



Rural dreams and constrained cosmopolitanism: Taiwanese working holiday makers in rural and regional Australia

Ju-Han Zoe Wang & John Connell

To cite this article: Ju-Han Zoe Wang & John Connell (2026) Rural dreams and constrained cosmopolitanism: Taiwanese working holiday makers in rural and regional Australia, Australian Geographer, 57:2, 251-268, DOI: [10.1080/00049182.2026.2693329](https://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2026.2693329)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2026.2693329>



© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group



Published online: 02 Jul 2026.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 154



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Rural dreams and constrained cosmopolitanism: Taiwanese working holiday makers in rural and regional Australia

Ju-Han Zoe Wang ^a and John Connell^b

^aCollege of Arts, Society and Education, James Cook University, Cairns, Australia; ^bSchool of Geosciences, University of Sydney, Sydney, Australia

ABSTRACT

Taiwanese Working Holiday Makers (WHMs) are one of the largest WHM cohorts in Australia. While mainstream media and public discourse often portray them as exploited labourers in precarious rural employment, this paper challenges such portrayals by highlighting the agency and diverse experiences of Taiwanese WHMs. Driven by their perceptions of a ‘rural idyll,’ many Taiwanese youth actively choose to work and live in rural and regional areas beyond merely fulfilling visa requirements. Taiwanese WHMs also seek to embrace a version of rural cosmopolitanism and cultural diversity. Despite structural constraints imposed by precarious employment and tied accommodation, and a labour regime that discourages social interaction, WHMs actively shape their transnational experiences rather than being solely passive workers. This paper thus contributes to a nuanced understanding of how rural spaces are imagined and experienced by temporary migrants in a globalised labour regime.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 25 March 2026

Accepted 18 June 2026

KEYWORDS

Backpackers; working holiday; rurality; rural cosmopolitanism; Taiwan

Introduction

Australia’s Working Holiday Maker (WHM) program provides temporary visas for young people from eligible countries to work and holiday in Australia. While initially launched in 1975 as a ‘cultural exchange’ visa, Working Holiday Makers (WHMs) have become a valuable source of temporary workers, especially in rural and regional Australia (Barry, Iaquinto, and Azeredo 2024; Reilly 2015). Originally dominated by participants from the UK, Canada, and Ireland, the scheme gradually expanded to involve Asian countries, including Taiwan, which joined the scheme in 2004. This evolution reflects the rise of ‘liquid mobility’ – a variant of the new mobilities paradigm, where mobility occurs across multiple scales, and involves diverse experiences and outcomes and the lack of fixed categories (Connell 2019). Here we attempt to illustrate this diversity through the experiences of Taiwanese WHMs who seek a period of rural residence. The terms ‘backpacker’ and ‘WHM’ are often conflated in public and policy discourse and are used interchangeably here. Significant scholarship now highlights how these individuals

CONTACT Ju-Han Zoe Wang  zoe.wang@jcu.edu.au

This article has been corrected with minor changes. These changes do not impact the academic content of the article.

© 2026 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited, and is not altered, transformed, or built upon in any way. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

navigate a multifaceted presence – moving fluidly between the roles of ‘leisure tourist’ and ‘essential worker’ (Barry, Iaquinto, and Azeredo 2024). While this conflation is fraught with complications – as the transition from ‘tourist’ to ‘worker’ often manifests as systemic vulnerability (Iaquinto 2025), it is nonetheless useful here.

A longstanding primary focus on employment issues has indicated that precarity and exploitation of WHMs in Australia have been widespread and in varied contexts (Barry 2021; Berg and Farbenblum 2025; James 2024; Mares 2026; Underhill and Rimmer 2016). A similar precarity has likewise been documented among temporary migrant workers in the Global North, as in Canada (Vosko 2023) while, Pacific seasonal workers in Australia also encounter multiple and intersecting forms of precarity (Petrou and Connell 2018; Stead 2023). Because the WHM program in Australia has been repurposed as a strategy to meet unmet demand for agricultural workers, WHMs are more vulnerable to potential exploitation when compared with the conventional ‘backpacking’ tourists (Barry 2021). For example, the NSW Anti-Slavery Commissioner (2024) has documented how WHMs in rural and regional Australia face modern slavery risks, social marginalisation, gendered violence and restricted healthcare access.

Despite the critical nature of this exploitation, the lived experience of WHMs beyond these labour constraints has received relatively little scholarly attention. While precarity and exploitation, especially in employment and accommodation, are critical issues, other aspects of the lived experience of WHMs have received relatively little attention, despite WHMs being an important component of the rural and regional Australian workforce. Moreover within the growing body of research on Asian backpackers, existing studies primarily focus on urban settings or individual transformations, fulfilment and aspirations (Alexander, Rivera, and Wickes 2025; Chiu 2020; Kawashima 2010; Li 2020; Robertson 2016; Wattanacharoensil and Talawanich 2018).

More specifically, some research examines issues of exploitation and precarity, particularity among Taiwanese WHMs, highlighting practical circumstances that are consistent with media reports (Li 2017; Li and Whitworth 2016; Oishi 2022). These studies, however, primarily focus on urban settings, despite most Taiwanese WHMs having also worked in rural or regional Australia. Previous work has pointed to the overwhelmingly negative accounts of Taiwanese WHM experience in both Australian and Taiwanese media, depicting the group as ‘exploited labourers’ due to employment exploitation, under-payment, sexual harassment and discrimination, but also how Taiwanese WHMs utilise technology as a tool for everyday resistance against exploitation (Li 2024; Wang and Connell 2021). Otherwise, no research concerns the broader lived experience of Asian backpackers in rural and regional Australia.

This research seeks to bridge this considerable gap by examining the transnational experiences of Taiwanese participants in rural and regional Australia. We investigate the rationale for choosing rural life and the subsequent lived experience of doing so, moving beyond pre-departure economic factors (Chang 2014; Ho, Lin, and Huang 2014). By exploring whether variants of a ‘rural idyll’ or ‘rural cosmopolitanism’ can be identified, this article reflects on the search for meaning amid precarity. While the experience of Taiwanese WHMs cannot be generalised to represent the whole WHM community, or even an Asian segment, an in-depth understanding of their experience can provide insight into the overall temporary labour mobility that underpins Australia’s rural and regional development.

WHMs in Australia

Passport holders from more than 40 countries are currently eligible to apply for Australia's WHM visa program. Eligible applicants must be between 18 and 30 years of age, although applicants from a few countries can apply until they are 35 years old (DHA 2024a). Currently, passport holders from over 40 countries are eligible to apply for a WHM visa in two subclasses, the Working Holiday (subclass 417) visa and the Work and Holiday (subclass 462) visa (Department of Home Affairs [DHA] 2024a). The subclass 417, which had a longer history, is less strict: annual caps are not set for the country and no language and education requirements are specified for applicants. Subclass 462 has more requirements compared to visa 417: it has annual caps, and applicants are required to meet language and tertiary education standards and provide a letter of support from the home government. Taiwanese youth fall under Subclass 417 without an annual cap. The discussion in this article is therefore based on the circumstances relevant to Subclass 417.

