no. 32 Making connections in Geelong: Migrants, social capital and growing regional cities

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SERIES EDITOR
Peter Kelly

ALFRED DEAKIN RESEARCH INSTITUTE
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AUSTRALIA

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Making connections in Geelong: Migrants, social capital and growing regional cities

ABSTRACT

Migration has been increasingly used to compensate for demographic trends and skill shortages in developed countries. This has resulted in policies to encourage migration to regional areas in order to relieve pressures on liveability and infrastructure in big cities. Like many other regional cities in Victoria, Geelong actively encourages migrants from overseas, from Melbourne and from other parts of rural and regional Australia, by promoting workforce participation, and enhancing lifestyles to attract and retain a growing population. A number of countries including Australia, Canada, Italy and Spain have policies to encourage immigration to locations other than large urban centres to stimulate regional economic development and to ensure immigrants fill skill shortages in regional areas. However, migrants do not always stay long in the regional locations where they initially settle, and new migrants are needed to replace their skills. Given the Australian and Victorian government policy imperatives of encouraging regional migration there is a need to understand how migrants and their families make the social connections that contribute to wellbeing and their retention in regional areas such as Geelong. This paper emerges from a research project on this challenge at Deakin University, in Geelong. It discusses some of the issues associated with regional migration and describes how a sound, theoretically informed understanding of social capital can assist employers, governments and community groups (formal and informal) to effectively assist migrants to make social connections and therefore remain in regional cities.

Ruth Jackson, Santosh Jatrana, Louise Johnson and Tanya King
Alfred Deakin Research Institute, Deakin University

Sue Kilpatrick
The University of Tasmania
Introduction

Migration has been increasingly used to compensate for demographic trends and skill shortages in developed countries. This has resulted in policies to encourage migration to regional areas in order to relieve pressures on liveability and infrastructure in big cities. Like many other regional cities in Victoria, Geelong actively encourages migrants from overseas, from Melbourne and from other parts of rural and regional Australia, by promoting workforce participation, and enhancing lifestyles to attract and retain a growing population. Research has indicated that migrants often remain and are happiest if they arrive with and grow their social capital in those places. This paper identifies and discusses some of the defining characteristics of social capital, and the ways in which workplaces and other ‘connection points’ can assist those who are migrating to make social connections and to enhance their social capital. The paper emerges from a research project running over 2011-2012 at the Alfred Deakin Research Institute (ADRI), Deakin University in Geelong. The project has grown out of a shared interest in migration issues by scholars from a range of disciplines – international development, migrant health, demography, human geography, sociology and anthropology – and combines these approaches to explore the ways in which migrants to Geelong forge social connections, with a particular focus on workplace initiatives that grow social capital.

Social inclusion of migrants is a key factor in the success of population policies that encourage migration to regional cities. Pre-existing studies show that while much energy and resources are put into encouraging migrants into regional areas, they often do not stay (e.g. Hegney et al. 2002; Han & Humphreys 2005, 2006). Often migrant groups are marginal to their new locales both geographically and socially (Fadel & Mestan 2008; Le & Kilpatrick 2008; Davidson & Carr 2010). How they make connections into their communities is vital to their health and wellbeing, to their willingness to stay and to the social cohesion of those communities. When moving for employment, it may seem that networks are readily accessible via the new workplace, but this is not always the case. Drawing upon a survey of regional migrants, Hugo (2008) suggests that while the availability of employment attracts migrants to regional areas, jobs alone will not keep them there. Hugo argues that while a great deal of effort has gone into attracting migrants to regional areas, retention is the key challenge. Attraction and retention depend to a large extent not only on the degree to which migrants are connected to their new community (Wulff & Dharmalingam 2008), but also whether they feel they have moved to ‘welcoming communities’ (Zhao et al. 2010).

Employers can play a significant role in assisting migrants to integrate into the community (Kilpatrick et al. 2002; MacPhee & Scott 2002; Han & Humphreys 2005; Wilks et al. 2008; Kilpatrick et al. 2011). Not only does social connection enhance worker satisfaction but in the process, it grows the social capital of the individuals concerned and their localities. Migrants motivated to relocate for employment reasons also emphasised the importance of lifestyle and family-related considerations in their new locale (Hegney et al. 2002; Lonne & Cheers 2004; Kilpatrick et al. 2011). Social integration enhances workforce stability and efficacy; growing social capital in individuals also grows the capacity of host communities.

The first section of the paper introduces the current research project, ‘Making Connections: Migrants social capital and growing regional cities’—which explores the experiences of migrants from overseas, Melbourne, as well as other parts of regional Australia. It responds to calls to further research those factors that lead to social connectedness. In order to build on policies that aim to attract populations and investment in regional areas, policies to retain migrants in regional Australia need to be developed (e.g. Department of Innovation Industry and Regional Development 2009-10; Regional Cities Victoria 2011; Regional Development Victoria 2011b). Improved understanding is needed of the patterns of relationships which develop between migrants and regional residents (Wulff & Dharmalingam 2008), and the structural variables (age, class, race, and gender) and networks that might modify relationship as well as the health linkages for people who are socially isolated (Umberson & Montez 2010).
Part Two introduces some background to international, national and regional migration flows and policies. Of note, are the patterns of migration into the regional city of Geelong, one hour from Victoria’s capital, Melbourne. The section then explores the geographies of Australian migration.

Part Three examines the notion of social capital in the literature, in particular the links between economic development and employment as well as social capital and leadership. It then discusses how social connections are made. At its core, however, understanding social capital requires a knowledge of the processes and places whereby migrants make social connections—friendships, acquaintances and contacts—within their host communities. A strong correlation exists between how migrants make social connections and their health and wellbeing (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000; Ziersch et al. 2005; Capercione et al. 2008; Stephens 2008; Berry & Shipley 2009; Umberson & Montez 2010; Zhao et al. 2010). This information is vital to those who wish to foster a stable regional workforce in places like Geelong.

