.

**Gendered division of labour**

Piece rates and hourly wages often had a gendered component. In the places where I worked, more than half of the outside orchard workers were men, as this was considered quite hard labour. Women dominated in other areas such as in the packing sheds where they were paid hourly. When ni-Vanuatu were hired in 2008, all women were sent to the packing shed, and the outside work was done only by men. This was an instance of what Briar and Tolich (1999, p. 129) call “task segregation.” They argued that a job is not a gender-neutral category, but reflects sex-typed expectations. Briar and Tolich described the situation in a supermarket, where the male and female employees with the same job description found themselves expected to carry out different work, or perform the work differently. Bradley (1989, p. 1, 12) suggested that allocations of specific tasks to
men and to women has become so extensive that the two sexes are only rarely found doing the same kind of work and sex-typing occurs in each industry and occupation (see also Acker 1990). Gender is a pervasive social category that is used as a source of control and social organization. Modern globalized work serves as vehicle of inequality (Smith 2001) and is accompanied by exploitation along the lines of gender and race (Pun 2005). Pun wrote about “constructing women” as a coherent and unified identity. This is a project of power that aims to feminize the labour force in the service of the new international division of labour (p.134).

At Motukiwi, the gendered division of labour and construction of feminity resulted in an unequal treatment of the employees. Not only at Motukiwi, but also other employers, labour contractors and seasonal work websites in New Zealand often presented grading and packing jobs as more suitable for women and expected them to take these jobs or directly allocated them into the packing shed. On top of this, the gendered division had an ethnic component. Different nationalities were sometimes not treated equally. In Motueka, this would explain the difference between the employers’ perception of ni-Vanuatu women and other foreign women. Ni-Vanuatu workers signed the contract on their island and then knew the type of work that was expected of them. Other foreign nationals were usually asked what kind of work they wanted to do during the harvest time. For example, it seemed that Czech women, like me, were considered capable of handling outside work, but not ni-Vanuatu women. As reported by my participants, other employers did not distinguish among nationalities and sent all women to the packing sheds. For this purpose, women were constructed as weak, patient and fragile entities.

At Motukiwi, the gendered division was sometimes the opposite to what Briar and Tolich (1999) found out when exploring the informal gendered division of work in a supermarket. At the supermarket, the women were envious of the male employees because of the better positions the men occupied, whereas the men did not want the positions allocated for women. At Motukiwi, men were sometimes envious of female employees. Some men did not like the outside work and wanted to obtain the jobs in the packing shed which women were supposed to do. For example, Paolo (Chilean) complained about hard work but had to stay working outside, because there was no vacancy in the packing shed. In contrast, women
tended to complain about the work in the packing shed, despite many employers suggesting this was more suitable for them because it was not so hard. Ironically, Brigita did not mind working outside but presented the work in the packing shed as “horrible:”

Brigita: For sure, I would never go to the packhouse again.
Jana: Why?
Brigita: Because it’s just horrible.
Jana: Can you explain it to me? I have never worked there.
Brigita: Ehm… simply it is a work which is not in the sun, not in the fresh air, and it is simply monotonous work. It’s not stressful, but… when tons of apples roll down on you, so it is about quickness too.

I knew what to expect in the packing shed and therefore, when asked if I wanted to stay outside or work in the packing shed, I decided to work outside. I was immediately laughed at by a male co-worker, who told me that soon I would cry to get “under the roof.” Yet, this did not happen because I liked the work outside. I was an average picker: I usually picked four bins of apples, which was not much but it was still more than what some male co-workers could pick.

The majority of ni-Vanuatu or Tongan women in Motueka did not have the same choice that I had and they were employed in packing sheds, whereas the men were allocated to outside work. During an informal conversation with two ni-Vanuatu women, I found that they would have preferred outside work sometimes; but they were told by the employers that the outside work was unsuitable for them. These categories resemble the description of “typical” women’s and men’s work discussed by Game and Pringle (1984, pp. 18, 28-32). The “ideal” vision of women’s work is focused on indoor work, which is considered lighter, and which is also boring, repetitive, lacking mobility and the need for skills (Game and Pringle 1984), or requiring patience, care, sharp eyes and nimble fingers (Pun 2005). By contrast, “typical” men’s work is connected with skills, strength, danger, mobility and outdoors. The lesson learned from this was that distinguishing between “typical” men’s and women’s positions led to a lack of long-term positions offered by some New Zealand’s employers to Pacific women, because these women were considered suitable workers for short-term work in packing sheds.

The different treatment of the foreign workers was not dependent only on their gender, but also on their visa conditions. This is the topic of the following sections.
6.3 Policies at work: Pay issues and piece rates as a common problem for WHV and SWP holders

This section aims to identify problematic areas in the implementation of specific labour policies in a workplace. I wanted to research how much the approach of the employers to the employees depended on the policies the workers come under. In contrast to RSE, where the employers were forced to guarantee and document the minimum wage and a certain amount of working hours, WHV and SWP holders were more dependent on fluctuations caused by weather conditions, changing piece rates and a lack of working hours during some periods. To explain this difference, I will use the examples of piece rates and the minimum wage.

Piece rates in New Zealand’s rural occupations are similar to Burawoy’s (1988) description mentioned above. In the orchard there also was a “norm”; however, this norm is usually not fixed or prescribed, but only expected. In reality, the norm equals the minimum wage. Workers on contract are expected to earn at least the same amount of money which they would receive if they were paid hourly. For example, if the piece rate per bin of picked apples is thirty dollars, the workers should pick a half of this bin in an hour to earn more than the minimum wage. In contrast to the piece rate system described by Burawoy, in New Zealand the rural employers should not pay less if the workers do not reach this expected norm. Unless the employer is exempt from certain duties by government, the workers should receive the minimum wage even if they are not able to meet the requirements, especially during the first few days of the harvest. Some employers choose one of two strategies to not pay the uncompleted norm: either they lay off the workers who repeatedly cannot reach the minimum wage, or they conceal their duty to pay the minimum wage and rely on uninformed foreign labour. This was reported by the informants and I also often witnessed these practices.
Some employers’ practices of how to save money on WHV and SWP holders can be demonstrated by using an example of a fictive worker “John”. John is told by his employer, that his pay will depend on his performance. During the first week, John as a beginner can pick only two or three bins a day at the rate of thirty dollars per bin. John is unsure about his rights and does not know that he should receive the minimum wage even if he cannot reach it, or he does not want to argue with the employer. John, dissatisfied with his low pay, will decide to work longer to pick more. Finally, he picks four bins and his payslip does not indicate that he is underpaid, although he actually works longer for less money. The payslip only shows that John picked four bins, but not the number of hours John spent filling them. John, as a WHV holder, decides to leave this employer without complaining, to travel and look for another job, hoping that he can earn more elsewhere.
Image 5: Kiwifruit picking. This was also contract work. The price for a bin of kiwifruit is lower than the price for apples, because the worker does not need to climb the ladder. However, this means that the worker has to pick more bins and carry more weight to earn more than the minimum wage. At Motukiwi, this meant to pick at least two tonnes of kiwifruit during 8 hours. Kiwifruit picking is unsuitable for workers who are too small or too tall, because kiwifruit is often grown on pergolas. Small workers cannot reach it and tall ones have to bend all day. Photo: J. Prochazkova

The WHV and SWP participants identified more problematic issues in contract work and explained other employers’ strategies of how employers exploited this. The piece rate does not have to be set in advance, but can be specified during a certain time of work and should not be changed later to take advantage of the workers. Yet, some supervisors did not reveal the rate at all or later brought the rate dramatically down. David and Iveta described such practices used by their employer in Hastings and their futile protests:

Iveta: Once I took courage and told her, that we won’t work like this, if we should work on contract, so we want to know for how much, and she said: you can always earn enough; you work fast, so work. But I said: but we have no motivation. How should we work, if we don’t know for how much? And she [said]: no, no, keep working. And right the first payslip was a problem, nobody’s payslip was all right. We went to see her and she [said]: Oh my God. I explained her, where she made that stupid mistake. And she [said]: yeah, in the next payslip. And in the next payslip nothing again. And it wasn’t just us. An American toiled five and half days for two hundred dollars.

David: That day, we earned thirty dollars each. And she [the supervisor] has to give you the minimum according to the law. She stopped giving it later.
From David’s and Iveta’s example it can be seen that in some cases, an individual protest against the employer’s practices is not really helpful. This indicated that there was often a lack of coordination between employees concerning collective actions. These were people with different interests who came from different cultural, ethnic and class backgrounds and they were unable or unwilling to defend themselves as a group. As Iveta regretted, many workers just gave up and left without complaining. Their employer in Hastings relied on a high turnover of such workers, who would move on instead of arguing with the supervisors.

The reported misuse of piece rates was accompanied by a supposed inequality between the pay rates offered to locals and to foreign nationals. This issue has been addressed by some New Zealand authors, but mostly concerning long-term migrants (Ongley 2004, Winkelmann and Winkelmann 1998a and 1998b). One study pointed out that some WHV holders reported being paid below the minimum wage (New Zealand Immigration Service 2004b). In my study, it concerned both WHV and SWP holders who reportedly often found themselves being underpaid or paid less per hour than locals doing the same job. One of the strategies used by their employers was contract work in combination with relying on the foreigners’ insufficient knowledge of English and of their entitlements.

I noticed that foreign workers rarely united with local workers to negotiate with the employers. First, foreign workers regarded local workers as a better paid workforce that would be unwilling to complain about the wages. Second, because of their transient and mobile way of life, WHV holders usually do not integrate within the local communities and do not engage much in their activities. Beres (in Lozanski and Beres 2007), conducting her research among seasonal workers in Canada, partly connected the lack of contacts between seasonal workers and the locals with the locals’ reluctance to open up to people who would leave at the end of the season. Among my informants, the situation was similar. Only two of my informants preferred local New Zealand workers as friends. Brigita explained that making friends with New Zealand co-workers and supervisors caused her some problems. Some other foreign workers viewed her as a traitor, who makes friends in order to have advantages within the workplace.