Other than the COVID pandemic period when numbers dropped significantly, annually more than 120,000 WHM visa holders stay in Australia. In November 2024, this number reached its historically highest level of almost 200,000 (DHA 2024b). The majority of WHMs in Australia are from Europe, notably from the United Kingdom. In the present decade, numbers and proportions of Asian WHM have grown. Youth from Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and recently Indonesia are the major non-western WHM groups in Australia. In June 2024, Taiwanese (7.4%) constituted the fifth largest WHM visa holder group in Australia, with UK (17%), Ireland (11%), France (11%) and Japan (8%) being the top four countries (DHA 2024c). For Taiwanese youth, Australia has been a popular destination; more than 200,000 Taiwanese youth have taken up working holiday in Australia since 2004 (Ministry of Foreign Affairs [Taiwan] 2025). Taiwan remains a popular working holiday destination because Australia is one of the few places that does not set a cap for Taiwanese working holiday visa holders, unlike other western host countries including New Zealand (600 places) and UK (1000 places) (British office Taipei. 2026; New Zealand Immigration 2026)

While the initial Working Holiday visa permits a twelve-month stay, holders can secure a second-year extension by completing 88 days (approximately three months) of 'specified work' in designated regional industries. Since 2019, the program has also offered a third-year extension, which requires participants to undertake an additional six months of specified work within regional or rural Australia during their second year.

For the Subclass 417 cohort – including Taiwanese youth – eligible sectors were strictly limited to primary industries such as agriculture, mining, and construction prior to 2020. It was not until the COVID-19 pandemic that the hospitality and tourism sectors in designated remote and very remote zones of northern Australia were included as eligible sectors (Hordacre et al. 2021). Despite this policy expansion, the agricultural sector remains the primary vehicle for visa extensions; the vast majority of second- and third-year WHM holders continue to secure their stays through agricultural labour (Vosko 2023). Intriguingly, among third-year visa holders, Taiwanese youth constitute the largest single nationality, significantly outnumbering cohorts from Western nations like the United Kingdom (DHA 2024c). This demographic dominance also highlights a concentration of Taiwanese labour within Australia's rural and regional primary economies.

Situating Taiwanese WHMs in Australia: rural idyll and rural cosmopolitanism

Since this article focuses on the lived experiences of Taiwanese WHMs in rural and regional Australia, a critical discussion of Australian rurality is essential. For a long time, public discourse surrounding rurality in Australia has framed 'rural and regional Australia' as a fixed entity, defined largely by what it is not – metropolitan Australia (McManus and Pritchard 2000). This 'othering' process is accompanied by a powerful national identity constructed through specific rural imagery and stories, fostering a rural idyll characterised by quintessentially local landscapes of rolling fields, sleepy regional towns, and family-owned farms (Cloke 2006a, 2006b). This rural idyll denotes an idealised and romanticised perception of rural spaces characterised by peace, simplicity, and harmony with nature as opposed to urban degradation (Rogers, Castree, and Kitchin 2013). The historical depth of these idylls is often rooted in colonialist narratives of 'productivist heartlands' (Argent and Tonts 2015). The notion of rural idyll has hitherto been associated with rural tourism, lifestyle migration (Connell 2014; O'Reilly and Benson 2016) and international migration (Krivokapic-Skoko and Collins 2016). Any discussion of rural idyll has rarely been associated with WHMs partly on the assumption that employment and visa credits are the key factors in movement to rural areas.

Nevertheless, the reality of Australia's rurality is often more complex. Today, the imagery of a rural idyll frequently masks a globally networked environment where rural spaces are shaped through several multi-scalar, mutually constitutive processes, including (but not limited to) transnational finance, intellectual property, environmental governance and international labour migration (Neilson et al. 2025). Consequently, when Taiwanese WHMs arrive in rural and regional Australia, their desire for a pastoral idyll immediately collides with the structurally complex and highly globalised realities of the local workplace. It is within this collision that rural cosmopolitanism emerges. Traditionally, the concept of cosmopolitanism has been synonymous with the urban elite, framed as 'an attribute of elite, transnationally mobile, relatively privileged social actors, whose life-spaces are anchored in global cities' (Woods 2018, 165). Yet, the application of cosmopolitanism has extended well beyond the metropolitan elite, to include 'vernacular cosmopolitan', or 'everyday cosmopolitan' (Datta 2009; Werbner 2006), and even 'precarious cosmopolitan' brought by Woods (2018) which emphasises vulnerability to economic instability, restrictive visa conditions, and shifting socio-political attitudes. In the context of Australia, Krivokapic-Skoko, Reid, and Collins (2018) argue that 'contemporary regional and rural Australia has developed a cosmopolitan character as a result of the Indigenous and immigrant history' (153; see also Woods 2017; Klocker et al. 2021). This ongoing transformation is driven by dynamic social interactions in areas that have become critical sites of agricultural labour and settlement for a broad spectrum of arrivals, including refugees, permanent residents, and temporary migrants (Hugo 2014; Schech 2014).

The agricultural sector, in particular, has functioned as both an economic driver and a vehicle of cultural diversification. It has long been entwined with international migration and, in doing so, has facilitated the remaking of rural localities into spaces of multicultural encounter and negotiation. Woolgoolga, New South Wales, exemplifies this

transformation; once shaped by twentieth-century Punjabi Sikh banana farmers, its vibrant modern community demonstrates that rural identities are dynamic rather than fixed or monocultural (Milner and Hughes 2012). Such cultural diversification has been enhanced by short-term labour migration in this century, redolent of nineteenth century sugar plantation labour migration (Neilson et al. 2025; Petrou and Connell 2019). The contemporary Pacific Australia Labour Mobility (PALM) scheme, which includes workers from ten Pacific Island countries and Timor-Leste, added a medium-term component to transnational labour flows. This multicultural dynamic was further enhanced by the expansion of the WHM to include nearly 50 participating nationalities, resulting in intriguing rural transformations. In places such as Far North Queensland, Ni-Vanuatu workers have become the predominant workforce in the banana industry (Azeredo and Wang 2024), forming lasting relationships with local communities and reshaping the social dynamics of these regions. Ultimately, the lived experience of Taiwanese WHMs is shaped by tension between the romanticised rural idyll they seek and the often-precarious cosmopolitan reality they must navigate.

Research methods

Data for this article were collected as part of a research project conducted during 2019--2022. In the first stage quantitative data were collected, followed by in-depth interviews producing qualitative data from 21 interviews.

In the first stage, an online survey was deployed via SurveyMonkey between May and July 2020. Recruitment relied on voluntary sampling across active Facebook groups and online forums dedicated to Taiwanese backpackers in Australia. The survey captured 104 valid responses and generated a basic yet sufficient understanding of some factors influencing the working holiday experience, notably their motivations, as well as their working, mobility and accommodation experience, which. generated a more nuanced understanding of the profile of the Taiwanese WHMs, in order to narrow down the research scope.