The paper concludes with a discussion of the various challenges and opportunities for employers, local government and business, professional bodies and recruiting agencies interested in attracting and retaining workers in regional areas such as Geelong that have emerged from the early parts of this research and the literature on regional migration.

The ‘Making Connections’ project

Many new migrants, and particularly their families, lack social networks in their new location (McMichael & Manderson 2004; Le & Kilpatrick 2008; Zhao et al. 2010; Kilpatrick et al. 2011); those with stronger social connections are healthier and are more likely to remain in their new location. Formation of a primary social contract has been identified as the joint responsibility of communities and migrants (Kilpatrick et al. 2011), and understanding this process is key to understanding the nature and quality of social connection. Social and cultural capital underpins the process (Wulff & Dharmalingam 2008). The ‘Making Connections’ project investigates how the concept of social capital can be used to analyse the process whereby migrants to the regional city of Geelong make social connections. It will make recommendations to governments, employers and community groups (formal and informal) as to how to more effectively assist migrants to make social connections in regional cities.

We focus on migrants from three subgroups: international migrants; rural/regional migrants and migrants from Melbourne. Figure 1, adapted from ‘What is Social Capital? A Study of Interaction in a Rural Community’ (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000), describes the links among social processes and social, civic and economic features of the macro social order. We propose that micro interactive processes of migrants to Geelong ‘have the capacity to link with meso and macro social, civic and economic outcomes’ (105). Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) demonstrate that ‘local interactions can affect meso and macro social, civic and economic outcomes, by providing the learning that facilitates people’s later involvement in volunteer work, civic roles, small business, or their expansion of existing business’ (105). This project seeks to identify and analyse the micro interactions between the migrants which may or may not be embedded in the macro social order. For our purposes, a number of meso-level groups or organisations (“bridging” groups) have been identified as likely to provide a leadership role in Geelong. Meso-level groups such as Diversitat, G21, Committee for Geelong, Skilled Migration Taskforce, the Transport Accident Commission (TAC), and, the Geelong English Language Centre New Arrivals Program are expected to teach members and support their application of skills and knowledge in the community and in gaining employment.

What this qualitative research will explore is how outsiders are incorporated into the Geelong community and how policy makers, community groups and planners work to effect connections between bonding and bridging groups. A key research question is how policy/programs/organisations support and foster bridging group formation and bridging activities through policy and resources.
 Migration

International and intra-national

Strongly urbanised economies in most Organisation for Economic Development (OECD) countries have large urban centres that continue to attract populations, including international immigrants. Since the early 1990s, several OECD member countries have become concerned about their capacity to deal with migration, especially the negative economic effects ‘from an excessive concentration of immigrants’ (OECD 2003:91). Policies to reverse this trend in Australia and Canada try to channel more immigrants into regional areas by identifying strategic skill shortages and fulfilling ‘specific economic development goals through specially targeted regional migration programs’ (Withers & Powall 2003:36; see also Walton-Roberts 2004; King 2009). In this quest to decentralise migration Australia is not alone:

Figure 1: Migrant societal and community level social capital resources sustained by interpersonal interactions in Geelong (adapted from Falk and Kilpatrick (2000)).
Switzerland, is interested in cross-border migration in view of the implementation of the free-movement agreement signed with the European Union. Canada is trying to encourage new immigrants to settle out of the large urban centres to address depopulation in certain rural areas as well as to support and complement economic development in these regions. Australia seeks to improve the economic performance of its regions and to alleviate labour shortages by “selecting” new immigrants whose profile matches the needs of the local labour markets (OECD 2003:106-7).

Academic research on the geography of Australian migration is focused on international movements of people into and out of the country as either permanent or semi-permanent migrants (Collins 1988; Wooden 1994; Jupp 2001); patterns of settlement that result from international and intra-national migration, in particular concentrations of ethnic groups in specific localities and the resulting environmental impact (see Burnley 1975; Clarke et al. 1990; Fincher 1991; Hugo 1992; Crossman 1993; Mercer 1995; Burnley et al. 1997; Salt 2003). Geographers have also been concerned with the integration of people into place, the changing nature of those places which result and associated issues of identity (Anderson 1990, 1991; Dunn 1993; Thompson 1994; Burnley & Forrest 1995; Burnley et al. 1997; Dunn 2001; Randolph 2002; Thompson 2003). The latter component of the geographies of migration is most relevant to the “Making Connections” study and will be discussed below.

The numbers of international migrants from poorer countries are unlikely to slow due to: global population growth; environmental decline in already marginal areas; ongoing war and civil conflicts producing displacement and the prevention of irregular migration which involves ‘the promotion of economic development in origin countries and the strengthening of legal migration channels’ (OECD 2011:15). According to Greenwood (1997), most people move from one place to another to pursue ‘increased utility resulting from better employment opportunities, higher wages, a preferred bundle of amenities, and many other factors’ (1997:651): migration ‘serves an equilibrating function in the economy, expediting the balancing of demand and supply forces within and across regions, and thus facilitating the operation of market economies’ (1997:711). The World Bank argues that mobility, especially migration to cities, is vital for economic growth (World Bank 2009)—for example, international migration has been seen by many Asian and Pacific governments as an instrument of national economic development along with remittances, aid and government bureaucracy (De Haas 2010).