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At the time of the research, the adult minimum wage was $11.25 an hour.
6.4 RSE at work

This section shows the dangers of workers’ dependence on employers. I describe the difference between the mobile, ‘free’ and independent WHV holder and a dependent and restricted worker coming under RSE. The situation with RSE was different from the above stories because the employers had to guarantee working hours and wages. Consequently, some employers used other strategies to cut costs with this workforce. My finding is that RSE is a workable scheme with some disadvantages related to workers’ dependence on the employers and to the employers’ duty to guarantee minimum wages to RSE workers.

The dependent workforce

The RSE scheme initially included many restrictions for the workers. As mentioned in Chapter Four, the success of any temporary scheme depends on the enforcement of law against all parties: recruitment agents, employers and workers (Ruhs 2005). Yet, RSE enforced the law mostly against the workers.

For example, RSE workers were forbidden to visit local bars, not allowed to change employers and were not allowed to apply for another type of work permit. Being tied to one employer is not exceptional; many countries use similar restricted programmes and only a few of them allow the guest workers to be free agents in the labour market (Martin et al. 2006). The contracts and also the visa often tie the workers to a specific job with a specific employer, or to a certain region and occupation. Sometimes, even freedom of movement is restricted (Bartram 2005). In most cases, labourers are not totally free, because social obligations, expectations, and economic realities limit their ability to choose work offers and to end their employment (Ortiz 2002). Making workers “unfree” officially serves the workers to earn as much money as possible during their temporary stay, but in reality, it also leads to workers being controlled by employers and authorities (Bailey 2009b, Basok 2002, Ortiz 2002).

The Pacific workers in New Zealand had only limited possibilities to be transferred to other recognised employers during their stay, which could create an environment for possible mistreatment. Temporary migrants are more focussed on
short term earnings and large remittances; therefore they are a more pliable, eager and exploitable workforce (Gibson 1983, p. 39). This issue was later addressed by the Australian Government, who warned about social costs and possible exploitation of Pacific workers. Under the Australian scheme, workers are not tied to a single grower but to a labour hire company (Macdermott and Opeskin 2010).

In September 2008, the government’s plans to improve the scheme were published, which included the possibility of workers being able to transfer to another employer, improvement to the pre-departure orientation and enhanced pastoral care planning (New Zealand Government 2008). Yet, the policy still shaped the RSE workers’ stay in New Zealand and in comparison to WHV and work permit holders, RSE workers could be viewed as much more dependent, unfree and with limited choices.

As my notes indicate, the men considered themselves powerless in relation to the immigration policies:

I noticed that that the men were a little bit worried about the future of the scheme. They partly considered themselves restricted and dependent. They felt being at the mercy of the government and at the employers. They felt a bit like actors or puppets in a game played by other parties. They were afraid that the government might change their minds because of changes in the economy or that the employer won’t get a licence to hire them. (Field notes, May 2008)

The purpose of the following section is to explore how this dependence of RSE workers was used by the employers.

Discourses about mistreatment

In this section, I argue that the RSE scheme is a viable conception, but its realisation by some employers was controversial and there were several issues that could be improved. I started being interested in the alleged mistreatment of ni-Vanuatu after talking to Paolo, who had worked with ni-Vanuatu in the packing sheds of Motukiwi and Tasman Apples. This section starts by quoting my field notes that described the supposed mistreatment of ni-Vanuatu resulting from their inability to defend:
On Friday, I found Paolo’s letter under the door. There was written that he needs my help to do some interviews with ni-Vanuatu. I didn’t really understand this. Next day, he came from work and told me, he wanted to do some interviews with ni-Vanuatu because he discovered that they are mistreated and he wanted to bring this issue to the public. I know he studied media. He wanted to record the interviews or make a movie with some “mistreated” women and bring it to the public. Paolo looked really angry, concerned and I had a feeling that he really wanted to help these people. (Field notes, May 2008)

My field notes continue with Paolo explaining the reasons, why ni-Vanuatu should be considered mistreated:

Paolo’s story was the following: I worked in the packing shed. I talked to some Ni-Vanuatu women who work there too. And so I know that the Vanuatu people have to work twelve hours a day, sometimes seven days a week, also night shifts. Not in Motukiwi packhouse, they usually work at the Tasman Apples packhouse. One of the women was happy and told me: tomorrow I have a night off! Night off! Not a day off! She has just one night off this week! They have just 5 minutes break. And the pay? They all get just eighty dollars a week. The rest goes to some account and they should get it when they fly home. I think the boss can do what he wants with this account. And the boss or supervisor of the packing shed behaves horribly. He pushed this woman. He is violent. And I noticed that two women had different payslips, although they worked the same hours. Why? Think about it. It’s all horrible, it’s misusing, it’s slavery! It has to be stopped! And you have to help me. My English isn’t very good, and also you know how to do the interviews. It will be good for both of us. So you will get some information and I will get my movie and I will use it against him to help those people. (Field notes, May 2008)

As I explained in the methodology chapter (Chapter Three), I refused to help Paolo with his documentation, because I was not convinced about the truth of his story. Simultaneously, I felt a strong inner conflict between the rules of ethical research and my intentions to help ni-Vanuatu. Paolo’s view needed to be compared with the opinion of ni-Vanuatu workers as well as with the opinions of others who were involved. I ascertained that most of Paolo’s assumptions resulted from a lack of knowledge of the RSE rules and the system of payment.

The ni-Vanuatu rejected Paolo’s claim about breaks being too short, but confirmed that they sometimes worked long hours:

The interviewed men talked about the breaks lasting fifteen minutes, not five, as Paolo claimed. All the informants said, they would appreciate longer breaks, but did not really complain about working too long hours. In
contrast to Ben’s assumption, they really often worked twelve hours a day, including night shifts, and reported they did not have a day off the following day. Sometimes, the men were supposed to work four hours in the packing shed after they had worked eight hours outside, which they described as tiring, but necessary. (Field notes, May 2008)

The results of the sample audit undertaken by the Department of Labour reported the average weekly hours ranging from thirty-six to fifty-seven; so the minimum requirement of thirty hours was more than adequately met (New Zealand Government 2008). The number of hours for ni-Vanuatu in Motueka could be also described in the term “more than adequately met” during certain weeks. However long hours did not indicate that ni-Vanuatu were mistreated or oppressed. The interviewed men revealed they knew that they could expect long working hours:

As the men explained, they understood that there was more work during the picking season and therefore they did not have any other choice than working long hours. What is the most important, the workers have signed the contract before coming to New Zealand and as they admitted, they knew they could expect working long hours if needed. (Field notes, May 2008)

The controversial alcohol ban that included a forbidden entry to local bars, which the men complained about, was reportedly contained in the contract.

Paolo’s allegation about the insufficient pay the workers received was only partly correct. Although the workers received eighty dollars a week for their expenses, this did not necessarily mean that they were underpaid. In reality, they received only a small part of their earnings and the rest was sent to an account which could be accessed at the end of their stay. This procedure was explained by the employers as an arrangement to support the initial idea of development in the Islands. Supervisor Peter who has had previous experience with employing Pacific Islanders explained this system in this subjective discourse: because some Pacific Islanders cannot really deal with money, it is better not to give them all the money they earned at once, because they will just spend it on drinks, food and useless things.

Peter’s paternalistic assumptions did not explain the whole system of payments in a satisfactory way. In reality, bank accounts with limited access were necessary for those workers who could not meet the application costs.
could be met through loans which were paid from these accounts. Many workers, who intended to work in New Zealand during the following season, were asked to leave money in this account to meet their airfare costs. This system was proposed by Carmen Voigt-Graf (2006). These accounts were also necessary for workers, who covered their initial expenses by loans from the growers’ association Seasonal Solutions (McKenzie et al. 2008). Paolo was probably not informed about the whole system and supposed that the employer was stealing money from the workers.

To summarise, ni-Vanuatu could not be considered mistreated with respect to working hours or the system of payment, even if this system had some disadvantages (for example, the loans could be viewed as a source of dependence). Yet, there were other indications, which supported Paolo’s worry about mistreatment. Here I argue that the personal approach of the RSE employers was very different, but it could be sometimes described as paternalistic and even as bossy and discriminatory. Indications about Tasman Apples using such an approach came out during interviews with ni-Vanuatu and other foreign workers.

Ben, then a junior manager, refuted all statements about alleged mistreatment and described them as nonsense. Yet other foreign workers Brigita, Iveta, Charles and Margaret, occasionally working in Tasman Apples’ packing shed, confirmed the paternalistic approach of the managers towards ni-Vanuatu. The managers were described as authoritative people who were strict towards ni-Vanuatu and behaved to them as if ni-Vanuatu were naïve, unintelligent and a dependent labour force who needed to be shouted at. What is more, Ben also left his position later, with inexplicit remarks about the “treatment.”

The interviews with ni-Vanuatu did not directly confirm any controversial treatment, but there were indications that the employer-employee relationship was not perfect. The ni-Vanuatu informants refused to be recorded and they were cautious during interviews, always looking around and checking, who entered the room. While they enjoyed talking about their homes and about New Zealand, nobody was willing to talk about work and about the relationships at their workplace. After my direct question about the managers at Tasman Apples, suddenly there was a dead silence. As my notes reveal, the men refused to comment on this topic:
The supervisors were described as nice and no problems were mentioned. But nobody was talking about the bosses. So I asked about the Tasman Apples’ managers again. Adam only said, that they “aren’t really nice.” All of them stopped looking at me and obviously didn’t want to talk about it. When there were more people, they started looking at each other and didn’t say anything. I asked them, what was the problem, if they wanted to talk about it or not and they said NO. After a long break, only Stuart (who seemed to be the speaker of the group because of good English) explained that “boss is tough,” because he allegedly never smiles, never says Hi and behaves “like a big boss.” (Field notes, May 2008)

I considered this rejection and discreetness as an indication that something was not right. To explain this, I have to note that the interviews were conducted at a time when the RSE workers had only limited possibilities to change employer. They only could be transferred to another employer when the original one had no more work available or when there were specific conditions. This rule led to a significant dependence of the workers on their first employers, which could create a suitable environment for exploitation. Under this situation, workers who are scared of possible dismissal might choose not to complain even if they are mistreated or discriminated against. Although I could not confirm my assumption, I supposed that the paternalistic approach of the managers (as reported by Brigita, Charles, Iveta and Margaret) was not a myth.