In the second stage, interviewees were selected based on the following criteria: Taiwanese nationality having worked in rural and regional Australia for at least three months since 2019, as Working Holiday Visa holders (irrespective of their visa/resident status at the time of interviews, as some had changed their visa status or returned to Taiwan). Interviewee recruitment was through two methods: snowballing from first stage survey respondents and direct online recruiting. For direct online recruitment, we used two social media platforms popular among Taiwanese WHMs: Facebook and Line Groups of Taiwanese Working Holiday. All interviews were conducted in Mandarin by the first author and a research assistant, either via phone calls, or face-to-face. Although earlier studies (Chang 2014; Lu 2011; Wang and Connell 2021) indicate that the majority of Taiwanese WHMs in Australia are female backpackers, our research provided a more balanced gender division of the interviewees, with nine male, eleven female and one transgender WHM.

The semi-structured interviews typically lasted between 60 and 90 min. In addition to general demographic and personal background, interviewees were asked about their motivation and pre-departure perceptions of participating in Working Holidays in Australia; their work/life experience prior to being in Australia; and their overall WH

trajectory and experience. The focus of the interviews was on lived experiences, including job-seeking processes, work environment and workplace relationships. The interviews also addressed social experiences including accommodation, transportation, recreation activities, food, personal relationships, and interactions with local communities and other WHMs. Additionally, participants were asked about their perceptions of rural society, rural environments and livelihoods. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and coded using NVivo software (Version 12). To ensure participant anonymity and confidentiality, all identifying information was removed during transcription. Each interviewee was assigned a unique alphanumeric code based on the order of the interview and self-identified gender (e.g. 1F, 2M), and no personally identifiable details were reported in the analysis.

As the study concerned the concept and perception of rurality, interviewees were asked to identify if a place (both in Taiwan and in Australia) was rural or not. This categorisation did not therefore necessarily follow Australian government categorisation for visa and migration purposes, which itself is regularly revised and varies between different visa types. The definition of rural and regional by the Department of Home Affairs for visa regulation is somewhat arbitrary. According to the Australian Department of Home Affairs, all of Australia outside the Australian Capital Territory, Sydney, Newcastle, the Central Coast, Wollongong, Brisbane, the Gold Coast, Melbourne, and Perth is considered 'rural and regional Australia' (DHA 2024d). For Working Holiday visa purposes, a complete list of postcodes declared by the Department of Home Affairs is the ultimate guide (DHA 2024d). We specifically asked the interviewees to identify rural places because there are different understandings of 'rural and regional' by WHMs. For example, Adelaide, a city of more than one million population, is classified as 'rural or regional' by DHA, but many backpackers could consider it a city. By contrast, while DHA defined Perth as a city, throughout the research we encountered many interviewees who identified Perth as 'countryside/rural', a contextual outcome of Taiwan being a highly urbanised, densely populated country. Many Taiwanese youth are used to a metropolitan lifestyle with easy access to public transportation, high-rise buildings, a bustling night life and extended hours of commercial activities, but not all Australian 'cities' in Australia provide similar experiences. In order to discuss 'rurality', we use the self-defined 'rural' and 'urban' here. Because rurality is largely an imagined and socially constructed concept rather than a fixed reality, it is not surprising that Taiwanese WHMs have a slightly different conceptualisation of what is rural or regional compared to Australian official categories.

Some general findings are mostly consistent with earlier studies on Taiwanese WHMs in Australia, (e.g. Ho, Lin, and Huang 2014; Lu 2011). The vast majority (86%) of the Taiwanese interviewees had a university degree. However, there was minimal relationship between the degree/program they studied and their jobs in Australia. Except for one WHM who worked in the hospitality sector, none of the other interviewees' jobs in Australia had any relevance to their degree. While WHMs are allowed to work in several 'specified' industries (agriculture, mining, construction, hospitality) for the consideration of the second and third visas, farm work is the most common job, a context consistent across the wider WHM community (e.g. Vosko 2023). The second commonest job was abattoir employment. Somewhat surprisingly there were no gender differences in

those industries; both male and female WHMs from Taiwan had high participation in both agricultural and abattoir jobs.

Almost all the WHMs interviewed had encountered various forms of precarity and exploitation. A common problem was over-crowded shared accommodation, reported by eight interviewees (38%). One WHM lived with another 14 tenants in a small farmhouse with rooms partitioned by wooden boards and supplied with bunk beds. Others reported problems including occupational injuries, racial discrimination, and workplace complaints. Most cases of exploitation related to wage theft and low pay. Five WHMs (24%) reported that their pay was unreasonably low for their work during certain periods of their working holiday experience, noting instances where their estimated hourly earnings fell below the national standard. That was particularly true of early years (before 2022) when payment was on a 'piece rate' (based on the amount picked, packed, or pruned) but not calculated according to the 'Minimum Wage Guarantee'. With no guaranteed minimum wage, workers were more likely to be paid unfairly. Despite many Taiwanese backpackers encountering difficulties and experiencing exploitation, they demonstrated a high level of agency and also diversity in terms of their motivation for staying and working in rural and regional areas, as well as in their cosmopolitan experience. We discuss this agency and the lived experience of rurality below.

Imagined and experienced rural Australia

Most narratives, from academia, government and industry, suggest that the reason for WHMs staying and working in rural and regional Australia is the requirement to accumulate enough days to extend their visas (e.g. AITHER 2024; Anderson 2018). Li (2020) stated that Taiwanese WHMs' primary intention to stay in rural areas for at least three months was to gain a longer stay in Australia (where metropolitan Australia is usually the preferred location). Australian government policy has contributed to creating this narrative by simply offering visa incentives to attract WHMs to rural and regional Australia to meet rural workforce needs. This simplistic narrative is perhaps most pronounced within the agricultural industry itself. In responding to the federal government's Review of Regional Migration Settings, the President of the National Farmers' Federation (NFF), David Jochinke, commented 'The 88-day incentive means these visitors, mostly backpackers, leave the fast-paced city streets and immerse themselves into a true-blue Aussie experience in the regions, importantly filling vital workforce shortages (National Farmers' Federation 2024). Senior federal government ministers have made similar euphoric statements (Petrout and Connell 2023, 196). Nonetheless, mainstream narratives assume that WHMs go to rural and regional areas simply because of the visa requirement and that otherwise they would not choose to stay in these areas for such an extended period.

However, this analysis indicates that, beyond their visa requirements, a version of the rural idyll has motivated Taiwan backpackers to work and live in rural and regional Australia. While rural idyll is deeply rooted in European history and culture, that depicts the countryside as a pastoral paradise (Short 2006), this concept has gained influence beyond Western society, thus including Taiwan (Chueh and Lu 2018).

Taiwanese WHMs sought to experience Australian rurality for various reasons and many of them genuinely sought or preferred, a rural lifestyle. Taiwanese WHMs may go to rural areas at any stage of their working holiday and there was no definite pattern

where it only followed urban experiences. Some WHMs went to rural areas as their first stop, others went first to urban centres. Due to the abundance of the information available from online resources such as dedicated websites (The Taiwanese Backpacker Forum) and social media (Facebook groups, LINE group chat), some Taiwanese backpackers had identified areas where potential jobs were available, or even secured jobs, prior to their arrival in Australia. Several of the interviewees had secured jobs through either online recruiting agents or their personal networks in areas including Coffs Harbour (a major blueberry production area) and Caboolture (a major strawberry producing area), where workforce demand is high (Ernst & Young 2020; Neilson et al. 2025).