Research also shows that “[i]nternal migration is important almost everywhere and in some countries is far greater than international migration’ (International Organization for Migration (IOM) et al. 2005:10) especially in countries such as China, Vietnam, and India. The major driver and result of internal migration in many Asian countries has been urbanisation (IOM et al.2005:35). Likewise, Australians have a high propensity to migrate—double the number of moves made by internal migrants in Britain (Bell & Muhidin 2009). Regardless of who is going where or where they have come from, migration is an issue that all governments are compelled to address:

The link to public policy permeates the study of internal migration. Most obviously, migration is linked to the spatial shift in the location of job opportunities. Some economic development programs have made population relocation a central feature, and studies of migration can help evaluate the consequences of such interventions (White & Lindstrom 2005:315).

As the population ages in developed countries, OECD nations compete for highly skilled migrants. For example, analysis of within-UK migration in the year leading up to the 2001 Census found a somewhat favourable picture for urban Britain, but this was mainly due to London’s ability to attract the most skilled migrants. People move to the ‘economically stronger localities’(Champion et al. 2007:xii) such as London, as higher skill occupations are more responsive to labour market drivers, posing a ‘continuing threat to the sustainability of the recent positive shifts in migration balance towards many northern cities’ (2007:xii). Champion et al. (2007) argue that
migration is still acting as a mechanism for supplying labour where and when it is needed. This is particularly true of the longer-distance migration that is shifting people from cities with the weaker economies to those that are the strongest, thereby helping to alleviate the joblessness of the former and reduce the bottlenecks that cause inflationary tendencies in the latter … Given evidence on London’s role as the focus of inflows of recent graduates, the results of our migration analyses make rather depressing reading. Put starkly: the very success of London in attracting highly skilled people is, in the zero-sum numbers game of internal migration, a large part of the key problem of lost talent for other cities (2007:50).

Renewed interest in the regional aspects of international migration has emerged in several OECD countries (OECD 2003). Motivations for this interest include:

- The increased weight of regions in migration policies (for example, in Australia, Canada, Italy or Spain). Regions demand to play a larger role in the process of the selection of migrants, particularly of skilled workers.
- Some governments are seeking to set up policies to encourage new immigrants, especially highly skilled immigrants, to settle in regions other than large urban centres in order to stimulate local economic development.
- In some countries, the concentration of immigrants in large urban centres creates pressure on public infrastructures, which may result in negative externalities (OECD 2003:90).

A number of OECD countries have established ‘regional schemes in their systems of labour migration with the aim of ensuring that immigrants go to areas where they are most needed and obtaining a more even distribution of immigrants across their territory’ (OECD 2011:111). Both Australian and Victorian Government policies encourage settlement in regional areas for international migrants, refugees and internal migrants.

**Australia and Victoria**

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), during the three years to October 2008, around 2.7 million people in New South Wales and Victoria moved their usual residence. The most common reasons given by Victorians for moving were: being able to live near family and/or friends (23%); better access to or prospect of work (20%); and the desire for an attractive neighbourhood (19%) (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). The 2006 Census also shows that residential mobility in Melbourne is common, as almost 40 percent of residents moved house in the five years before the Census (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008).

The Department of Planning and Community Development (2008) states that the ‘largest migration flows in regional Victoria are within large regional centres’:

> The largest flow within regional Victoria between 2001 and 2006 was from Surf Coast to Greater Geelong, consisting of 1,740 persons. There was a corresponding large flow in the opposite direction (1,410), resulting in a net gain to Greater Geelong of 330 persons. Furthermore, movement out of Greater Geelong to the neighbouring municipality of Golden Plains was the second largest flow, comprising almost 1,700 persons. The size of these flows are not only indicative of Geelong’s importance as a regional centre, but also it [sic] links with its hinterland. These links are both historical and cultural, and exemplified by the growth of commuting towns, as well as increased mobility and accessibility (Department of Planning and Community Development 2008:48).

Regional Development Australia (RDA) is an Australian Government initiative that brings together all levels of government to enhance the development of Australia’s regions from 2012 (now under the Department of Regional Australia, Local Government, Arts and Sport). RDA is a partnership between the Australian, state, territory and local governments to develop and strengthen the regional communities of Australia. It has a national network
of committees made up of local leaders who work with all levels of government, business and community groups to support the development of their regions. A key focus of RDA is the economic, social and environmental issues affecting communities. RDA aims to be an important contributor to and driver of:

- regional business growth plans and strategies, which will help support economic development, the creation of new jobs, skills development and business investment,
- environmental solutions, which will support ongoing sustainability and the management of climate change (including the impact of drought, flood or bushfires), and
- social inclusion strategies, which will bring together and support all members of the community (Regional Development Victoria 2011a).

In 2003, Regional Development Victoria (RDV) was created as a statutory body to facilitate economic, infrastructure and community development to support prosperity and growth in regional Victoria. In 2005, the Moving Forward – Making Provincial Victoria the Best Place to Live, Work and Invest statement provided AUD$502 million for new infrastructure, services and support in regional areas. In the aftermath of announcements by some major employers of retrenchment, the Geelong Investment and Innovation Fund provided $15.2 million from the Federal Government, State Government and Ford Australia to ‘attract new investment and jobs to the Geelong region…This funding was committed to 18 companies and is expected to create 658 full time equivalent jobs and $82.5 million in investment’ (Regional Development Victoria 2009-10).

In 2010, the Ready for Tomorrow – A Blueprint for Regional and Rural Victoria statement was released. This builds on RDV’s Victoria’s ‘major investments and achievements, aiming to further strengthen the regional economy and continue to improve regional lifestyles, opportunities, services and amenities in the years ahead’ (Regional Development Victoria 2011b). In 2011, the Regional Growth Fund was legislated to enable regional Victorians ‘to enjoy new prosperity, more opportunities and better quality of life through better regional infrastructure, facilities and services’ (Regional Development Victoria 2011a). Funding also targets key local projects, and is divided into the Local Government Infrastructure Account and the Putting Locals First program, which will focus on locally-identified priority projects.