Nico who worked with Pacific Islanders in the vineyard, explained why the workers on a restricted contract do not complain. He suggested that the dependence on certain employers created an environment of easy exploitation. The Pacific workers reportedly did not protest against controversial treatment, fearing dismissal:

Nico: In work, if you have a problem, I mean that a lot of people, when something is wrong, they tell it. (...) Just it looks like, they (Pacific Islanders) just go to work and then they don’t say anything even if it’s wrong. The French people, someone would tell: hey, it’s too much, I don’t wanna work, what’s that, it’s crap, they just pay 2O cents for tree, I speak for the pruning in the vineyards. And... if I want I can get a better job, and so and so, I mean that, I think, people from Tonga, people from Fiji, they really need money, so then they have special arrangements with the visa, so I think maybe they are afraid, to speak, when there is a problem. Maybe they are afraid to lose the job. And not to have another one. Because they have special arrangement, I speak again about the vineyards, they have the arrangement for this company, they can’t have another job. So they just have special visa with this company. So they know that if they lose the job, they have nothing else.
In this statement, Nico referred to the difference between WHV holders and RSE holders. WHV holders sometimes protest, knowing that they can move and possibly find another employment elsewhere if dismissed. Yet, workers on restricted contracts know that complaining could lead to their early flight home.

The paternalistic approach to the Pacific workers was probably not only confined to Tasman Apples. Bailey (2009a and 2009b), working on a similar topic in Central Otago, also mentioned the paternalistic behaviour of the local employers. Another example of a slightly paternalistic approach was an employer’s speech published in Courtney’s article (2008, p. 76).

Returning to employers’ practices, ni-Vanuatu could be considered victims of unequal treatment by some managers. An example of this was the workers’ accommodation. Ni-Vanuatu working for both Motukiwi and Tasman Apples were accommodated separately at a hostel, which was explained as a necessary measure because of a lack of suitable accommodation capacities. Yet, ni-Vanuatu had to pay more for this backpacker style accommodation than the “traditional” workers staying at the employers’ accommodation. Some ni-Vanuatu were later moved to houses, but they still paid more than other foreign workers. The employers explained that this was because cleaning services were included; however, a cleaner regularly visited the cheaper employers’ accommodation building as well.

I understood this as another indication of unequal treatment. I noticed that the employers wanted to reclaim the expenses related to hiring ni-Vanuatu by charging them more than other employees. The RSE was not perceived by employers as an aid model, but mainly as business. The employers have to prove that they pay the minimum wage to ni-Vanuatu even if some workers do not reach it, but this duty to guarantee minimum wages is not enforced with other foreign workers. Employers have higher expenses connected with ni-Vanuatu because they have to follow strict RSE rules. Therefore employers use two strategies to make the Pacific workers “worth” employing: charging more for accommodation and keeping only “proven” workers, who always reach the minimum wage when working on contract rates.
Ni-Vanuatu were initially not enthusiastic about piece rates because they did not like the idea of not being paid equally. My field notes show that the men preferred working in a group as a unit where they divided their responsibilities but shared the amount of picked fruit and thereby the pay:

They also did not fully understand why they shouldn’t work as a group, where each of them would be paid the same amount of money. In Motueka, they were on piece rates; that means there could be big differences among their earnings, which was a bit surprising for them. Therefore, they often worked in a group of three, while other foreigners worked in couples or alone. Working in small groups was initially necessary, because not everybody could drive a tractor, so one of them became the driver and other two joined him. (Field notes, May 2008)

Increasing the minimum wage also proved to be confusing for ni-Vanuatu workers. They did not understand why the piece rate was not increased correspondingly to the minimum hourly wage and asked me about this topic:

For example, there was a question: “what do you think of minimum wage and contract? The minimum wage was increased, but the rate for a bin of apples wasn’t. That means, that people who are in packing shed and are paid on hourly basis, are advantaged. Those outside get the same price for the bin and have to work more to make the same amount of money as those on wages. Isn’t that injustice? Shouldn’t the prices for the bin be increased too?” (Field notes, May 2008)
Again, this contradicts some employers’ claim that Pacific workers never ask questions. They would probably never ask the managers these questions, but they asked me as their co-worker. At least I started having a feeling that the men finally accepted me and did not think that I was the “spy” of the company.

My observation and later messages from my informants confirmed the notion of making someone financially “worth” employing. I found out that the employers keep only the fastest workers and the slower ones have a minimum chance to return to work in New Zealand, even if they do their best. Because these employers prefer the same “proven” workers and villages, it is debatable if the RSE has benefits for the whole communities in the Pacific islands, or only for certain households. I also realized that falling ill or getting hurt was considered dangerous by ni-Vanuatu, who were scared that they could be sent home if unable to work. This worry led some workers to hide their injuries (although not serious) and suppress the symptoms of a cold instead of looking for medical assistance. This was similar to the findings of Basok (2002) on Mexican seasonal workers in Canada as well as of Culp and Umbarger (2004) in the USA.

The alcohol ban could also be viewed as unequal treatment, because it concerned only ni-Vanuatu, but not other foreign workers who sometimes caused problems when intoxicated. Yet, the ‘no drinking’ policy is supported by Pacific state officials and pastoral care workers. Those caught drinking could be sent home, which was a source of concern for the Department of Labour because New Zealand law does not allow workers to be dismissed for drinking (Department of Labour and IMSED Research 2010, p. xiv). The alcohol ban could be regarded in different ways: it was initiated by the Pacific leaders as favourable for the workers, but it could be viewed as discriminatory and as having unlawful consequences (Department of Labour and IMSED Research 2010, p. xiv).

To conclude, Paolo’s and Ben’s views were subjective. The concept of abuse is also subjective, as is discourse about paternalism, inequality and discriminatory practices. The implementation of the RSE scheme depends on particular employers and some of them used the initial situation characterised by a high level of dependence for their own goals. In this environment, ni-Vanuatu had very little possibilities for resistance. Yet, some forms of resistance occurred, which will be described in the following section.
6.5 Resistance and workers’ strategies

One important research question emerged in the environment characterized by restrictions and dependence: can the restricted workers be considered completely powerless? It has been argued that these people, interested in high earnings, will be reluctant to support any actions which can cause short term loss of earnings, such as strikes (Gibson 1983, p. 39). Mild forms of resistance tended to be more common. In his book about Mexican tomato workers, Torres (1997) demonstrated that although the workers were restricted, they were not completely powerless. Some forms of resistance happened every day, sometimes in a form of a joke. How was the situation at Motukiwi and in the workplaces where my participants worked? I realized that most of the foreign workers and especially ni-Vanuatu were powerless politically. But I wanted to uncover how the foreign workers resisted the employers’ strategies, how they refused to do what supervisors wanted them to do or did their jobs differently from what was recommended by management and how they collaborated with co-workers and played games on the job.

Games and jokes were often used by ni-Vanuatu as well as by other nationalities who liked making fun of their supervisors, as documented by my notes:

One of the favourite jokes is teaching the supervisors bad words in a foreign language and telling them different meaning of those words. Then the supervisor tells the other workers and doesn’t understand why they laugh or why are they angry with him. The best joke is if the supervisor makes himself ridiculous in front of the managers. Like example, if the workers put a rotten apple on his tractor seat and then the supervisor walks around with a brown spot on his pants. I have never noticed managers would get really angry with the workers because of such jokes. (Field notes, May 2008)

The purpose of such jokes was to make fun, but sometimes also to discredit a certain person. The joke with a rotten apple was convenient, because the initiator was anonymous and there was a very small possibility that the apple fell on the seat by itself, so there was an excuse available in case the supervisor became angry. Except for jokes, ni-Vanuatu also used some other little “strategies” at work. Sometimes, insufficient English was used as an excuse and ni-Vanuatu pretended not to understand, if they were rebuked for doing something wrong. I also noticed that some men liked emphasizing that they were poor, hoping that the
supervisor would raise the piece rate or offer them some other advantages. Yet, this rarely happened.

All the RSE, SWP and WHV holders were aware that Motukiwi was sometimes considerably dependent on them, mostly during harvest time when a certain variety of fruit needed to be picked within a short timeframe. They knew that the employers would probably not dismiss them at this time, because employers were too busy organizing picking, transportation and packing rather than recruiting new employees. Thus the workers held a certain power to negotiate their situation. Pun (2005), exploring the situation of restricted workers in a Chinese factory, explained how the working women used this hidden power. The factory's management had to rely on workers' cooperation and willingness not only to work overtime but also to finish the work on time. Therefore, their tactics of defiance often targeted work speed and controlling pace. If required to work faster, the workers intentionally spoiled some work or pretended to be ill. They were willing to work faster if the rate of pay was good; if not, they slowed down. In this way, the workers were able to exert control over the work pace and maximize their interests. Defiance and “hidden transgressions,” as Pun revealed (p. 93) were present at the workplace everywhere and every moment.

At Motukiwi, the situation was similar, but different groups of workers had better or worse opportunities to use their “hidden power” as Pun called it. The WHV and SWP holders, especially, seized the opportunity to maximize their interests as they were more willing to resist and to play games with the supervisors. These “games” mostly concerned increasing the piece rates, and therefore, employees working on contract had more power to influence their earnings than those working in packing sheds on hourly rates. SWP and especially WHV holders had much wider possibilities than RSE holders to resist or to achieve their goals such as to increase the piece rate. Occasionally, the unsatisfied employees stopped working, sat down on the grass and waited till a higher piece rate was set. Yet this was quite rare as the workers could not anticipate the employers' reaction. A typical, safer strategy was to work slower before the rate was set and work faster as soon as the supervisor confirmed the price that the workers found convenient. The insufficient knowledge of English did not play a big role and usually, all workers understood it immediately and were willing to
cooperate on any strategy bringing them profit. Jean (French) presented contract work as a constant fight between supervisors’ and workers’ strategies:

If it’s contract, you have to work, before you know the prices. It’s a shit politics. So we were fighting against that. We got sometimes some small victories but he was always taking it back from us after.