However, not all WHM decisions were based on potential job availability. ‘Rurality’, a significant but quite vague factor, attracted many Taiwanese youth to rural and regional Australia. More specifically, many backpackers selected their first destinations based on how they associated the locality with their perceptions of rurality. One WHM, who had decided on Perth as his first location, said:

‘In the beginning, I chose to go to Perth. My intuitive thought at that time was that I wanted to go to a place with fewer people and have a rural feel. It would be like taking a vacation, and then I thought it would be easier to save money’.

When asked if Perth matched his image of rurality, he replied,

‘Oh. I quite like it, there are not many people, and it has a very natural atmosphere ... when I was in Perth, I would sit outdoors for a long time and just look at the scenery’.

Another backpacker who had chosen Darwin commented,

‘If you are not a hard-working person, you would never go to the Northern Territory, and you intent to commit bad behaviour, you don’t want to go to the Northern Territory. (People in Northern Territory) are usually kinder, more hard-working people ... many Taiwanese people are unfriendly and even do something illegal, but there are very few people like that in the Northern Territory. Everyone is happy and there is no problem’.

Another WHM who also picked Darwin as his first stop associated rurality with ‘fewer Chinese’, explaining that he chose to come to Darwin first because *‘Darwin seemed pretty good [to start with] because there were not many Chinese people ... [so I would be] forced to learn some English’*.

Some backpackers opted to start their working holiday in rural areas, not because of eligibility to extend the visa but because of the perceived attractiveness of the rurality of the place they had chosen. More elected for rurality in a later stage of their working holiday journey. One backpacker, whose decision was based on both job availability and the desire to live in a rural area commented,

‘We didn’t really want to find a job in the city at that time [the Covid period], because the wages in the city were very low. So we thought it would be good to just go [to rural area] and have fun. If we really want to live in a city, Taiwan is very urban. There would be no need to go abroad, and it would be a bit difficult to live in a city’.

Many who had already accumulated enough days to extend their visa still opted to continue to stay in rural and regional area, or to return from cities if they had moved back to urban areas. A few backpackers had clear, focused reasons to do so. For example, one WHM stated that moving to Cairns from Melbourne was due to her hobby of diving.

Sentiments contrasting the metropolitan lifestyle in Taiwan with rural and regional Australia were shared by others. Two women who had been in Australia for more than three years expressed their preference for rural areas due to less traffic, less air pollution and the rural lifestyle being more relaxed, in comparison with Taiwan. One said, *'I think what attracts me the most is the environment, because I prefer the countryside [to Brisbane]. I think the environment in the countryside is better. I am from Kaohsiung (the 2nd biggest city of Taiwan), and the air pollution in Kaohsiung is very serious. There are a lot of cars (in the cities), which is very annoying'*. Another had similar comments, *'I prefer rural areas ... because there are less traffic jams ... it just feels more chilled, right? ... In the cities there are a lot of traffic lights and traffic jams, and it may take a long time to drive to anywhere ... there are more people wherever you go [in the city], like Taipei ... feels very crowded'*. The role of population size was evident.

Another female backpacker, after spending several months in Brisbane, decided to return to rural Australia (Mareeba) and stayed there for more than two years. She commented, *'although there were many places to go in the city, I felt I had nowhere to go ... I wanted to go to the beach, the forest ... when I was in Brisbane, I had to drive for one to two hours to go camping ... the pace in the city was fast and people were indifferent'*. This WHM had also arranged for her family to visit her in Australia, and noted that her mother did not enjoy Brisbane through feeling 'still being in Taiwan'. Instead, her mother had a *'profound sense of being in Australia'* after arriving in Cairns. Her mother also commented that she could understand why her daughter enjoyed her life in Australia, because *'the environment in Taiwan could not offer this lifestyle'*. In all these examples the notion of 'rural idyll' was created almost entirely in opposition to the disadvantages of urban life, even by those who had not hitherto been in Australia, from previous experiences in urban Taiwan. Taiwanese WHMs in New Zealand likewise regarded Taiwan as being crowded, busy polluted and urban, and sought to experience its antithesis in New Zealand and thus experience a different culture and way of life (Tsai and Collins 2017)

For many Taiwanese WHMs, rural and regional Australia offers far more than a transactional space to satisfy visa requirements. A rural idyll can be seen as a real and anticipated emotional bond people may have with the countryside, characterised by feelings such as peace, belonging, and nostalgia, and reflected the cultural values that prioritise simplicity and natural beauty, often in contrast to busy urban life. This understanding advances the concept of rural idyll in three key ways. First, it extends the notion of the rural idyll being sought after by Western lifestyle migrants and tourists, to include temporary, non-western youth migrants. Second, it highlights the rural idyll as a relational construct; the appeal of rural Australia is magnified by its direct contrast to the hyper-urbanised environments of prior lived experience. Finally, it fundamentally challenges mainstream policy narratives by reframing WHMs as active agents deliberately seeking the intrinsic well-being benefits of rural life, rather than merely reluctant labourers driven by visa incentives.

The rural idyll disrupted and rural cosmopolitanism

This notion of rural idyll created from its converse in Taiwan and without direct experience of rural and regional Australia is disconnected from both advantages and disadvantages of rural living, the latter including economic struggles, social inequalities, weak

infrastructure and geographic isolation (Krivokapic-Skoko and Collins 2016; Woods 2011). Moreover, no welcome or introduction to the new locality occurs and many WHMs are distant from even small towns. WHMs who opted to work in rural Australia encountered substantial challenges, particularly within the agricultural sector where physically demanding labour is common and often undertaken under harsh environmental conditions. These conditions frequently result in occupational injuries. One female WHM, for example, recounted her experience working on a greenhouse tomato farm where she was required to lift heavy potted plants while simultaneously wiring support strings. She described the repetitive strain of lifting approximately five kilograms per plant, and handling almost 500 plants an hour:

'In a day, I might lift thousands of plants ... my sister and I would wake up in pain in the middle of the night ... That was a real occupational injury. Because your hands would end up with inflammation ... swelling and pain, which was really uncomfortable.'

Similarly, another female WHM employed in a plant nursery required long-term medical attention after the repetitive lifting of potted plants resulted in a bladder injury, even though occupational safety training had been provided. Such accounts underscore the embodied toll of rural labour.

Beyond physical hardship, WHMs also experienced downward social mobility. Many Taiwanese WHMs were previously employed in white-collar professions but found themselves in blue-collar roles in rural Australia, mirroring the experiences of Japanese and Hong Kong backpackers (Ho 2019; Oishi 2022). A male WHM who had worked as an occupational safety and health specialist in Taiwan worked as a taxi driver, cleaner, and delivery truck driver in Darwin. Similarly, a female WHM who had worked in Taiwan's online education sector worked as a strawberry picker and egg collector in Western Australia.