Australian and Victorian government policies for international migrants contain regional elements for migration beyond the major cities: for study/settlement/employment/sponsorship generally outside large metropolitan areas (OECD 2011:110). Changes to the General Skilled Migration stream in 2011 were designed to make selection of high-calibre applicants more effective and included extensions to age-eligibility and, greater recognition of overseas qualifications, Australian work experience and English proficiency (OECD 2011:108). The Regional Sponsored Migration Scheme (RSMS) allows employers in regional or low population growth areas of Australia who are unable to fill a skilled position from the local labour market, to sponsor employees who are foreign nationals for a permanent visa to work in Australia. In Victoria, the Skilled - Regional Sponsored (475 or 487) visa is a temporary two year visa to attract highly skilled and employable professionals and tradespeople to live and work in regional Victoria (this does not include Melbourne) to meet the criteria for the second stage permanent residency visa. Boese and Phillips (2011:2) argue that attracting skilled migrants to regional locations follows the general observation of a trend of declining populations in rural and regional areas usually in combination with emerging skills or labour shortages in the aftermath of economic restructuring…[and that this] shift from federal to state and local governments … and the increasingly important role of employers’ demands as key parameters are indeed significant features of current ‘migration management’ in regional locations (Boese & Phillips 2011:3).

In addition to regional migration for skilled migrants, the ‘regional dispersal of refugees has been experimented with over the last five to ten years by governments in Australia as well as in Canada, the UK and some European countries’ (Boese & Phillips 2011:3).
For example, Boese and Phillips note that the resettlement of Iraqi refugees in Shepparton, Victoria, Bosnian refugees in the UK and Kosovar refugees in British Columbia were based on schemes to circumvent the concentration of refugees in cities that would stretch the capacity of metropolitan settlement services (2011:3).

To encourage a more balanced national distribution of overseas immigrants and promote regional economic development in areas outside of the major cities where most immigrants settle, Regional Cities Victoria has also developed a regional settlement strategy to attract and retain a skilled workforce to ensure there is appropriate infrastructure to accommodate larger populations (Regional Cities Victoria 2009). The objectives of Regional Cities Victoria (2011), a consortium of the ten largest regional cities, include increasing workforce capacity and participation, and enhancing lifestyle amenities to attract and retain a growing population. This also means pressure on liveability and infrastructure in Melbourne is reduced as Victoria’s population continues to grow.

Geelong is one of a number of Victorian regional cities which has experienced recent population growth. The current population is estimated to be 220,068. Presently growing at an estimated 1.7%pa (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011), between 2001 to 2006 the City of Greater Geelong welcomed:

- 17,570 people from other parts of Victoria;
- 4,676 people from other parts of Australia;
- and, 3,988 overseas migrants from another country (City of Greater Geelong 2006).

Table 1 shows the percentages of migrants to Australia, Victoria, Melbourne and the City of Greater Geelong in 2006. Although the percentage of people born overseas in the City of Greater Geelong is lower than that of Melbourne, Victoria or Australia, more broadly, internal migration from other places in Australia to Geelong is higher than the State average. The majority of new settlers to the Barwon South West region (which includes Geelong) were from Southeast Asia and Southern Asia (Department of Immigration & Citizenship (DIAC) 2010/11).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total born overseas</th>
<th>Australia (%)</th>
<th>Victoria (%)</th>
<th>Melbourne (%)</th>
<th>Greater Geelong City (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>25.4</td>
<td>31.0</td>
<td>17.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks a language other than English at home</td>
<td>16.8</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>10.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internal migration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who lived at different address 1 year ago</td>
<td>15.5</td>
<td>13.4</td>
<td>13.0</td>
<td>14.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persons who lived at different address 5 years ago</td>
<td>40.3</td>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>35.1</td>
<td>38.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


1 The number of residents who moved within the City of Greater Geelong between 2001 and 2006 was 42,875. By comparison, 53 percent of residents (105,610) did NOT move between 2001 and 2006.
Geographies of Australian migration

Geographical studies on migration concentrate on the location of overseas migrants, the resulting pressures on infrastructure and the debate around ghetto formation. In general the conclusions are that in Australian metropolitan centres – where most international migrants congregate, especially in Sydney and Melbourne – there are nowhere near the concentrations that are witnessed in, for example London or Los Angeles, and the resulting issues associated with segregation and hostility based on race, profound inequality, and social isolation do not arise. This is not to ignore that some areas and social groups experience real problems associated with unemployment, poverty and the stigma associated with public housing (Burnley et al. 1997), nor the existence of negative actions and attitudes based on anxieties over race or religion (see Dunn 1993, 2001). Dunn’s work on the Vietnamese in Cabramatta and the building of mosques in Western Sydney have uncovered the extent and depth of racism that exists in some parts of Australia as well as the resilience of old and new migrant communities.

Geographical studies have also focused on just how migrant identities and their locales are actively and discursively constructed. So, for example, Anderson has examined the construction of Chinatown’s in Sydney, Melbourne and Vancouver concluding that it is necessary to examine the detailed history of these places and also the ways in which those with the power to name and regulate space as well as to construct identities have to be the focus of analysis (Anderson 1990, 1991). Such dynamics are particularly evident when a migrant group wants to express its difference within a city, through for example, the erection of a place of worship.

Both Thompson and Pulvirenti have examined the more subtle ways and spaces in which ethnic identities are expressed and maintained – such as through rituals associated with home making (Thompson 1994; Pulvirenti 1997). It is this particular site of integration or connection as well as places of workshop examined by Dunn that offer the strongest parallels and useful insights for the ‘Making Connections’ study. But while geographers have focused primarily on the home as a key site of integration, there may well be other key sites of connection—such as shops, schools, workplaces and streets—which can usefully be examined and integrated into the literature on the Geography of Migration. So too the gendering of those experiences and sites will prove an important addition to that literature. For while homes have long been associated with women, places of worship, the street and shops are also gendered, along with sporting venues and workplaces (see Johnson 2000). The ‘Making Connections’ study can therefore enrich the geographies of Australian migration by adding consideration of the gendered spaces of integration. In this exercise of integration, the existence and growing of social capital is crucial.