As Jean indicates, the supervisor also achieved some “victories” in the constant “game” for piece rates. As I noticed, the supervisors and managers also utilised strategies to achieve the goal of saving employers’ money. They would slow some workers down, and then make them leave without asking them to look for another workplace. Supervisor Peter used some of these strategies, based on a good knowledge of the workplace. I was a relatively experienced worker, compared to some short-term WHV holders, and I noticed that there were big differences between parts of the orchard and rows of trees, such as the height of the trees, their accessibility, quality and amount of the crop. If Peter disliked a certain worker, he sent her or him to a bad row, where the worker had to make a much bigger effort than other workers to reach the minimum wage. Sometimes, Peter even shifted a worker’s bin far away or placed it on the top of the hill to make the worker’s walk to the bin more difficult and to tire the worker.

Peter was disliked by many workers for these practices, but I managed to keep a friendly relationship with him. This was based on my willingness to “save” Peter one afternoon. Because it was raining that morning, no work could be done in the orchard. The rain stopped in the afternoon and the managers ordered Peter to make the foreign employees come to work. Such late work was unusual; most of the workers rejected to go and finally, only two people and myself agreed to work. Later I realized that the friendly relationship with this supervisor gave me more influence within the workplace, including the possibility of having some workers dismissed. For example, I disliked a local worker C., who moved into our accommodation building and behaved disrespectfully when intoxicated. While working in the orchard, I discussed this situation with a co-worker and did not realize that Peter, who was in the neighbouring row, could hear this conversation. A few days later, I did not see C. at the workplace. Peter explained that he dismissed C. because his work ethic and quality were low. I was surprised because I knew that C. was the fastest among the whole group of workers. Later, Peter admitted that he dismissed C. because of me:
Peter: I don't like naughty guys... Didn't you say he annoyed you?
Jana: yeah, but...
Peter: Do you remember how only you and P. and T. went to work that afternoon? You helped me, I'll help you... (Field notes, December 2007)

I also found out that I could resist Peter’s strategies to use piece rates to his benefit. Peter often changed the piece rates. For example, in the morning he promised three dollars per tree during apple thinning, but he lowered this rate in the afternoon. I needed to make sure that he will not change the rate again:

Peter: Oh I can see that you guys finished this in three hours. Three dollars was apparently too much. It will be two per tree.
Jana: What? Two dollars? But you said three in the morning so it should be three. Look at those huge trees...
Peter: Ok Ok so two fifty.
Jana: Peter, these trees were two seventy last season.
Peter: ehmm those people from last season are dangerous... OK so two seventy.
Jana (thinking this was actually good price. Shouting that everybody can hear it): OK so two seventy. Is it your last word? Really last word?
Peter: Last word. (Field notes, December 2007)

I could afford this conversation because of my good relationship with Peter and because I was not really dependent on the company.

Unintentionally becoming one of Peter’s favourite workers offered me the possibility to learn more about supervisors’ practices that Peter was willing to reveal, and it provided me with introductions to other labour contractors (see following section). Peter confirmed he really tried to make some workers leave by making their working days increasingly difficult. However, I did not notice that the supervisors would use such practices against the RSE workers, because their employment was much more institutionalized and regulated. First, a dismissal of a RSE worker would have to be properly documented. Second, the employers did not want to easily lose a workforce that required higher initial expenses.

To sum up, both workers and their management used specific strategies at work bringing them profit. All the workers resisted managers’ strategies in some way; however, the RSE holders had more limited possibilities to use their own strategies in comparison to WHV or SWP holders. Ni-Vanuatu did not protest collectively, as some WHV holders did. As I demonstrated in my example, workers who were not dependent on the employers did not fear dismissal and therefore they could both use “hidden power” (Pun 2005) and
directly negotiate their wages. Yet, one category of foreign workers held even less power than RSE workers. This refers to the problem of the undocumented workers, which will be described in the following section.

6.6 Undocumented workers and dishonest labour contractors

The existence of undocumented labour in New Zealand, especially in the agriculture sector, is an open “secret.” The Human Rights Commission (1990 and 1991) estimated that in 1989, there were about 17,350 illegal immigrants in New Zealand, and 20,000 in the following year. In 2002, the horticulture industry estimated there were 17,000 illegal workers in New Zealand (Courtney 2008, p. 73). Several years ago, employing tourists or other undocumented workers was a common practice. Before the introduction of the RSE, some growers solved their labour shortages by employing undocumented workers. For example, in an article in The Orchardist (Board 2004), a grower freely admitted employing people on visitor permits because of a labour shortage.

There is agreement that undocumented workers can become an easy target of exploitation (Fenton 2003, Human Rights Commission 1990 and 1991, United Nations 1996). Fenton (2003, p. 123) wrote about super-exploitation: “If migrant workers generally are liable to exploitation, undocumented workers are liable to super-exploitation since it takes only one false move for them to be removed by their employer or threatened with exposure.” The possibilities to improve the situation of such workers are limited, as they have no legal status, they are unable to use the protections that may be open to them and they rarely seek justice because of fear of expulsion (Fenton 2003, United Nations 1996). Because the undocumented workers fear deportation and do not want to cooperate with authorities, it can be difficult for governments to uphold their rights (Kritz and Keely 1983).

There are few resources concerning the situation in New Zealand and there is a lack of studies on the contemporary situation. A more vivid discussion could be found in non-academic sources such as journals and newspapers, which described the dilemma between seasonal labour shortages and employing illegal
workers (Board 2004; Nicholson 2007) or gave examples of mistreatment by employers (Martin 2007).

The mistreatment of undocumented workers was confirmed by the Report to the Prime Minister on Migrant Workers (Human Rights Commission 1990). The Human Rights Commission collected a number of case studies, which illustrated the abuse of the foreign workers, typically from small workplaces. The Commission supposed that some abuses issued from the visitor permit system, especially from the length of time for which a permit could be obtained. These “tourists” were likely to remain invisible until they obtained work or residency permits (p. 10).

The Human Rights Commission’s report (1990) examined the problems, which undocumented workers have to deal with. Many need to work to survive as they are ineligible for the unemployment benefit. Because they work illegally they cannot easily insist on proper wages and conditions. In 1995, there were reportedly about 200 illegal workers in the Kati Kati area, mostly Indians, working for as little as two dollars an hour, or Chinese on visitor permits working on building sites in Auckland for the same rate (Walker 1995).

In connection with the “invisible” workers, Risa (Chinese) told me about his Chinese friends, who reportedly have been hiding and working close to our accommodation for two years. He refused to tell me any details and did not want to talk about this topic any more. Risa was not the only participant who talked about the workers, who officially did not exist. Iveta and David mentioned their co-worker, who lost his passport. This person allegedly spent two years working in Central Otago without having a passport, visa and driver’s licence. According to my informants, undocumented workers who they met were from Asia, but also from Europe and South America. Most of the undocumented workers who I met were from Europe and Asia. Compared to WHV, SWP and RSE holders, they could be considered completely powerless because they were totally dependent on their employers’ will. If the employers did not pay them, the workers did not see any possibility how to object.

Two participants, David and Iveta, experienced problems with payments from employers. Iveta complained about the approach of one employer who did not pay holiday pay and further entitlements. Because her partner David did not
have a proper work visa when waiting for TRSE visa, Iveta felt defenceless and entrapped:

And how should you defend yourself, you know? You go there to ask for work and they will tell you: OK, we will employ you under these conditions. Otherwise, go elsewhere. And moreover, David was there illegally. We were caught like in pliers. Wherever we went, we were entrapped.

David explained the strategy of some employers, who did not register the workers or registered them under false names: “I was registered as a woman over there [laughing]. Moreover, my name was Yo. Discreetly.”

David and Iveta’s problems occurred when the RSE scheme was not yet in full operation. After more employers had the opportunity to hire from the Pacific states, I observed that the number of undocumented workers in and around Motueka really dropped. The managers expressed their satisfaction that they had enough employees and did not have to worry about getting new ones if some WHV holders decided to leave and travel again. I met numerous foreign nationals on tourist visas looking for employment in Motueka, but finally leaving for Central Otago. This region was rumoured to still hire workers without work permits because this area was not as attractive for hundreds of backpackers as Nelson-Tasman region. Later, I received messages from these people confirming they were able to obtain employment as undocumented agricultural workers.

The RSE scheme can be viewed as a useful strategy against illegal labour and not as a guest-worker programme increasing the number of illegal immigration (Briggs 2004, Castles 1986, Miller and Martin 1982). I also considered RSE as a strategy which helps to prevent dishonest employers and labour contractors from using exploitative practices. Employers’ dependence on dishonest labour contractors was reduced and the economic underdevelopment and underemployment in the Pacific states was addressed. Underdevelopment was regarded as one of the basic causes of all worker migration and of clandestine traffic in foreign labour (United Nations 1996).

My statement about questioning dishonest practices was supported by the interviews with the managers. As manager Matthew supposed, the Government wanted to overcome the reputation of bad contractors operating especially in Marlborough and Hawke’s Bay by introducing the RSE scheme, which placed more requirements on the employers. Courtney (2008, p. 73) also supported RSE,
which she reported as “the first major initiative to set the scene for a clean-up of the dirty, open secret at work in New Zealand’s orchards and vineyards.” The illegal use of casual employees under unacceptable conditions became more obvious during the tight labour market of the mid 2000s and RSE is a strategic approach against these practices (Ramasamy et al. 2008, p. 174).

In April 2008, North and South Magazine published an article, which included a provocative chapter named “Scams and Slave Labour” (Courtney 2008). This article described the situation in Hawke’s Bay. Courtney used terms such as “mafias,” “gangsters,” and “modern day slavery.” She described this “mafia” as a network of people traffickers and cunning contractors, especially from India and Asia, who have figured ways to get around the immigration rules and who intentionally misused both undocumented and legal workers, using practices such as low piece-work rates and misusing the workers’ insufficient knowledge of their rights. The foreign labour contractors often employ people from their own countries, because, as Martin (2005) explains, workers related to the contractor or from the same region or village are not likely to complain, even if their rights are being violated.