Such narratives complicated the idealised image of the rural as a harmonious space of escape and simplicity, rather than revealing how the transnational trajectories of Taiwanese WHMs are shaped by dynamic tension between aspiration and precarity. Crucially, this tension between aspiration and precarity extends beyond physical and economic hardship; it fundamentally disrupts the social aspirations of these migrants, particularly their desire to engage in rural cosmopolitanism. Taiwanese WHMs sought to experience rural cosmopolitanism, where they would be involved in relationships with individuals and communities with different cultural, economic or social flows (Krivokapic-Skoko, Reid, and Collins 2018; Woods 2017).

Taiwanese WHMs in Australia often exhibit dispositions consistent with vernacular cosmopolitanism, seeking to actively engage in and contribute to rural cosmopolitanism, through an openness to cultural diversity and a willingness to participate. As one WHM stated,

'I am actually very interested in [Pacific] Islanders. I want to understand their culture and I also want to get to know them ... when we worked on a farm, [the Islander] belonged to different agencies, so they always worked separately [from us]. When we passed by, they were always singing and dancing even when picking fruits. Their laughter was so hearty which made me also want to laugh along ... I also really want to get to know the Australian Aboriginal People, but there was almost no chance ... I only met one Aboriginal who spoke to me ... we chatted for a long time. This was the only time'.

As the Taiwanese WHMs navigated their work environments, they frequently formed friendships with workers from diverse cultural backgrounds, fostering cross-cultural exchanges in their daily lives. This everyday engagement with cultural diversity reflects the dynamic and relational nature of rural cosmopolitanism, where global mobility and localised experiences intersected to shape new forms of social connectivity and conviviality. As one interviewee stated,

‘(My colleagues) were good ... they were of other ethnicities, Malays or Tongans ... Malays are Muslim and don’t eat pork ... they sometimes have parties. We have been to their parties, which were pretty good, and we also went to their weddings afterwards’.

WHMs generally held positive views of these cosmopolitan experiences, and would have liked more. One commented,

‘The cultural atmosphere here (in Australia) is really different from where I worked in Taiwan ... maybe because many of those I met here have experienced cultural exchanges with many other countries ... , when I first started working, our colleagues included Singaporeans, Australians, Indonesians, Malaysians, and many other countries. [I would] keep talking and interacting with them. Relatively speaking, the colleagues here are more inclusive than Taiwanese’.

Despite WHM interest and enthusiasm for cross-cultural relations were not easy to develop or sustain.

Constrained rural cosmopolitanism

Despite Taiwanese interest in cosmopolitanism, the nature of labour intensive, short-term employment and other structural factors meant that interactions between Taiwanese backpackers and other cultural groups were predominantly constrained within the institutional settings of rural labour, including workplace environments and/or in accommodation linked with employment. Language proficiency further reduced opportunities as it did for Taiwanese backpackers in urban areas (Fan and Hebbani 2014). As these constraints do not necessarily result from or constitute precarity, we refer to this as ‘constrained rural cosmopolitan’, highlighting the tension between migrants’ aspirations for intercultural engagement and the structural conditions that delimit these interactions.

One WHM talked about her experience socialising with co-workers from a strawberry farm, *‘people around me were Taiwanese, Korean, Japanese, German, or from other countries ... the place was very remote ... some people didn’t have cars, so any (social) activity would be held in the dormitory ... having potlucks, chat, and listening to music ... on the no-working day, we would just sit outside [of the dormitory], smoke and chat’*. The geographic isolation of the work locations, compounded by a lack of personal transportation, significantly restricted social interaction.

Such workforce diversity could be further limited. In many workplaces, multicultural interaction was reduced by managerial decisions to assign workers of similar ethnic backgrounds to the same shifts or teams. As one participant recounted: *‘My colleagues were from all over the world ... Taiwan, UK, Germany, Japan etc ... I didn’t chat with them [the non-Taiwanese] because they were all in fixed work groups, ... so in fact, you may only know the people on your team’*. Much depended therefore on the particular nature of the employment in terms of possibilities for interaction.

Another woman shared her experience socialising with housemates: *'I ended up living with workers from the [same] garlic factory ... there were ten people in the room, all Japanese, except one Korean, plus me, a Taiwanese, ... [I] felt very connected to Japanese people ... because my English is not very good, but the people I interacted with were quite patient'*.

It is important to note that those interactions beyond work were mainly with other temporary residents. Only a few Taiwanese WHMs stated that they had regular social interactions with the local community, a phenomenon typical of other WHM groups who also had limited social interaction with long-term residents, with most exchanges being transactional, such as for shopping, employment, or accommodation (Anderson 2018). Such possibilities were further reduced when accommodation was on farms isolated from urban centres. Exceptions tended to be intermediated through employment relationships. For example,

'When I worked at the abattoir, I always hang out with my colleagues; sometimes if my colleagues invited everyone to dine together, we would have the opportunity to get to know other local [Australian] friends'.

Outside work, Taiwanese backpackers primarily socialised within culturally proximate circles, largely consisting of fellow Taiwanese or Mandarin-speaking migrants from China, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore. While this clustering restricted the breadth of their intercultural engagement, the phenomenon was not merely a result of language barriers or a reluctance to integrate; it was driven by the 'bundled' arrangements through which rural employment is facilitated. Foremost among these constraints was the power of labour hire agents and intermediaries (often referred to as 'foremen'), who commonly package employment, accommodation, and transportation together. Because it is challenging for transient WHMs to secure independent accommodation and transportation in rural areas, this 'bundle' arrangement was prevalent. Intermediaries predominantly advertise and recruit for the bundled arrangements through Chinese-language social media networks, notably Facebook groups and LINE chats (Wang and Connell 2021). People recruited by the same (Mandarin-speaking) agents were thus placed together both during and outside work for management convenience. In many contexts it was a standard practice to rigidly allocate WHMs to residences and rooms with fellow nationals (Barry 2021). Consequently, Taiwanese WHMs had limited opportunity to socialise and associate with people from different cultures beyond their workplace. Beyond even the institutional arrangements seen in international education, where dedicated services, residences, and clubs for international students could unintentionally encapsulate them within their own cultural networks (Amit 2014), constraints were even more pronounced due to their labour conditions. That even rebounded on workers from Asian countries, notably Taiwan and South Korea, who were likely to be seen as introspective, focused on saving money and only there to work (Barry, Iaquinto, and Azeredo 2024).

This structural isolation is further compounded by the physical toll of the labour itself. Physically demanding and time-intensive work – particularly in agriculture or meat processing industries – further inhibited social interaction outside immediate work groups. Long hours and exhaustion often precluded after-hours engagement. On top of hard work, including six-day weeks, other aspects of daily life, including commuting for work and even organising day-to-day life in a shared house, also restricted opportunities

for socialising. As one WHM said: *‘After a hard working day, your soul is gone How can you have time to socialise? Well, ten people live in one house, just one kitchen, how do you organise cooking and eating? You have to queue up (for everything).’*

Ultimately, while many WHMs sought to engage with and learn about different cultures, whether Australian or other, opportunities to do so were constrained by a segregated labour regime that largely dictated where they lived, how they commuted, and who they shared their scarce free time with.