Social capital

‘Social capital’ describes good quality social relations. These are viewed as essential for sustainable communities as good social relations facilitate regional growth and enable community renewal. Berry and Shipley (2009) point out that although there is ongoing debate about the nature of social capital, extensive research indicates that ‘communities rich in social capital enjoy both day-to-day and long-term health and social benefits’ (2009:6). Le and Kilpatrick (2008) argue that individual or group relations which provide social support take place at family, community and institutional levels. Networks of social relations are characterised by ‘norms of trust and reciprocity which lead to outcomes of mutual benefit’ (Stone & Hughes 2001). Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) put forward a definition of social capital that encompasses both positive and negative consequences (discussed below) while acknowledging that social capital is produced and used in ‘everyday interactions’ that make sense in ‘the framework of a set of purposeful community activities’:

Social capital is the product of social interactions with the potential to contribute to the social, civic or economic well-being of a community of common purpose. The interactions draw on knowledge and identity resources and simultaneously use and build stores of social capital. The nature of the social capital depends on various qualitative
dimensions of the interactions in which it is produced, such as the quality of the internal-external interactions, the historicity, futurity, reciprocity, trust and the shared values and norms (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000:103-4).

Falk and Kilpatrick (2000) propose a theoretical framework that classifies social capital into two broad and interdependent groups: knowledge resources and identity resources. They argue that the quality of these resources and the extent to which individuals are prepared to use them for the collective good will determine the quality of the social capital produced. Knowledge resources are considered as knowledge of:

- who, when and where to go for advice or resources (e.g. networks, skills and knowledge available) and knowledge of how to get things done (e.g. precedents, procedures, rules, communication sites). Identity resources refer to the ability and willingness of individuals to act for the benefit of the community and its members, and include self confidence, values and attitudes, trust, vision, and commitment to the community (Kilpatrick et al. 2009:3).

Social capital is not a ‘thing’ but both ‘process and outcome’ (Kilpatrick et al. 2009:3). It has been described as both the ‘glue’ which forms the structure of networks and the ‘lubricant’ that facilitates the operation of networks—or the process of creating a condition for the effective exchange of information and resources between people (Anderson & Jack 2002:207). Social capital can generate both positive and negative outcomes (Woolcock & Narayan 2000a). For example, the positive aspects of social capital have been recognised as essential for small town renewal in Australia because it ‘strengthens social well being and the sense of community, enhancing the benefits of investments in physical and human capital’ (Kenyon & Black 2001:16). However, the downside of social capital has been recognised by researchers such as Portes (1998) and Woolcock and Narayan (2000b). An example by Silvey and Elmirst (2003) examines the gender-specific limitations of social capital as a resource for development, and identified some of the ways in which the costs and benefits of social capital are organized by gender. Relations of solidarity and trust may bring unwelcome obligations and claims, restrictions on economic mobility and processes of solidarity formation which can lead to disadvantages for those outside particular networks. ‘Social capital that exists within a broader context of gender inequality can exacerbate women’s disadvantages, as women remain excluded from the more powerful networks of trust and reciprocity that exist among men’ (2003:867). This is illustrated by Macinko and Starfield’s (2001) diagram adapted from Portes (1998) (Figure 1). The figure shows how positive uses leads to improved levels of trust and reciprocity, family support and network-mediated benefits. Potential negative uses of social capital can restrict access to opportunities, restrict individual freedoms and make excessive claims on group members (Macinko & Starfield 2001).
Stone and Hughes (2001) argue that while there are high levels of bonding social capital (within groups) in regional Australia, there are insufficient stocks of cross cutting ties (bridging connections to people who are different as well as to institutions of power). Bonding social capital involves truth and reciprocity in closed networks (in which members of networks know other members) and bridging social capital involves overlapping networks (in which a member of one group can gain access to the resources of another group because of overlapping membership). Linking social capital involves social relations with those in authority, which might be used to garner resources or power. Sudanese refugees in Queensland, for example, described bonding capital (within the Sudanese community) as important for providing emotional support and encouragement as people established a new life in Australia. Bridging capital (between Sudanese and other Australians) was also important as it helped people to gain skills and jobs in their new environment. Both were positive influences on resettlement and feelings of social connectivity, wellbeing and status within the community (Murray 2010). However, social capital is ‘neither necessarily portable nor easily established’ (McMichael & Manderson 2004:96) as a study of Somali immigrant women’s sense of social capital in Melbourne was compared to interpersonal relationships in their homeland. The results show that social capital does not always live up to the reality of community life in Melbourne as women recalled community life in Somalia that featured ‘solidarity, sharing, reciprocity and trust’ and were disappointed that these norms had disappeared. In their new homes they did not receive the support they wanted: ‘Expressions of lost social ideals and relations were frequently the framework within which women placed their experiences of loneliness, sadness, and depression’ (2004:91). However, women also found new ways of maintaining social structures through informal visiting and telephone calls, and social and ceremonial activities including ‘a constant stream of marriages, engagement parties, women’s gatherings, and religious events’ (2004:96).