The experience from my work and research indicated that this article was probably not exaggerated. When working in Hawke’s Bay in 2006, I had an opportunity to catch sight of this “network,” when I came across contractors using several names and phone numbers so that they cannot be easily found by unsatisfied workers. This “network” did not consist only of contractors from India and Asia, but also of New Zealanders. I experienced being “sold” by a New Zealander to a Chinese contractor and I also talked to some Asian workers, who felt misused by the contractors from their own countries, who rely on the workers’ insufficient English. As I found out, these Asian workers paid more for bunk-style accommodation than I did. Later, in another region, I obtained some information about the practices of some labour contractors from one of them, “Tim”. “Tim” described the controversial practices in a following way:

Yeah, tricky business. Calling. Never tell them where you live. Never give them your own phone number. It’s mostly about calling, selling stuff and people. You set the rate and later you cut the price. You can sell them the tools, which they should get for free. When they leave, they will give it to you anyway, what would they do with it. And you can sell it again. Some contractors hire backpackers for two weeks. You will come to the workplace and say, you will pay them the fourteenth
day. The fourteenth day you won’t come. [That is you will not pay them as you promised them cash. You will not bring it]

Four other participants complained about the Indian contractors or supervisors. Anthony felt “ripped off” by an Indian supervisor and Achi claimed that he never got his salary paid fully. Achi also mentioned an Indian contractor, who finally “ran away” without paying. Risa commented on the strategy of his dishonest Indian contractor:

Risa: They are not really good, that’s right. They are doing their job considerely unfair.
Jana: Unfair?
Risa: Hm... like cunning, cunning, yeah.
Jana: What do they do? What’s the problem?
Risa: You do, like example, two hundred plants, they told you, you have just finished hundred and fifty.
Jana: Really? But you can tell him: look, count it, it’s two hundred.
Risa: But you have no time to count it. And they told you: you have fifty not to the standard. A lot of excuse on it, yeah.

I realized that such dishonest practices cannot be accredited only to Indian contractors. For example, “Tim” was a New Zealander. Another local contractor, who allegedly took half of the pay of Tomas and Eva, explained to them that half of the pay were fees for “providing jobs” and “looking after you.” Tomas described the work for another contractor, who was also a New Zealander, as inhuman and viewed himself as being forced to work “like a machine.” Nico even started talking about “slavery” and “robots” referring to Asians working in the vineyards:

I think it’s not like slavery, but looks like, for me. Because I have the feeling, that they are not free to do, what they want. I just... I saw in the morning... especially for Thai people, they just came in a special van, they are maybe ten in the van, just get out from the van, just go to work, just work, like robots, like mechanoids (?), like, I don’t know... like if they are... no choice... and they don’t say anything.

Nico perceived Thai workers as “robots” not just by force, but also by choice, because “they don’t say anything.” Similarly, Achi remembered some Koreans in the vineyard, who reportedly “have no face,” that is they do not talk, but only satisfy the requirements. Yet, non-academic articles (Martin 2007, New Zealand Press Association 2007) supported the notion of “robots by force”

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45 This citation is not an exact transcription of Tim’s words. His speech was not recorded, I was only able to write down the basic ideas in my field notes.
(Wallman 1979b, p. 17) by revealing the situation of Thai workers. These articles illustrated the role of the labour contractors, cooperating with dishonest recruitment organisations overseas. These Thai workers were allegedly treated as an underclass and exploited by threats and a system of obligations and debts which tied them to both the home recruitment agency and local labour contractors.

These examples show that dishonest contractors were not only foreigners, but also locals and that they were able to find many ways to achieve their goals. The RSE can reduce the cases of workers’ exploitation by dishonest contractors by minimizing employers’ needs for a labour force offered by such contractors. Before, many growers have turned a blind eye to the contractors’ activities because of too much dependence on them. In Courtney’s article, a grower reported, he had been “beholden to those guys” (Courtney 2008, p. 73).

To sum up, these examples of exploitation of undocumented workers show the dangers of not having a legal guest worker programme. Although the RSE scheme is not perfect, it can be considered a useful tool for the fight against dishonest employers’ practices and against employing illegal labour, mostly from Asia. The situation of the Asians was specific and their nationality often predisposed them to a certain kind of treatment by employers. The following section will examine this topic.

### 6.7 Ethnicity as an independent category?

Using the example of Asians, this section aims to add more information about employers’ treatment of different groups of workers. Ethnicity can be described as a category independent of visa but pervasive; that means, SWP or WHV holders would be treated differently if they came from Europe or from Asia.

*Workers with “nimble fingers”*

I noticed that Asian employees were often preferred by the employers and were mostly employed in the packing sheds. The participating manager Greg claimed, he would like to employ more Asian workers, as they work hard and do not party. This was a reasonable statement, but, some explanations of the reasons for employing Asians were controversial. As Wallman (1979b, p. 13, and 14)
explained, some work is considered appropriate only to particular kinds of people. The reason can be either the real requirements of strength, skills or talents, or restrictions by custom, right or by obligation to particular social categories. Several criteria are used to specialise people into forms of work, such as gender, age, nationality, “race” or caste. Such specialization, sometimes even discrimination, is justified by alleged “natural” laws of ability and appropriateness.

Also in New Zealand, I came across such “laws” of ability and appropriateness. I noticed that these subtle forms of racism and understandings of ethnic embodiment were used to justify the place of each group within the labour hierarchies. Courtney (2008, p. 75) quoted an orchard manager from Central Otago employing Malaysians in his packing shed: “Working in the close confines of a packhouse best suits people of small build with nimble fingers”. In contrast, none of the Asian workers interviewed connected certain abilities with their physical characteristics or with their ethnic origin, but with how work is understood and organised in their countries.

Image 7: Malaysian workers. These two Malaysian women with “nimble fingers”, weighting only about 40 kg each, would be perfect for the packing shed, as the employers supposed. Instead, they picked several tonnes of apples every day. I always heard them singing when working.

The expression about “nimble fingers” resembles the comments of New Zealand’s National Party parliamentarian Lockwood Smith, who later apologized for causing offence by saying Asians have small hands that make them more productive and Pacific workers need to be taught to use toilets and showers (see for example Radio New Zealand 2008). Unfortunately, such a racist approach
seems to be common in the relationship between the foreign employees and their employers in New Zealand. In a study of professional foreign workers, Oliver (2000, p. 8) discovered, that employers were more likely to employ migrants if they had attributes that were “especially desirable.” Oliver’s study gave the example of the small hands of the Chinese for computer component assembly (see also Pun 2005, p. 149). Similarly, Courtney (2008) presented her informant as an exemplary employer, although he talked about the small Asians with nimble fingers and had a paternalistic attitude to Pacific Islanders.

**Asian participants’ understandings of work**

Greg’s reference to hardworking Asians was confirmed by my observation. During the work in the orchards, I met only one Asian worker who I did not consider hardworking in comparison to European workers. I could also see that all Asian participants tended to not complain about the physical activity as much as European backpackers and emphasised its relaxing character in comparison with work in their home countries. Sometimes, they were even unsatisfied that rules did not enable them to work longer. Supervisor Peter admired this character and disclosed that often it was difficult for him to keep most of the Asian workers busy, as they demanded more work. For Achi and Risa the nature of work did not pose a challenge, but the problem was that they were not allowed to work all day. The Koreans Lee and Phan also regarded work as relatively easy. The contrasting description of the rural work by Aporo (French) and by Achi (Malaysian) is clear:

Just very very boring. But working is very eas [easy]. (Lee)

Orchard is the place where... rest only. After that, I go back to Singapore working. Here is a... keeping rest (...). Not many Kiwi here. Kiwi can find a good job in other place. Nobody want to work, we work. (...) First important, you must hard work. Yeah. Never work hard, you can feeling very cold. Work hard, the body become hot, not cold. (Achi)

While Aporo and Pommeau (French) talked about hard work and the cold, Achi was enthusiastic about relaxing work and suggested that I use his strategy to overcome the cold by working even harder. All Asian participants realized the difference between their and the European understanding of work and tried to explain the Asian attitude by comparing the working conditions in New Zealand
and in their home countries. Phan said he could not understand why young New Zealanders did not like working and compared them to the Koreans, who reportedly have to work all the time. Similarly, Achi explained the Malaysian approach, where the workers cannot leave work, until the problem is solved or the task finished. Risa saw a difference in the attitude, which is reportedly more career-oriented in Hong Kong. The unskilled work in the orchard did not pose so many requirements on him; therefore it could be described as enjoyable and relaxing. Yet, Risa still viewed the Chinese style of work as better than New Zealand’s “relaxed” style. Risa described the “Western culture” (including New Zealand) enjoying “free time” as a contradiction to his own culture, which enjoys advancement in career. Risa’s preferred style of working all-day, that was viewed as exhausting and incomprehensible by the European workers, was appreciated by Risa for its alleged flexibility and freedom which contrasted with the New Zealand’s working style:

Risa: Also in the vineyard, the boss will tell you, don’t go fast, after five o’clock, you have to stop working. But in our country, we never say like that. Never ever. Up to you.

If you’re tired, you can finish yourself. MORE freedom. If you go tired, you can go sleep. If you wake up, go back, it’s up to you. It’s more freedom. All the freedom for you. More flexible. Here not. You work up to five o’clock. This is a rule.. I have ability, I have energy, to work up to nine. But this is restrict.

In our country is more flexible. That’s why we have a contradiction between Kiwi and Asian culture. Their mind, the Kiwis... they don’t like work long time. And Asian people, they like very long time. This comparison make the contradiction between each other.