Conclusion

While many Taiwanese backpackers were motivated by a desire to experience rural Australia, influenced by idealised perceptions of rurality, the sense of a rural idyll was relational to their urban experiences in Taiwan, and was less about iconic Australian landscapes and animals, such as deserts or kangaroos (mentioned just once). WHMs exhibited strong aspirations for cultural exchange, forming friendships with diverse colleagues and participating in and learning about multicultural social activities, their cosmopolitan experiences were largely confined to the workplace and employer-arranged accommodations, bounded by the very conditions that enabled their mobility. Taiwanese WHMs inhabited a culturally diverse space but could not easily engage in cosmopolitan practice.

The experiences of Taiwanese WHMs in Australia illustrate the complexities and constraints of rural cosmopolitanism, which is shaped, and often curtailed, by the structural conditions of temporary labour migration. This analysis advances debates on cosmopolitanism by introducing the concept of constrained rural cosmopolitanism, which explains how temporary migrants’ aspirations for intercultural engagement are shaped and limited by the spatial, temporal, and labour conditions of rural employment. In doing so, the study extends existing scholarship on everyday and precarious cosmopolitanism by demonstrating how cosmopolitan disposition and practices are reconfigured within the institutional and geographic constraints of rural labour regimes. While possibilities exist for cosmopolitan dynamics in regional and rural areas (Krivokapic-Skoko, Reid, and Collins 2018; Woods 2018), for temporary workers structural factors in workplaces and residences (often distant from small towns), duration of stay and linguistic constraints combine and mediate to reduce the extent and quality of their intercultural engagement, underpinned by a basic unfamiliarity with rural places and employment. The circumstances of work that discourage and prevent cosmopolitan experience demonstrate how the cosmopolitan dispositions and practices of individuals and communities are contingent on particular social, economic, and political circumstances. Informal practices and formal employment merge to complicate social experience.

The case of Taiwanese WHMs in Australia highlights how the spatial characteristics of rurality can structurally condition and shape labour experiences. While the appeal of the rural idyll effectively draws flexible, transnational youth to regional agricultural and other sectors, the inherent isolation of the rural environment limits opportunities for wider social integration. Perceptions of friendliness do not translate into meaningful friendships and lasting social connections (Alexander, Rivera, and Wickes 2025) and more difficult when WHMs live beyond even small towns. Constrained rural cosmopolitanism is consequently a structural outcome of how temporary migration programs operate within remote spaces to the extent that more educated rural migrants are the more

likely to move away from rural areas (Argent et al. 2025). This case serves as a paradigmatic lens for understanding a broader, global structural tension. Globally, from the seasonal fruit-picking tracks of New Zealand to the agrarian guestworker programs of Europe, the 'global countryside' (Woods 2007) has become thoroughly dependent on highly mobile, temporary youth labour. Young Taiwanese WHMs, especially those from urban areas, embrace idealised narratives of the countryside – as a space of purity and simplicity, and use mobility schemes to pursue these desires. However, when these young migrants enter rural spaces, romanticised cultural expectations immediately collide with the raw, productivist realities of modern rurality. Thus the migration of WHMs parallels wider international labour migration in contributing to an effectively segregated countryside, where aspirations to involvement beyond the workplace are constantly frustrated by structural constraints, resulting in a superficial cosmopolitanism and a disappointing rural idyll.

Beyond the considerable structural constraints, Taiwanese youth working and travelling in rural Australia demonstrated a high level of agency and diversity, and often a strong desire to live and work in rural areas, where that was not contingent on employment, in contrast to narratives that portray WHMs as mere visa pursuers. However limited options for independence and conviviality resulted in a 'constrained rural cosmopolitan', shared by other temporary migrant workers. The notional rural idyll of peaceful places with close community bonds could not overcome geographical separation and a social exclusion, that is more generally true (Alexander, Rivera, and Wickes 2025; Forbes-Mewett, Hegarty, and Wickes 2022), WHMs' attraction to rural Australia was not merely instrumental but reflected deeper cultural and personal aspirations, related to the allure of a rural idyll and transnational adventure, but their actual experiences were frustrated and shaped by a complex set of socio-economic, spatial, and institutional factors that mediated and minimised their aspirations.

The limitations on the aspirations of Taiwanese WHMs highlight the uneven nature of rural cosmopolitanism, shaped by labour structures, migration intermediaries, accommodation providers (and the practices of each of these) and the spatial organisation of rural workforces. Geography, transport infrastructure, work and limited time are ubiquitous constraints on cosmopolitanism. Rather than dismissing rural Australia as inherently parochial or valorising it as newly cosmopolitan, this study highlights how rural cosmopolitanism is always uneven and contingent, in whatever form it takes, and thus indicates the need to reconsider simplistic assumptions over how temporary migrant workers engage with rural Australia. While structural factors such as labour demand and visa regulations undoubtedly shape their choices, individual agency, cultural imaginaries, and emotional connections to rural life play significant roles.

As Australia's rural economies continue to be shaped by the presence of temporary migrants, it is vital to recognise and better understand the complexities of their lived experiences – not merely as labour inputs, but as individuals navigating transnational aspirations, cultural encounters and barriers, and everyday life in rural settings. Further studies with larger samples elsewhere in Australia, would extend the scope of this study, and offer a more comprehensive and comparative approach. Such an understanding can foster more inclusive rural communities and contribute to a more nuanced and human-centred experience of migration, rural change and the multicultural countryside.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank two anonymous reviewers for their constructive feedback. Special thanks also go to Dr. Sophia Huei-Ling Chen for her valuable assistance in conducting the interviews for this research.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Funding

This work was supported by the Chiang Ching-kuo Foundation for International Scholarly Exchange (CCKF) under Research Grant RG017-P-18

ORCID

Ju-Han Zoe Wang  <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-3303-7013>