Bridging and linking social capital are associated with rural community development and renewal as they provide access to extensive information, resources and support (Kalantaridis & Bika 2006). Linking with both government and the corporate sector provides access to resources necessary for community capacity building, especially for agriculture-dependent communities facing economic and social decline (McKenzie 2003:44). The Victorian Government’s Department of Planning and Community Development report *Indicators of community strength in Victoria: framework and evidence* (Pope 2011) underpins the department’s community development work. The framework is based on bonding,
bridging and governance network building activities that can significantly impact on social and economic outcomes for individuals and communities. The indicators measure ‘aspects of Victorian’s ability to get help when needed, community participation, satisfaction with amenity in their local areas and select community attitudes’ (2011:4). The Department’s activities focus on building and supporting ‘community participation that promotes networks and connectedness in communities’ and ‘collaborative governance that ensures robust community planning matched to different communities’ demography, economy, interests and needs’ (2011:4). According to Pope (2011), inclusive governance builds collective efficacy (a community’s desire to and belief that they can deal with problems collectively); better ‘community planning that matches solutions to the demography, economy, assets, interests and needs of the community’; and the mechanism to get things done (2011:12).

Participation in education, employment, and public life gives people skills for complex civic problem solving providing a basis for strong governance and communities.

Social capital: employment and economic development

Sustainable small town and rural communities are likely to share a number of features: positive energy and optimism for the future; open-minded leadership that values its people and place; smart use of resources and new community networks that ‘actively support new ideas [and] new thinking and new ways of working together’ (Kenyon & Black 2001:26; see also Plowman et al. 2003a). Sustainable regional cities are likely to share many of the same features. The Victorian state government gives examples of positive changes enhancing social cohesion, including culture and leisure activities that have enabled regional communities to participate in local events; access and use community infrastructure; build leadership capabilities and participate in community events (Department of Innovation Industry and Regional Development 2009-10). Examining these factors and examples provides ‘a lens to examine and explain social action (or lack of action), and to better understand the factors that influence capacity building’ (Kilpatrick et al. 2009:2). Social capital has proven vital to community revitalisation, especially in marginalised communities where there may be limited opportunities for business and householders to gain economic viability (McKenzie 2003).

Kilpatrick et al. (2011) describe factors that influence satisfaction, integration and retention of mobile skilled workers in rural communities; including individual characteristics and attributes, working conditions and workplace practices, formal and informal community structures, infrastructure, community culture and leadership. Many mobile skilled workers researched rural communities before relocating to them and actively sought out community activities and groups after moving. Important attributes of mobile skilled workers included ‘a rural affinity, commitment to the community, adaptability, persistence and willingness to risk take’ (2011:187). The researchers also found that communities needed to play a key role in shaping these integration processes by having a strong culture that welcomes and values newcomers, and providing a range of social and leisure activities through social support groups for workers and their families.

One of the clearest links between social capital and economic benefit has emerged in studies of paths to employment (Matthews et al. 2009). Since Granovetter’s classic studies (1973, 1974), it has been established that ‘approximately half of all jobs are filled through social connections’ (Matthews et al. 2009:307). McDonald (2011) argues that while work experience itself is an indicator of human capital, it may also reflect accumulation of social capital. Fernandez et al. (2000) shows how employers who use workers’ social connections as resources when hiring new staff are typically “social capitalists” as they invest in their staff to gain economic resources in the form of better hiring outcomes. However, social capital can have a positive or negative effect for people trying to find work or change jobs (cf. Beggs & Hurlbert 1997; Brook 2005).

While it appears that the network mechanisms for the general population, ‘influence where one finds work, housing and leisure’ (Eve 2010:1236), the ‘migration process’ systematically shapes social ties and ‘can be seen as a special case of the development of social
networks’ (2010:1236). Effective integration of people relies on their ability to tap into existing community networks and on the ability and willingness of communities to assist them (Honczarov et al. 2003; Hall et al. 2007; HallAitken 2007; Kilpatrick et al. 2011). For this reason, Ryan (2011), argues ‘that more attention is needed to the ways in which migrants access, maintain and construct different types of networks, in varied social locations, with diverse people’ (707).

Comparing paths to employment in urban and rural regions in Canada, Matthews et al. (2009) conclude that people from outside rural regions appear to have better access to formally-filled positions, especially professional positions. Newcomers and their spouses (of either gender) who arrive without jobs, find it much harder to find employment than people who have lived locally long-term who have established themselves and have access to local information and referral networks. These networks are described as strong and weak ties. Strong ties with family and longstanding friendships (bonding social capital) are considered less useful in finding employment because strong tie networks are more likely to be smaller and more homogenous. Weak ties are typically infrequent connections people make through work, neighbourhoods, voluntary organisations and friend-of-friends. These connections are more likely to broaden access to information about job opportunities. Thus, newcomers in rural areas tend to take longer to build strong and weak tie networks than in cities (Leonard & Onyx 2003).

Research by Woodhouse (2006) illustrates how social capital positively impacts on economic development as:

> higher levels of social capital within a small regional community will have a positive impact on the level of economic development and, importantly, provides empirical evidence within an Australian context to support the networks view of economic development that suggests it is the synergistic effect of both bonding and bridging social capital that is crucial in fostering positive economic outcomes for such communities (2006:92-3).

As small and regional communities have a tendency to develop bonding rather than bridging social capital, policy efforts focusing on building local capabilities may be contrary to what is required. Two towns in the Darling Downs in the southern part of Queensland were selected by Woodhouse based on the 2006 Australian census for all urban areas in Australia with a population of 4,000 or more. Both towns were typical of small service towns in rural and regional Australia but one demonstrated a relatively strong economic profile and the other displayed the opposite. By measuring the social capital (including formal association, informal association, generalised reciprocity, community cohesiveness, thick and thin trust and civic-ness and levels of crime in each town) “Greenside” (a pseudonym) recorded higher levels of both economic development and social capital than “Shefton”. Although this does not prove that social capital positively influences economic development, high levels are associated with each other. In short, Woodhouse proposes that policy interventions, whether they are bottom-up or top-down, should target ‘whatever social capital is lacking’ in rural and regional communities. This is more likely to require bridging rather than bonding social capital “to ensure rural and regional communities are engaged in broader policy debates and partnerships that recognise the value of cooperation and collaboration across traditional divides’ (2006:93).