Risa did not realize that his attitude to work was sometimes a difficult issue in relation to other workers. The supervisor Peter disclosed that many New Zealanders do not like Asian workers because most of them work too fast or too long. Consequently the locals assume that all Asian co-workers “steal” their jobs and there will be no more work left for locals. This approach is not a new phenomenon, since the fear or the Chinese as economic competition had previously nourished racial prejudice during the late 19th century (Brooking and Rabel 1995). Later, the high levels of material and scholastic achievement by Asian immigrants have elicited praise, but also resentment and critical comments about an Asian “invasion” (Brooking and Rabel 1995, p. 47; see also Walker 1995, p. 295).
Most Asian employees often preferred working long hours. This could be compared to Wallman’s (1979b, p. 17) discussion about the “over-identification” with work, which in an industrial society is diagnosed as pathology. Such people are named “workaholic” and are said to neglect other obligations. Sometimes, this word was used by my participants from European countries, but it was directed only towards the workers from the same group who were perceived to lower the piece rate by working too fast. The Asians were not likely to be marked in this sense, even if they worked longer than the supposed “workaholics.” Once again, if work is a socially constructed category (Wallman 1979b), also the border between the identification and over-identification is a construct used in a specific social context. The line drawn by the European workers for their own group lies lower than the line drawn for Asians. In other words, the European workers expect all Asian workers to work hard, even if there are differences between individual labourers. In this case, the stereotypical expectations towards the Asians mark them as hardworking and sometimes even as stingy.

“Workaholics” can become a target of jokes, but also victims of hostility or exclusion within the system of contract work, because fast workers cut down the rate set by the supervisor during work. To be marked as “workaholic,” a certain person has to work too long or too fast (which is measured differently by different ethnicities) or to talk about work issues too much during their leisure time.

Discrimination against Asians or misunderstandings?

The distinction between different approaches to work was also obvious in the relationship with supervisors or managers. The same supervisors were described in different ways, which can be demonstrated by the example of Brigita (Czech) and Lee (Korean). Brigita portrayed one of the supervisors as her best friend and she spent a lot of time with his family (but, this also caused her problems, as other foreign workers accused her of making friends to have advantages). In contrast, Lee viewed the same supervisor as quite unfriendly and impersonal. Other Asian workers expressed similar opinions and supposed that the manager and some supervisors did not like Asians. Achi complained that the supervisors “never go personal” and Risa even felt discriminated against by
supervisors and employers. Why did Risa consider he was discriminated against and was this based on a misunderstanding or cultural differences?

Risa’s statement about discrimination is supported by some academic sources. According to Spoonley and Bedford (2003, p. 310), there is growing evidence of significant levels of employer discrimination, which reflects the reaction of some New Zealanders to the “Asianisation” of New Zealand. Anti-Asian sentiment by some New Zealanders is not a phenomenon attributable only to the growing Asian population; it emerged already as a response to the first Asian settlers to New Zealand (Butcher 2008). As Zodgekar (2005, p. 151) remarked, some politicians have portrayed the Asians as a problem because of their lack of interest in and familiarity with New Zealand culture. The social distance felt towards the Chinese, in particular, is the result of racism and the ethnocentrism of a traditionally Eurocentric society (Ip 1995, p. 193). Contemporary negative or ambivalent feelings about Asians usually concern the nation’s alleged distinctive social and cultural characteristics, failure to integrate, the nation’s identity and economic competition (Trlin and Watts 2004, p. 115). Collins (2006, p. 221), who focused on Asian students in New Zealand, noticed that media representation of Asians has fixed on a group of individuals within a specific racial identity. This group is ascribed stereotypical economic, cultural and social characteristics. Asians are presented as exotic others and as a social problem. Collins continues: “These representations are part of a process of racialisation whose objective is to create a racial category, Asian, that can be known and controlled in the New Zealand context” (p. 221).

These studies’ results were partly relevant at Motukiwi. All Asians were perceived as economic competition by some local workers and viewed as exotic others by some foreign workers. At Motukiwi, I sometimes observed that there was a communication gap between the European or American workers and most Asians, who tended to stay together and some of them did not want to be included in European workers’ parties and barbecues. For instance, the Koreans Lee and Phan became welcome members of the community after they cooked a soup for the whole group and participated in a basketball game. A Japanese couple was not accepted because they were considered weird and accused of “hiding in their room all the time.” Other foreign nationals probably did not realize that some Asians might choose to isolate themselves voluntarily for various reasons, for
example as a consequence of culture shock, or as a precaution against it. Exclusion could also result from the migrant worker wanting to earn as much money as possible, which does not leave much time for interaction with others (Demuth 2000, p. 48). This was probably not the case of the Japanese couple, because these people did not want to work on Saturday if offered. A voluntary isolation was a more probable reason for “hiding” of noisy European backpackers.

Although the employers at Motukiwi also had some stereotypical imaginations of Asians never partying and being suitable for work in the packing shed, I never noticed that they would really discriminate against Asians. Instead, employers were keen to employ Asian workers because of their expected high productivity. But I realized that my own and some participants’ understanding of “discrimination” differed in some respects. I focused on the following topics: equal access to employment, entitlements and benefits, equal treatment by the employers and equal accommodation fees. Nevertheless three of my Asian participants focused mainly on the personal approach of the management, supervisors, but also co-workers.

As I have observed, the notions of discrimination at Motukiwi could be often attributed to this different understanding of the word “discrimination,” to conversational misunderstandings and different expectations. Some supervisors distanced themselves from the Asians, supposing that their English was too bad. Some Asian participants noticed that one of the managers did not talk to them much and never said ‘Hi’ first. They did not realize that this manager behaved to other workers in the same way. This feature of the manager’s personality was misinterpreted by these Asian workers as hostility or racism. These workers expected that the manager would talk to them and would explain everything. The impersonal behaviour of the manager was included in the term “discrimination.”

For two Asian participants, the manager’s function was also connected with authority. Phan mentioned his embarrassing experience when he used to bow in front of his supervisors, until he noticed that nobody else bowed and that he looked ridiculous. Risa was also surprised that I did not bow my head when one of the managers entered the house. Risa even told me, I was disrespectful. I realized that the different understanding of work and supervision led to misinterpretations and occasionally caused problems for workers from different cultural backgrounds.
Risa experienced problems with supervisors in several workplaces, which can be partly explained by different approaches to supervision. Talking about his experience with work in the vineyard, he saw the biggest problem in insufficient communication and lacking explanation, which he compared to serving a bowl of rice without providing the chopstick:

Because the management, the manager level here in New Zealand, they can’t explain themselves very clear to their subordinate. Like example, I give you rice, a bowl of rice, so for you, you don’t know how to do it. Because you don’t have the tools. You don’t have the chopstick. Like the New Zealander. They seem like you could eat the bowl of rice. (...) Because all the western people, they don’t know how to serve(?) the people. So they don’t know, they just give you the bowl of rice, they don’t tell you how to feed it. (...) We have the communication area between. (...) You have no idea because you are first time in the vineyard, right? Further action, you don’t know. What’s going on? You don’t know. Only they have the experience and you have to learn from all the environment. (...) Compare with Asian. We are different. We have to learn all the things and provide all the (things?) to you. That mean, if you sit down, you have the dinner, I put the chopstick for you, I give the fork, knife, everything for you on the table. But the Western, they don’t, they give you the bowl of rice, that’s it.

No, they can’t explain very detail. They seem [think] you can understand.

Expectations play a significant role here, because Risa expected the supervisor to explain everything in detail, whereas the supervisor supposed that Risa understood his explanation. As Brislin (2006, p. 68) indicated, the reason for stress and problems during intercultural interactions is not so much due to the difficult experiences, but because of differences between what was expected and what was experienced. Brislin’s example of Americans working in Asia refers to Risa’s different expectations from leadership. As Brislin explained, the Americans can be puzzled by the expectations which some Asian employees have of their leaders; these expectations can be summarised as “paternal authoritativeness” and the leaders are supposed to act like “concerned fathers,” which was exactly what Risa expected.

I did not deny possible discrimination, but noticed that the problems of all Asian participants were influenced by both Asian workers’ and supervisors’ unwillingness to overcome misunderstandings. The supervisor did not make sure that the workers could really understand him; however, Risa did not try to adapt to the different working conditions. During the interview, Risa repeatedly talked about the Chinese approach to work as the best in the world. It is possible, that not only
the misunderstandings, but also Risa’s inability to accept cultural differences and following of his own rules (preferring working to speed rather than good quality) caused him problems, resulting him into physically attacking the supervisor and Risa facing several cases of discharge from work. I did not think that this was only a cultural issue but it was also a personal conflict between the supervisors and Risa’s personality of an independent, somewhat querulous man who disliked restrictions. When Risa spoke against the supervisor who criticized Risa’s work, Risa has also been rejected for a visa extension. This probably reinforced his feeling of discrimination.

It was interesting to compare Risa’s view with that of the WHV holders, who Risa would call “Western culture people”. Risa conflated the European, American and New Zealand cultures together into one term, “Western culture,” which he depicted as a hundred percent different from his “culture”. Risa accused the “Western culture” of wanting him to adapt, but not being interested in his culture at all. “Western culture” reportedly does not want to understand his culture with different values, customs, food and thinking. Risa felt that he was never explained anything in a satisfactory way. In comparison, Brigita (Czech) assumed that the Asians caused all the misunderstandings, because they did not ask, if they did not understand. She described all Asians as a “different mentality,” regretted she could not have a real friendship with her Asian flatmates and supposed this was not her fault:

Brigita: I just think that we don’t do that. I was helpful in the beginning, I advised the girls, when they bought a wrong phone card, I was looking for someone who wanted the same; I was glad that they were happy, but it was somehow… It was always only about a polite level. I don’t know if they are scared of us or what… But should I ever get something back from them, that never happened. They were glad, they were polite, but should they foster a human contact, that did not happen. Maybe… they might have been scared of me… they were mainly among themselves. And I also think… they had a problem with English.
Jana: And you said that actually you don’t know those Koreans who you work with. Do you know their names at least?
Brigita: Well, I call them Dodgy and Bum, but their names are probably… I don’t know. I’m not good with names.

As with the problematic relationship between the Asian workers and their supervisors, different expectations were also significant. Palumbo-Liu (2003, pp. 765-767) commented on the expectations: “We expect certain types of behaviour
from certain people, and these expectations may well persist despite any evidence to the contrary.” Like Risa, Brigita also had undischarged expectations, when she imagined her flatmates would reciprocate her help. Brigita revealed further possible causes of the distant relationship between her and her flatmates when she mentioned their problems with English.

Insufficient English of some Asian workers was not viewed as problematic by the managers. Even if the managers disclosed there were some communication problems with the foreign workers, they did not consider this a big issue and explained how they overcome these problems:

Jana: And can you speak any foreign language?
Greg: No. (laughing)
Jana: And the supervisors?
Greg: I think it’s the same. I suppose, we’ve been lucky. Generally, I would say, that... if I had trouble with... there was a French boy who had trouble with English, but there was another one with more skills to help me.