References

- AITHER. 2024. Regional Impacts of Working Holiday Makers: A Final Report prepared for National Farmers' Federation, Australian Tourism Export Council and Backpacker & Youth Tourism Advisory Panel. Accessed March 10, 2026. https://nff.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/NFF_Regional_Impacts_WHM_FINAL_STC_02_clean.pdf.
- Alexander, A., L. Rivera, and R. Wickes. 2025. "Friendly Not Friends: Migrant Settlement and Diverse Social Ties in Australian Regional Cities." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 51 (1): 122–140. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2024.2393652>.
- Amit, V. 2014. "Circumscribed Cosmopolitanism: Travel Aspirations and Experiences." *Identities* 22 (5): 551–568. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1070289X.2014.975709>.
- Anderson, E. 2018. "Belonging, Temporariness and Seasonal Labour: Working Holidaymakers' Experiences in Regional Australia." In *Work and Identity: Contemporary Perspectives on Workplace Diversity*, edited by S. Werth and C. Brownlow, 117–131. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Argent, N., A. Bernard, D. Laukova, T. Wilson, T. Zajac, and A. Kimpton. 2025. "Retaining Permanent and Temporary Immigrants in Rural Australia: Place-Based and Individual Determinants." *Population, Space and Place* 31 (1): e2865. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2865>.
- Argent, N., and M. Tonts. 2015. "A Multicultural and Multifunctional Countryside? International Labour Migration and Australia's Productivist Heartlands." *Population, Space and Place* 21 (2): 140–156. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.1812>.
- Azeredo, R., and J. Z. Wang. 2024, December 5. "Horticulture and Migrant Labour in Coastal Australia." Paper presented at Australasian Agri-food Research Network Conference 2024, Tweed Heads, NSW.
- Barry, K. 2021. "Momentarily Immobile: Backpacking, Farm Work, and Hostels in Bundaberg, Australia." *Geographical Research* 59 (1): 46–55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1745-5871.12445>.
- Barry, K., B. Iaquinto, and R. Azeredo. 2024. "From Tourists to Essential Workers: The Multifaceted Presence of Backpackers in Rural Queensland, Australia." *Journal of Rural Studies* 112:103469. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2024.103469>.
- Berg, L., and B. Farbenblum. 2025. 'Right or Wrong, Just Accept It'. *How Employer-Tied Visas Foster Fear and Silence among Pacific Workers on the PALM Scheme*. Migrant Justice Institute. British Office Taipei.
- British Office Taipei. 2026. *1st Ballot of the 2026 Youth Mobility Scheme for Taiwanese youth*. Accessed June 01, 2026. <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/1st-ballot-of-the-2026-youth-mobility-scheme-for-taiwanese-youth>.

- Chang, H. 2014. "Experience the West: A Study on Taiwan Working Holiday Makers in Australia." Master's thesis, National Taiwan University. (In Chinese).
- Chiu, P. 2020. "'Tai-Lao' in Australia and 'Losers' in Taiwan: The Stigma of Working Holidaymakers in Neoliberal Taiwan." *Journal of Youth Studies* 25 (2): 209–224. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13676261.2020.1865524>.
- Chueh, H.-C., and Y.-H. Lu. 2018. "My Dream Life in a Rural World: A Nonfiction Media Representation of Rural Idyll in Taiwan." *Journal of Rural Studies* 59:132–141. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2017.04.004>.
- Cloke, P. 2006a. "Conceptualising Rurality." In *The Handbook of Rural Studies*, edited by P. Cloke, T. Marsden, and P. Mooney, 18–28. London: Sage.
- Cloke, P. 2006b. "Rurality and Otherness." In *The Handbook of Rural Studies*, edited by P. Cloke, T. Marsden, and P. Mooney, 447–456. London: Sage.
- Connell, J. 2014. "Soft Country? Rural and Regional Australia in Country Style." In *Rural Change in Australia. Population, Economy and Environment*, edited by R. Duffy-Jones and J. Connell, 211–234. London: Ashgate.
- Connell, J. 2019. "Contracting Margins? Liquid International Migration in the Pacific." *Revue Européenne des Migrations Internationales* 35 (1 and 2): 107–123. <https://doi.org/10.4000/remi.12739>.
- Datta, A. 2009. "Places of Everyday Cosmopolitanisms: East-European Construction Workers in London." *Environment and Planning A* 41 (2): 353–370. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a40211>.
- Department of Home Affairs. 2024a. *Working Holiday Maker Program Overview*. <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/What-We-Do/whm-program/overview>.
- Department of Home Affairs. 2024b. *Visitor Visa Statistics*. <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-statistics/statistics/visa-statistics/visit>.
- Department of Home Affairs. 2024c. *Working Holiday Maker Report – June 2024*. <https://www.homeaffairs.gov.au/research-and-stats/files/working-holiday-report-june-24.pdf>.
- Department of Home Affairs. 2024d. *Working Holiday Maker (WHM) Program: Specified Work and Conditions*. Accessed March 10, 2026. <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/visas/getting-a-visa/visa-listing/work-holiday-417/specified-work>.
- Ernst & Young. 2020. *Seasonal Horticulture Labour Demand and Workforce Study*. Accessed March 20, 2026. https://www.horticulture.com.au/globalassets/laserfiche/assets/project-reports/st19040/seasonal-horticulture-workforce-study_2020.
- Fan, P., and A. Hebbani. 2014. "Navigating through the Australian Workplace: Mapping the Experience of Taiwanese Working Holiday Makers (WHMs) in Brisbane." *Intercultural Communication Studies* 23 (21): 33–53.
- Forbes-Mewett, H., K. Hegarty, and R. Wickes. 2022. "Regional Migration and the Local Multicultural Imaginary: The Uneasy Governance of Cultural Difference in Regional Australia." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 48 (13): 3142–3159. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2021.1915120>.
- Ho, C., P. Lin, and S. Huang. 2014. "Exploring Taiwanese Working Holiday-Makers' Motivations: An Analysis of Means-end Hierarchies." *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research* 38 (4): 463–486. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1096348012461549>.
- Ho, L. 2019. "Policy, Mobility, and Youth Subjectivity: The Case of the Hong-Kong-Australian Working Holiday Scheme." *Cultural Studies* 33 (6): 944–963. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09502386.2019.1660692>.
- Hordacre, A. L., C. Moretti, H. Gamble, and S. Crossman. 2021. *The Australia Experience. Perceptions of Australia's Working Holiday Maker (WHM) Program, 2019–2020*. Adelaide: Australian Industrial Transformation Institute, Flinders University of South Australia.
- Hugo, G. 2014. "Immigrant Settlement in Regional Australia: Patterns and Processes." In *Rural Change in Australia. Population, Economy and Environment*, edited by R. Duffy-Jones and J. Connell, 57–82. London: Ashgate.
- Iaquinto, B. L. 2025. "Backpackers Tourism: Definitions, Methods, Debates." *Tourism Geographies* 27 (3–4): 789–797.