Extending the aforementioned discussion to regional renewal is important for regions to sustain themselves over time. Arbuthnott et al. (2011a) illustrate how established dominant and traditional industries can view ‘new local industry initiatives (and actors) as threats rather than opportunities’ (2011a:624) especially when there is a shortage of resources, infrastructure and public support. Directing antagonism and negative emotional responses towards new local industry actors strengthens the isolation of the established actors and hinders renewal. For this reason, authorities and support organisations should play dual and important roles in supporting regional opportunities by paying attention to both new and established industry actors. Furthermore, there is ‘a potentially positive and strengthening effect arising from the competition and resources in that the new industry is forced to improve their concepts to manage given the competition’ (2011a:625). The implications are
that a lack of social capital could signify weak organisational links between industry actors and that it ‘would be useful to promote the building of social capital among regional industry actors’ (2011b:627). As reported by Arbuthnott et al., although the municipality aimed for 2,000 new jobs and support for regional economic and social development, further studies should examine how competition between established and emerging industries for the same workers affected those workers long-term when the new industry initiatives were met by rigid threat responses (2011b:628). The existence of social capital therefore affects the development in a regional innovation system both positively and negatively.

Kilpatrick et al. (2011) found rural communities varied in their ability to assist workers make social connections. The success of the integration of those mobile skilled workers studied depended on individual and community attributes. Individual characteristics included age, gender, education, motivation for relocation, expectations, commitment to the new community, and personality traits such as flexibility and locus of control. Community and employer actions, structures, attitudes and beliefs, and infrastructure for social and leisure activities influenced the integration of workers and their families. Kilpatrick et al. (2009) concluded that mobile skilled workers are ‘well placed to build external linkages (bridging and linking social capital), because of their existing networks and willingness to use these networks for the benefit of the community’ (2009:62).

As several researchers argue for further research to understand what factors lead to social connectedness in order to develop policies to retain migrants in regional Australia, improved understanding is needed of the patterns of relationships between migrants and regional residents (Wulff & Dharmalingam 2008) and the structural variables (age, class, race, and gender) that might modify linkages for people who are socially isolated (Umberson & Montez 2010). Umberson and Montez (2010) argue for research that examines linkages from the perspective of several network members. The current project, ‘Making Connections’ explores the migrant and employer experience in Geelong. The study also links social capital to individual and regional well-being as well as development.

How then can communities grow social capital? One way is for communities to mobilise around a shared ideal or set of practices to bring about change by developing ‘leadership’. The concept of community leadership is discussed below. Like ‘social interaction’ it is more complex than it may at first appear but it is crucial when examining how social capital actually works and grows in place.

**Social capital and leadership**

According to Falk and Mulford (2001), Purdue (2001) and others, the links between social capital and leadership are crucial as community leaders are key ‘points of contact between government regeneration initiatives and local residents in neighbourhoods’ (Purdue 2001:2221). This means that community leaders require two types of social capital: internal communal and external collaborative social capital. Both require mutual trust or goodwill with community groups and networks, and regeneration partners from the private and public sectors (2001:2221). This model of community leadership has been called ‘enabling leadership’ (Falk & Mulford 2001). Other studies such as Plowman et al. (2003b) emphasise that innovative rural communities are characterised by distributive leadership rather than a direct focus on individuals as leaders.

Purdue (2001) argues that community leaders are unlikely to have enough resources to engage with a wide range of local community networks where it can be difficult to accumulate communal social capital. And attempts to collaborate with statutory partners means that the leaders are often expected to ‘trust their powerful partners without reciprocation’ (2001:2222). This means they can be expected to be engaged without tangible gain—resulting in more difficult communication with local residents ‘depleting potential stocks of communal social capital, especially when connected to leadership succession conflicts’ (2001:2222).
On the other hand, people who act as boundary crossers by moving between internal and external domains may not be formal leaders but trusted professionals or semi-professionals such as pastors, teachers, doctors or group convenors who are respected because of their position and role providing bridging links to the wider world (Onyx & Leonard 2002). Boundary crossers play an important role in encouraging community interaction (Kilpatrick et al. 2011:283). The study on ‘Mobile skilled workers’

indicates a leadership role for specific groups and organisations, such as local government, the business community, schools and employers, by helping to create opportunities for interaction. This includes developing networks, organising events and meetings, and providing venues for interaction. Employers can and, in some examples, do play an important role in encouraging community involvement by their staff, but this role is not widely recognised and there is little research on this area (Kilpatrick et al. 2011:188).

Further research on rural and regional areas therefore, has confirmed the importance of social capital in their regeneration but also of leadership in that process. Leaders in particular help to drive the development of bridging forms of social capital and also connect the area with the organisations and opportunities that exist beyond the region. They are also crucial to the development of internal networks of social capital.

Making social connections—friendships

While such connections between individuals – some of which we might call them friendships – may seem self-evident, the study of mutually beneficial social inter-relationships is a ‘slippery subject’ (Rubin 1981:106), as anthropologists have observed. ‘While a friendship may be publicly recognized, its content is often shielded from the public within a structure of privacy’ (Uhl 1991:90). Articulating the details of the bond, and the benefits – material and otherwise – may seem to undermine its’ authenticity. Such relationships rely heavily on the perpetual exchange of ‘gifts’, whether they be objects, sentiments or information (King 2011), and on the agreement among all parties that each presentation be offered with an air of graciousness, if not selflessness. Certain kinds of friendships operate in different contexts, in different spheres of life, and involve a different bundle of rights and obligations (Herzfeld 1985); one might describe ‘work friends’ as distinct from ‘school friends’, or ‘church friends’, and associate different relationships with each. In contrast to the description of friendship as being a voluntary social contract between consenting people, our ‘friends’ are sometimes those we neither like nor wish to spend time with, but may be those with whom we are compelled to engage due to various social, political and economic imperatives. Despite the myriad ways in which people who are not related make connections with each other, a common theme involves exchange. Sahlins (1972:186-7) captures the economic and dynamic flavour of such social interactions when he says:

If friends make gifts, gifts make friends... Peacemaking is not a sporadic intersocietal event, it is a continuous process going on within society itself. Groups must ‘come to terms’ – the phrase notably connotes a material exchange satisfactory on both sides.