Matthew: Yes, we ... we... there’s been a few times, when we had some Czech people that just had no English at all. But they just have been with their partner, or their friend had some English. And he could interpret for us. Jana: do you speak any foreign language?
Matthew: No. It’s very bad...No, we’ve been isolated, but it’s probably getting better. New Zealand was really bad with languages.

In contrast to the employers’ optimistic talk about there being little problem with communication, all Asian workers admitted that language misunderstandings caused them some problems. These Asian participants mostly related the problems they experienced at work and during interactions with the locals to a difficult understanding of New Zealand English accent, intonation, slang and colloquialisms such as “smoko” and “heaps.” Two Asians especially indicated there were communication problems between them and their supervisors. Some situations like this occur not through racism but through ignorance, such as people speaking very loudly to a person with a foreign accent (Connor 1995, p. xvi). It was interesting to view this from the informants’ perspective – for example Phan complained, that this kind of talk drove him to despair and made him feel like an idiot. New Zealanders reportedly shouted at him supposing he would understand better if they talked louder.

To sum up, the reported discrimination against some Asian participants was difficult to explain as I did not observe the employers or supervisors discriminating
against these informants. I noticed that my participants’ problems were mostly based on language problems, misunderstandings and cultural differences. This is a subjective view because I could not observe these informants all the time and because the understandings of “discrimination” were different. However I could see that at Motukiwi, the Asians were positively discriminated by employers, but negatively viewed by some local workers who perceived all Asians as a competition. The Asians were stereotyped and considered a workforce with a strong work ethic, suitable for work in the packing shed because of their supposed race-related characteristics.

6.8 Summary

Chapter Six focused on the relationships and employment practices at the workplace. It identified three main variables that influence the employer-employee relationship. I have argued that the employment practices depended considerably on the policies that the workers came under, but they were also articulated according to all-pervasive categories of gender and ethnicity. As an example, a foreign worker will not be guaranteed minimum wages by the employer (which is visa dependent) and will be sent to the packing shed because of being female. She is regarded as suitable for this kind of employment because she is a “typical” patient Asian with “nimble fingers.”

The first variable, the policy conditions, significantly influenced the workers’ experience of working and living in New Zealand. The conditions of the RSE scheme led to a high dependence of the workers on their employers who seized this opportunity and used several strategies to economise and to exert labour control on their employees. The RSE workers faced important issues such as controversial treatment by some employers, based on paternalism. Even if dependence on one employer was later removed, the employers still treat ni-Vanuatu differently than other foreign workers and some make RSE workers “worth” employing by using debatable practices such as over-priced accommodation.

Work under the RSE scheme included a lack of freedom for the workers, but they cannot be viewed as powerless slaves. These workers are controlled by regulations and legal employment conditions (Bailey 2009b, p. 13). Although
restricted, the RSE workers used subtle forms of resistance. WHV and SWP holders had more possibilities for workplace resistance and negotiation. These strategies mostly targeted the work pace and piece rates. All nationalities quickly learned these strategies and cooperated even when their English was very limited.

The variables of gender and ethnicity touched various groups of workers in a different way. Many European or ni-Vanuatu women were employed in the packing shed, but both Asian men and women were preferred there and they were constructed as a unit with common features. The employers emphasized the Asians’ productivity, which they connected with the Asians’ supposed physical and behavioural characteristics.
Chapter Seven: Conclusion

My previous employment in Motueka provided a site where I could study the experience of distinctive groups of migrant workers within three main policies: WHV, SWP and RSE. The main aim was to explore how the temporary labour policies shaped both workers’ experience with working conditions and their treatment by the employers. Additional research questions, detailed in the introduction and literature review, could be summarised into four sections. The first and second area concerned the perceptions of the workers and employers on the effectiveness of temporary work programmes and employers’ reasons for hiring foreign nationals. The necessity of temporary work programmes in the face of technological or mechanical innovation was the third discussion area for the orchard managers. The fourth area for examining were the tensions between temporary and permanent migration.

The answers to the questions outlined in this dissertation contribute to a growing body of literature on guest workers and temporary labour migration. This dissertation especially contributes to the number of qualitative studies on this topic. My research also provides an original methodological contribution by utilizing not only interviews but also participant observation including the work season before beginning this thesis. This dissertation is one of the few insider studies of foreign workers conducted by a foreigner. The main advantage of this methodology was the willingness of most informants to open their hearts to a person with the same status of a foreign worker who had similar experiences.

This chapter reports the main findings of this dissertation in light of the research questions listed above. The chapter ends by outlining the implications of these findings with reference to possible areas of future research.

7.1 How do the policies shape workers’ experience with working conditions?

The labour and immigration policies played a very important role in forming my participants’ experience of working at the orchards. The three main policies
(WHV, RSE, SWP) significantly influenced the diverse experience of different groups of workers. First, the policies determined the characteristics of possible applicants for work in New Zealand. They specified the age, but indirectly also the rank and status of the applicants by imposing various fees, specific amounts on workers’ accounts or a specific level of education. Second, they excluded applicants from certain countries.

Diverse rules and requirements of these policies predisposed the foreign workers to different approaches of the employers, to various possible problems and to different levels of personal freedom (freedom to choose the employer, to move to another place, to visit local bars and organize the free time).

The experience of the RSE holders was influenced by the workers’ dependence on the employers. This dependence was much higher than in the case of the WHV or SWP holders and created an environment suitable for mistreatment. Fearing dismissal and an early flight home, the RSE workers were reluctant to complain or to join any collective action which could endanger their employment.

I understand that RSE is not necessarily exploitative, but I argue for closer attention to some employers’ controversial practices such as paternalism and unequal treatment. Unequal treatment of RSE and other workers results from the employers’ duty to guarantee minimum wages and a certain amount of working hours for the RSE workers. Consequently, RSE workers are more costly than WHV or SWP holders. This is the nexus of the labour policy and employers’ practices: the strict conditions of RSE policy lead to some employers’ attempting to make their employees financially “worth” employing. This can be achieved, for example, by controversial practices such as overpriced accommodation and services. “Proven” (that means fast, healthy, non-complaining and non-costly) workers are preferred; others have a limited chance to obtain employment in New Zealand. This consequently limits the possibilities of certain households and communities to benefit from the scheme. Although the applicants are often chosen by the community leaders in their home countries, New Zealand employers have the last word, as well as a lot of power to make the scheme a success or not.

Compared to “un-free” foreign workers coming to Canada under the CSWAP programme (Basok 2002, Gogia 2006, Satzewich 1991, Sharma 2001), the RSE workers were also significantly restricted and legally tied to their
employers, but they were not hidden on remote farms. In Motueka, the local community could meet them every day, but some local workers felt threatened by the foreign labour. Stereotyping and prejudice was an important part of the Pacific workers’ experience. Ni-Vanuatu were initially feared and stereotyped by employers, local and non-Pacific foreign workers. Not only were the Pacific islanders often perceived as a threat, but they also were approached as possible drinkers, problem makers and lazy workers. The “popular antipathy to cheap foreign labour” (Maclellan and Mares 2006b, p. 27) was also present in Motueka. Fortunately, this initial negative experience of the RSE workers changed during several months.

Although RSE workers were restricted (not allowed to change between employers, not allowed to visit local bars, not allowed to apply for another type of work permit and for residency), they were not completely powerless. At work, they used subtle forms of resistance against employers’ practices. Yet, SWP and especially WHV holders had much more power or options as their visa allowed them to take up alternative employment. For example, they could use a wider range of strategies to resist or to achieve their goals. WHV holders were a mainly transient and highly mobile workforce who did not worry about possible dismissal so much as the RSE workers did.

The transient lifestyle of the WHV holders was welcomed by some employers who knew that if problems at work occurred, many mobile backpackers preferred leaving and looking for alternative employment to arguing with the employer and requesting minimum wages. Not receiving minimum wages, together with low piece rates, was the main problem for WHV holders. WHV and SWP were not controlled and regulated by the New Zealand authorities to the same degree like the RSE scheme and consequently, this was used by the employers. Some employers conceal their duty to pay the minimum wage, relying on uninformed foreign labour with insufficient knowledge of English.

7.2 Other factors influencing the workers’ experience with working conditions

Except for the policies, I have identified two other variables that shaped this experience: workers’ gender and ethnicity. Gender and ethnicity were two all-
pervasive, visa-independent categories that influenced the employer-employee relationship.

The employers were keen to employ people with certain supposed physical and behavioural features. Men and women, but also different ethnicities were often constructed and stereotyped as units with common characteristics suitable for a certain kind of work. For example, many different nationalities originating from Asia would be described simply as “Asians,” and would be expected to be hard-working, productive, patient, submissive and non-partying. Also other foreign workers stereotyped the Asian nationalities as workaholics and as someone who “spoils” the norm.

The Asian nationalities were preferred in the packing sheds, as were the women. There were stereotypes among the employers about what kind of work was ideal for men and women. The definition of “typical” men’s and women’s work contributed to a lack of long-term positions available for ni-Vanuatu women. These women were allocated to the packing sheds where they could spend only about four months, compared to seven months available for men working outside.

7.3 Additional questions

Using the example of the company Motukiwi, I have demonstrated that foreign workers were perceived as necessary for the orchards by the managers, by the seasonal work coordinator and by the growers’ association chairman. In contrast, many local workers were viewed as having a low work ethic. The criticism targeted especially local unemployed people; this means that unemployment and labour shortages co-existed at the same time, similarly as Mares (2005) described in Australia. The employers did not think that introducing better mechanization and labour-savings methods (Krikorian 2004, Martin 1998) was a suitable strategy to limit the number of foreign employees. Yet I have argued that the need for guest-workers was also caused by other factors such as the expanding agricultural businesses that did not consider the size of local workforce and insufficiently invested in the accommodation and services for their employees.