- Immigration New Zealand. 2026. *Taiwan Working Holiday Visa*. Accessed June 01, 2026. <https://www.immigration.govt.nz/visas/taiwan-working-holiday-visa/>.
- James, D. 2024. "Precarious Labour Geographies of Working Holiday Makers: Querying Sustainability." *Tourism Geographies* 26 (7): 1053–1071. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14616688.2024.2366488>.
- Kawashima, K. 2010. "Japanese Working Holiday Makers in Australia and Their Relationship to the Japanese Labour Market: Before and After." *Asian Studies Review* 34 (3): 267–286. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2010.508765>.
- Klocker, N., P. Hodge, O. Dun, E. Crosbie, R. Dufty-Jones, C. McMichael, K. Block, et al. 2021. "Spaces of Well-Being and Regional Settlement: International Migrants and the Rural Idyll." *Population, Space and Place* 27 (8): e2443. <https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2443>.
- Krivokapic-Skoko, B., and J. Collins. 2016. "Looking for Rural Idyll 'Down Under': International Immigrants in Rural Australia." *International Migration* 54 (1): 167–179. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12174>.
- Krivokapic-Skoko, B., C. Reid, and J. Collins. 2018. "Rural Cosmopolitanism in Australia." *Journal of Rural Studies* 64: 153–163. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.01.014>.
- Li, Y.-T. 2017. "Constituting co-ethnic Exploitation: The Economic and Cultural Meanings of Cash-in-hand Jobs for Ethnic Chinese Migrants in Australia." *Critical Sociology* 43 (6): 919–932. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0896920515606504>.
- Li, Y.-T. 2020. "Maintaining Transnational Ties and the Convertibility of Working Holiday Makers' Experiences in Australia." *Current Sociology* 68 (3): 316–332. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011392118811003>.
- Li, Y.-T. 2024. "Digital Togetherness as Everyday Resistance: The use of new Media in Addressing Work Exploitation in Rural Areas." *New Media & Society* 26 (4): 1851–1870. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14614448221080717>.
- Li, Y.-T., and K. Whitworth. 2016. "When the State Becomes Part of the Exploitation: Migrants' Agency within the Institutional Constraints in Australia." *International Migration* 54 (6): 138–150. <https://doi.org/10.1111/imig.12267>.
- Lu, M. 2011. "Experiences and Generic Skills Improvement of Taiwanese Young Adults Participating in Australian Working Holiday Program." Master's thesis, National Chung Hsing University.
- Mares, P. 2026. *Improving PALM. The Pacific Australia Labour Mobility Scheme*. Melbourne: Scanlan Foundation Research Institute.
- McManus, P., and B. Pritchard. 2000. "Geography and the Emergence of Rural and Regional Australia." *Australian Geographer* 31 (3): 383–391. <https://doi.org/10.1080/713612256>.
- Milner, L., and M. Hughes. 2012. "From Bananas to Biryani: The Creation of Woolgoolga Curryfest as an Expression of Community." *Locale* 2:119–139.
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Taiwan). 2005. *Working Holiday Program*. https://www.youthtaiwan.net/WorkingHoliday/Cus_WHNation.aspx?n=6386&s=113469.
- National Farmers' Federation. 2024. *New report highlights backpackers vital to regions*. <https://nff.org.au/media-release/new-report-highlights-backpackers-vital-to-regions/>.
- Neilson, J., N. M. Coe, R. Azeredo, R. Cross, J. Horton, Smith K. Pritchard, and J. H. Z. Wang. 2025. "Beyond the Farm Gate: Global Networks and the Remaking of Australia's Coastal Horticulture Regions." *Australian Geographer* 56 (4): 477–491. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2026.2642486>.
- NSW Anti-slavery Commissioner. 2024. *Be Our Guests: Addressing Urgent Modern Slavery Risks for Temporary Migrant Workers in Rural and Regional New South Wales*. NSW Department of Communities and Justice.
- Oishi, N. 2022. "Voluntary Underclass?: Globalism, Temporality, and the Life Choices of Japanese Working Holiday Makers in Australia." *Youth and Globalization* 4 (1): 31–55. <https://doi.org/10.1163/25895745-bja10022>.
- O'Reilly, K., and M. Benson. 2016. "Lifestyle Migration: Escaping to the Good Life?" In *Lifestyle Migration*, edited by M. Benson and K. O'Reilly, 1–14. London: Routledge.

- Petrou, K., and J. Connell. 2018. “‘We Don’t Feel Free at All’: Temporary ni-Vanuatu Workers in the Riverina, Australia.” *Rural Society* 27 (1): 66–79. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10371656.2018.1443415>.
- Petrou, K., and J. Connell. 2019. “Overcoming Precarity? Social Media, Agency and Ni-Vanuatu Seasonal Workers in Australia.” *The Journal of Australian Political Economy* 84:116–146.
- Petrou, K., and J. Connell. 2023. *Pacific Islands Guestworkers in Australia: The new Blackbirds?* Singapore: Springer Nature.
- Reilly, A. 2015. “Low-cost Labour or Cultural Exchange? Reforming the Working Holiday Visa Programme.” *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 26 (3): 474–489. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1035304615598160>.
- Robertson, S. 2016. “Student-workers and Tourist-Workers as Urban Labour: Temporalities and Identities in the Australian Cosmopolitan City.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 42 (14): 2272–2288. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2016.1205808>.
- Rogers, A., N. Castree, and R. Kitchin. 2013. *A Dictionary of Human Geography*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Schech, S. 2014. “Silent Bargain or Rural Cosmopolitanism? Refugee Settlement in Regional Australia.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40 (4): 601–618. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2013.830882>.
- Short, B. 2006. “Idyllic Ruralities.” In *Handbook of Rural Studies*, edited by P. Cloke, T. Marsden, and P. Mooney, 133–148. London: Sage.
- Stead, V. 2023. “Temporariness Made Interminable: Pacific Islander Farmworkers in Australia and the Enduring Crises of Global Agricultural Production.” *Journal of Agrarian Change* 23 (3): 579–589. <https://doi.org/10.1111/joac.12524>.
- Tsai, L. L., and F. L. Collins. 2017. “Youth and Mobility in Working Holidays: Imagined Freedoms and Lived Constraints in Lives of Taiwanese Working Holidaymakers in New Zealand.” *New Zealand Geographer* 73 (2): 129–140. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nzg.12149>.
- Underhill, E., and M. Rimmer. 2016. “Layered Vulnerability: Temporary Migrants in Australian Horticulture.” *Journal of Industrial Relations* 58 (5): 608–626. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022185615600510>.
- Vosko, L. F. 2023. “Through the Back-Door: How Australia and Canada use Working Holiday Programs to Fulfill Demands for Migrant Work via Cultural Exchange.” *Journal of Industrial Relations* 65 (1): 88–111. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00221856221131579>.
- Wang, J. Z., and J. Connell. 2021. “Taiwanese Working Holiday Makers in Rural and Regional Australia: Temporary Transnational Identities and Employment Challenges.” *Australian Geographer* 52 (2): 191–207. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2021.1916196>.
- Wattanacharoensil, W., and S. Talawanich. 2018. “An Insight into the Motivations of Thai Working and Holiday Makers (WHMs).” In *Asian Youth Travellers*, edited by C. Khoo-Lattimore and E. C. L. Yang, 15–38. Springer.
- Werbner, P. 2006. “Vernacular Cosmopolitanism.” *Theory, Culture & Society* 23 (2-3): 496–498. <https://doi.org/10.1177/026327640602300291>.
- Woods, M. 2007. “Engaging the Global Countryside: Globalization, Hybridity and the Reconstitution of Rural Place.” *Progress in Human Geography* 31 (4): 485–507.
- Woods, M. 2011. *Rural*. London: Routledge.
- Woods, M. 2017. “Rural Cosmopolitanism at the Frontier? Chinese Farmers and Community Relations in Northern Queensland, c.1890–1920.” *Australian Geographer* 49 (1): 107–131. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00049182.2017.1327785>.
- Woods, M. 2018. “Precarious Rural Cosmopolitanism: Negotiating Globalization, Migration and Diversity in Irish Small Towns.” *Journal of Rural Studies* 64:164–176. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2018.03.014>.