To talk about social interactions as processes of exchanging capital and resources, whether material or otherwise, is in keeping with what we know about social relationships worldwide. We do not suggest that friendships forged in workplaces, schools or churches are characterised by self-interest, or that exchanges of information about employment opportunities, homework or prayers, are devoid of genuine sentiments. However, as Sahlins’ words suggest, the result of such transactions are peace, social solidarity and productivity. Building social capital through friendships therefore has a range of benefits. The promotion of strong and positive social relationships between migrants and host communities will result in capital benefits, because this is the nature of social interaction.
Social capital and migrant health

Many studies from North America, Europe and Australia and Asia have shown that immigrants, often despite lower socioeconomic status (SES), have comparable or better health status compared to native-born residents of the host nation on a variety of health outcomes (Williams et al. 1997; Strong et al. 1998; Taylor et al. 1999; Hyman 2001; Kouris-Blazos 2002; Morales et al. 2002; Anson 2004; Jatrana & Kumar 2004; Deboosere & Gadeyne 2005; Jatrana et al. 2005; Markides & Eschbach 2005; Jatrana et al. 2005b; Gushulak 2007). Over time, however, the benefits of this positive self-selection disappear, resulting in the migrant and future generations approaching a health status of their host nation (Hyman 2001; Morales et al. 2004; Gushulak 2007; Hajat et al. 2010). A migrant health advantage does not hold for all populations and health outcomes, however. Some studies have shown that immigrants come to their host countries with a health disadvantage compared to the majority population in the host country, implying a higher risk of disease in their country of origin and the absence of any healthy migrant effect (Jamrozik et al. 2001; Gadd et al. 2003; Albin et al. 2005; Harding et al. 2008). One of the explanations for the ostensibly better health of immigrants is strong social networks and ample social capital among the newly arrived which positively impacts on health (Abraido-Lanza et al. 1999; Franzini et al. 2001).

Although there is growing recognition of the links between social isolation and poor health outcomes (including health behaviours, mental health, physical health and mortality risk) (Ziersch et al. 2005; Umberson & Montez 2010), there is little research about how social capital affects the health outcomes of migrant worker populations (Zhao et al. 2010). Social support may serve as a buffer or moderator that may alleviate stressful life events (for example, the effect of unemployment) and its consequences (Cohen & Wills 1985). There tends to be a reciprocal relationship between employment and social support, i.e., employment is often connected with social contacts, whereas unemployment may lead to being socially unattractive. In the case of migrants, they need to strive for both resources in their new environment. A new job is not provided automatically, and for most new migrants there are no immediately existing social networks (except for those on family reunion basis). For these reasons, looking for an appropriate job, as well as trying to establish contact with other people and making friends, become essential adaptation problems to be addressed.

There is an increasing body of literature supporting overseas visible migrant and refugee disadvantage in the form of social exclusion (Leong 2008; Saunders 2008; Davidson & Carr 2010; Murray 2010). Murray stresses that social connectivity is a predictor of perceived wellbeing and status within the community, while Leong examines how volunteering can help build self-confidence as well as personal, family and community capacity and employment opportunities. However, there is very little research on how within-country migrants forge social connections and its relationship to personal and community well-being.

Social Capital: Challenges and Opportunities

Given the policy imperatives of regional migration there is a need to understand how migrants and their families make the social connections that contribute to health and wellbeing. Migrants to regional areas are diverse in terms of area/country of origin, skills and occupation, family status and other demographic characteristics. The regional cities to which they migrate are also diverse in terms of community resources, and social and cultural capital. This calls for a sound, theoretically informed understanding of how employers and community groups (formal and informal) can effectively assist migrants to make social connections in regional cities, and practical strategies for responding to findings. The well-established social determinants of health tell us that more socially included, connected and stable workforce and their families will enjoy better physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Policies and programs intended to assist with settlement tend to be short term and project based. Good practice in assisting migrants make social connections must be embedded into the community. Workplaces and community groups that are already established, and
groups that migrants or others tend to form naturally are prime sites to embed and extend best practice. Workplaces, local government, institutions such as schools, community sector and other organisations can assist formal and informal community groups, once a sound evidence base is established.

The aims of the project are to:

1. investigate policies and practices that assist migrant workers and their families make social connections in their new location
2. identify other ‘connection points’ and ‘connecting’ groups that assist migrants make social connections
3. identify the features of strategies and practices used by migrants, connection points and connecting groups that are effective in assisting migrants to make social connections, and lead to positive health and wellbeing, employment, or other outcomes for migrants and their families
4. determine the intersection of the practices and strategies used by migrants to make successful connections in their new city and those of the groups with which they connect, or the process of formation of the primary social contract.

We anticipate that the outcomes of the project will not only increase opportunities for social inclusion, but it will identify and embed into regional cities such as Geelong, a range of opportunities that fit with the diversity of migrant preferences for social connection such as volunteering (Onyx & Leonard 2007; Leong 2008; Volunteering Australia 2009), social and leisure activities (HallAitken 2007), and local support groups (Honczarov et al. 2003). By isolating and detailing models of good practice and making them available to employers, recruitment organisations, government and to community development workers, it will disseminate guidelines for boosting social connection in Geelong.

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