The RSE in Motueka proved to be an efficient and workable scheme with no overstayers. This relates to Millbank’s (2008) criteria for a successful temporary
labour programme. RSE curbed the use of illegal labour because it provided local employers with a legal and reliable labour force. As I mentioned, undocumented workers were powerless to fight against bad employers’ practices as they were not controlled by any rules and law. The RSE scheme was a good tool for this because it has oversight by the New Zealand government. I agreed with the authors who highlighted a possible “triple win” of temporary programmes that can be achieved by proper administration (Abella 2006, Basok 2000, Hugo 2008, Ruhs 2002 and 2005) and I supposed that the RSE scheme could be both workable and moral if some problematic issues were addressed (see recommendations below).

RSE workers were not allowed to apply for another work permit or residency while in New Zealand. WHV and SWP holders were theoretically allowed to do so, and a high number of participants wanted to obtain skilled employment and settle in New Zealand. Their experience was influenced by the perceived difference between the participants’ intentions and their potential to obtain residency. This contrast became the main topic of several interviews as it was considered important by the informants (except for RSE holders). These people felt discriminated by their potential employers and also constrained by immigration policies. Although some participants portrayed themselves explicitly as discriminated victims, I suggest that there were also other possible reasons for their problems with obtaining employment outside the rural sector. These included the possible lack of New Zealand work experience, cultural differences, English language skills, personal and communication skills. This was especially important for the foreign workers from different cultural backgrounds.

As I have illustrated in the example of some Asian participants, their feeling of discrimination at the workplace was sometimes caused by different expectations, language problems and misunderstandings. For example, the assumed hostile approach of a manager towards Korean workers was based on a misunderstanding, difficult conversation and workers’ unfulfilled expectations from a leader. This example demonstrates the nuances in understanding supervisory practices, but also the nuances in understanding the term “discrimination.” The employers’ and participants’ understanding of “discrimination” differed and in the case of most Asian participants, this term was broad and included also the impersonal approach of the management.
7.4 Recommendations and suggestions

In this thesis, I have identified some problematic areas concerning guest workers and now I would like to suggest how these topics can be addressed. I have discussed several weaknesses of the RSE policy, for example controversial practices such as overpriced accommodation. At the time of my fieldwork there was a lack of adequate information provided to the workers before and after arrival to New Zealand and there were also limited possibilities of the RSE workers to transfer money to their islands.

I suggest that employers should only receive the Recognised Employer status if they demonstrate that they do not overcharge Pacific workers in comparison to other workers. The suitability of workers’ accommodation should be controlled as well as the differences between the accommodation fees for Pacific and non-Pacific workers.

The employers are responsible for the RSE workers’ induction to work, but not all employers are responsible for providing the information seminars as the workers are sometimes hired by private agents. My research suggests that attending the information seminars before departure is crucial for Pacific Islanders, even if some employers view such seminars as a waste of time. The authorities should make sure that these seminars are available for all applicants including those hired by private agents. The success of the information seminars could be improved by video clips.

I suggest that the employers should not rely on their workers coming prepared, but should explain the rules again during the post-arrival orientation. In case they hire a new group of workers whose community has not had any experience with the RSE scheme, the employers need to travel to the islands, hire the workers directly and make sure that they receive sufficient information about life and working conditions in New Zealand. The employees need to understand the system of deductions and taxes, so that they have realistic expectations and do not feel “ripped off.” The employers also called for more input from the Pacific states’ governments into the RSE.

It could be helpful if the information seminars also included the employers or supervisors. Most of the supervisors in my workplaces did not speak any foreign languages and some of them had only basic knowledge about the cultures which
the workers came from. The lack of cultural awareness among the employers was confirmed by the Vanuatu Department of Labour (Kalmet 2009). The strategies for improvement can be inspired by Maloney’s recommendation (2002, p. 76). Maloney, who studied the Hispanic farm workers in the USA, suggested that the managers should overcome the language barrier. This would include learning about the culture of the countries the workers come from and studying foreign languages. Learning about the cultures of the foreign workers would also help to overcome prejudice and stereotypes. Stereotypes about seasonal Pacific workers in New Zealand can also be reduced by the workers being more involved with the local communities.

Referring to the notion of planning good employer practices (Martin 1999), I would add the necessity of planning how to discourage bad practices. The RSE alone cannot solve all the problems connected with the misuse of foreign labour, but it can reduce them. It can work as a remedy against exploitation of undocumented workers by supplying employers with enough legal and controlled labour. This needs to be accompanied by examining labour shortages and by a timely introduction of all schemes so that employers do not have to rely on labour contractors providing them workers. When addressing the labour shortages, the opinions of the employers could be considered, such as the suggested increase of the working holiday visa caps in some countries or their longer extension.

I presented the RSE scheme as an initiative addressing economic underdevelopment and underemployment as two of the basic causes of all worker migration and of clandestine traffic in foreign labour (United Nations 1996). Yet, to be even more beneficial, the RSE scheme could use an improved system of transferring money from New Zealand to the Pacific, which would reduce the cases of the workers’ families lowering their consumption while waiting for the absent family member.

My recommendations can be summarised into this sentence: the improvement of problematic areas requires cooperation among all subjects who are involved and not just relying on government initiatives.
7.5 Afterword

As I have explained, to a large extent, my research reflected changing immigration policies. Later, the economic situation accentuated some issues which were not so pronounced before, such as the discussion on the (un)necessity to employ foreign workers during an economic recession. Despite the economic recession, Motukiwi still employed mostly foreign nationals.

An investigation of guest workers’ experience with working conditions in New Zealand is a varying task dependent on many factors and therefore this topic could be re-studied with different results. There are many areas for future research, especially concerning the RSE scheme. It is recommended that future researchers examine the impact of the RSE scheme on the workers’ households and whole communities. Although some studies are already available (for example Gibson 2008, Department of Labour and IMSED research 2009), these are predominantly economic. We require more anthropological and sociological research that focuses on the RSE programme’s influence on socio-economic conditions and cultural changes within the Pacific Islands.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: The interviewees

The names were changed and providing other information depended on the participants’ wish to share the personal details or not.

Foreign workers (except for ni-Vanuatu) formally interviewed:

**Achi**: Malaysian, male, thirty-one years old, technician. Work experience in New Zealand: orchard, vineyard (seven months).

**Anthony**: American, male, twenty-five years old, electrician. Work experience in New Zealand: orchards, packing sheds (five months).

**Aporo**: French, female, thirty-two years old, chemist. Work experience in New Zealand: orchards, vineyards, nursery (eight months).

**Ben**: African French, thirty-six years old, logistics manager. Work experience in New Zealand: orchard, cool store manager (ten months).

**Bernd**: German, male, nineteen years old, student. Work experience in New Zealand: manual labour, orchard (four months).

**Brigita**: Czech, female, twenty-six years old. Shop assistant and journalist. Work experience in New Zealand: orchard, packing shed, factory, sheep farm, cattle farm (second year).

**David**: Czech, male, thirty-five years old. Car mechanic. Work experience in New Zealand: orchards, vineyard, building construction (eight months).

**Dina**: German, female, twenty-eight years old. Assistant. Work experience in New Zealand: orchards, packing sheds, restaurants, supermarkets (four seasons of rural work).

**Eva**: Czech, female, twenty-six years old, receptionist. Work experience in New Zealand: orchards, packing shed (second year).

**Iveta**: Czech, female, twenty-seven years old, working in logistics. Work experience in New Zealand: orchards, vineyard, building construction (second year).

**Jean**: French, male, twenty-four years old, student. Work experience in New Zealand: orchard, packing shed (ten months).
Lee: Korean, male, twenty-seven years old, student. Work experience in New Zealand: vineyards, orchard (eight months).

Nico: French, male, twenty-five years old, psychologist. Work experience in New Zealand: orchard, vineyard (eight months).

Paolo: Chilean, male, twenty-six years old, working in media. Work experience in New Zealand: labour, restaurant, orchard, packing shed (nine months).

Phan: Korean, male, twenty-five years old. Economist. Work experience in New Zealand: vineyards, orchard (eight months).


Risa: Chinese, male, forty-two years old. Technician. Work experience in New Zealand: orchards, vineyards (second season).

Tomas: Czech, male, twenty-four years old. Builder. Work experience in New Zealand: orchards, packing shed (second year).

Ni-Vanuatu formally interviewed:

Adam, Albert, Bill, Lakale, Stuart, Tani – all ni-Vanuatu men in their thirties with no previous experience with paid employment. Self-sufficient farmers.

Others (formal interviews):

Greg – New Zealander, manager
Matthew – New Zealander, employer, orchard owner
Paul Heywood – New Zealander, local chairman of a growers’ association
Anne Riley – New Zealander, seasonal labour coordinator

Other names mentioned in the thesis (informal interviews):

Charles – Czech, male, in his second year of the rural work
Jane – New Zealander, student working in the orchard during her summer vacation
Margaret – Czech, female, in her second year of the rural work
Peter – New Zealander, supervisor
Sarah – New Zealander, student working in the orchard during her summer vacation
Sonja – Czech, female, in her second year of the rural work
Tim – New Zealander, supervisor
Appendix 2: The harvest trails in New Zealand. The original map of New Zealand is downloaded from: http://www.backpack-newzealand.com/mapofnewzealand.html

In the South Island, seasonal workers move between three main destinations: Nelson/Motueka (main picking season of apples is between February to April, kiwifruit in May), Alexandra/Cromwell (main picking season for cherries is December, other fruit till the end of April) and Blenheim (winter pruning of the vines). In the North Island, the foreign workers usually start the season around Hastings and Napier (February to end of April) and then either move to the north to Tauranga to pick and prune kiwifruit (May to August) or to pick and prune mandarins in Kerikeri area (during winter). Yet most of the seasonal workers move to Blenheim for winter to work in the vineyards because the demand for workers is high here.
Appendix 3: Countries having reciprocal Working Holiday Visa agreements with New Zealand

- Argentina
- Belgium
- Canada
- Chile
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Estonia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Hong Kong
- Ireland
- Italy
- Japan
- Korea
- Malaysia
- Malta
- Mexico
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Singapore
- Sweden
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- United Kingdom
- United States of America
- Uruguay
Appendix 4: Map of Vanuatu. Distribution of traditional power systems. (Bonnemaison 1996, p. 201)