Staggered Pathways: 
The Temporalities of Work and Career for Young Asian Migrants in Australia

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I didn’t have my permanent residency back to the time I applied for my vacation work so regretfully without the real industry vacation work experience it would be very difficult to go to the industry directly. [...] 

We compete with local students, so they grew up here, they know everything here so they have the advantages to compete with us. [...] 

Always I ask myself, what if it was 2010 or 2011 when I looked for the vacation work? Things could be totally different because I have several seniors in mining engineering, they [are] all native Chinese person from China, they just came here a couple of years earlier than me to study engineering disciplines and even before their graduations they have secured their graduate positions with the giant companies within the industry. So, well, definitely it’s a factor that the industry has been down. So the prosperity has been at least halved. So opportunities has been reduced. 

(Percy, China)
I tried to get myself still in the workplace and refresh my mind. And then probably when the right time comes I could still jump into the boat [for engineering]. So I just had to be optimistic and keep myself occupied. [...] It was a big team and all the colleagues come from different culture and social backgrounds. So they were pretty nice. And I did learn a lot from most of the colleagues I work with.

(Percy, China)
I participated into some like the professional networking events either in terms of my major, like relevant to engineering, chemical engineering and petroleum industry, or in terms of the Australia-China relationship. Because I could meet some like-minded young alliances and hear from their professional perspectives and to motivate me to grow to a higher level. And also learn how to behave professionally. So definitely I believe I will be the beneficiary for that. So it’s worth to invest more time interacting with those professionals.

(Percy, China)
I’ve spent five years to pursue [...] a passion for engineering and to be a professional engineer. [...] I think I have done some achievement in terms of personal development like communication skills, interpersonal skills, teamwork after so much experience in the working, study and the extracurricular activities.

I still haven’t got a job relevant to my major, but by now I understand actually even [if] eventually I couldn’t come back to the engineering profession it will still be alright as long as I discover my passion, my interest and even though in other area, sectors I will still go for it [...] Be stubborn to your goals but flexible about the methodologies. [...] I could always try to diversify my portfolios through different professional jobs, activities and events.

At least [now] I’m a permanent resident [...] so you don’t need to worry about like one day I might go back to China [...] I realized that the real journey, the real tough journey was just to start it, which is the job seeking and there is the real life. PR is not the end it’s just the beginning for a new stage.

(Percy, China)
I think at this stage I have to catch up with everything as fast as possible, because I'm still in the learning process, and as you know, like the tertiary education system or the secondary education system in Australia actually are quite complicated. [...] 

I think it's the nature of the job I'm doing right now, because as agents definitely we had to provide the premium service to make sure every single client will be satisfied with our service [...]. So, I check my mobile you know always open, turned on, and also as you know, those extracurricular activities do occupy some of my spare time. Plus, I also have some other activities I would like to do, catch up with friends, so sometimes [...] I'm pretty busy. [...] I still devoted myself into several organizations, like Australia-China Youth Association.

(Percy, China)
The Project. **Staggered Pathways:** Temporality, Mobility & Asian Temporary Migrants in Australia

Series of interviews & ‘focused’ ethnography using participation self-documentation and digital ‘time-mapping’

42 participants (50/50 male/female) from the top 6 Asian source countries – China, India, South Korea, the Philippines, Taiwan & Malaysia.

All arrived on temporary visas after 2000. All transitioned across 2+ different visas (inc. student, working holiday, 457, temporary graduate, partner/spouse, PR)

Some had permanent residency or citizenship when interviewed, others still had a temporary status

Most arrived in Australia as teenagers or young adults (between 16 and 30)

Most arrived unaccompanied by immediate family members

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## Chronomobilities: Understanding time-in-mobility

### Time-Regime

The ‘transification of migration’ comprises temporalities of both governance & cultures of migration that construct migration as simultaneously:

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<tr>
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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Transient</strong></td>
<td>Of limited and contingent duration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Transitory</strong></td>
<td>A stage in an ongoing pathway of mobility, rather than a destination or endpoint of ‘arrival’</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Transitionary</strong></td>
<td>A process that involves multiple, overlapping and non-sequential changes of status, identity &amp; belonging</td>
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### Lived Time

Interconnected experiences of everyday time

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><strong>Sequencing</strong></td>
<td>Sense of progression; chronology; past, present &amp; future</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td><strong>Synchronicity</strong></td>
<td>Relational/collective; ‘(de)sync-ing’ with others</td>
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<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><strong>Tempo</strong></td>
<td>Pace, velocity, rhythm</td>
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The Transification of Australian Migration

1.9 million+ temporary migrants living & working in Australia (DIBP 2016).

65,000 People in 2013 living in Australia on temp visas who first arrived between 6-10 years prior (Mares 2016)

2.4 million Australian residents born in Asia (ABS 2016)

Multi-Stage Migration

Growth in ‘multi-stage’ migration (transitioning onshore across multiple visas to PR) is a paradigm shift in 21st c. Australian migration (Wright et al. 2016). Leads to ‘long-term temporariness’ (Mares 2016)

Main Visa Types

Working holiday, student, skilled graduate, temporary skilled work, bridging visas and dependent or spouse visas (varied work rights)

Asian migrants more likely to have non-linear & multi-stage pathways (Hugo 2008) & dominate ‘entry point’ visa arrivals for transified pathways.

6.4 years and 3.3 visas

Average duration of multi-step migration (arrival to PR) (Productivity Commission 2014)
Middling Migrant Mobility

Conventional Understanding of “Middling Migrants”
- Migrants who are middle class at home & middle class in host countries; usually educated and skilled.

My Understanding of “Middling Migrants”
- Migrants who are multiply ‘in-between’ within a ‘dynamic’ middle-space

Social Locations
- Social & economic dislocation & relocation as they move (e.g. skilled & unskilled work, social im/mobility)

Motivations
- Multiple & shifting: work, education, lifestyle, love, cultural & leisure experiences; ‘escape’

Temporal Status
- In-between temporariness and permanence; uncertain temporal horizons

Life Stage
- In-between youth & adulthood/ emerging adulthood
The directors took me aside for a meeting, and they got really angry. [...] It’s pretty funny, but my direct department manager, actually, he said he knew that they just wanted me to really want the visa. If I was sitting there, all arrogant, “Oh, you don’t have to sponsor me,” they just wouldn’t. So, he leaned over and goes, “Start crying.” I swear, that’s what happened. He goes, “Start crying.” And this was not an act. It was actually really sad. The whole situation was really sad. And I looked him, I’m like, “Shut up.” And I turned around and water works, just tears down my face. And I’m just crying and crying.

I’m like, “You don’t understand. The people I’ve worked with are like family, and I don’t have family here. [...] And I was like, “I’d be happy to stay until you find someone new, or if you sponsor me, you know, I’ll work very hard. I’ll stay with the company for a long time.” And that’s really hard to find in real estate. So, yeah, and then they decided to sponsor me. (Abigail, Malaysia)
My plan, and I don’t know if it’s possible, but my plan is to finish up the year, get my permanent residency and then I just want to take a break from working. I think having that security of being able to stay here with no job, it’s actually just really good. [...] I just want to have a break for a while and then I’ll find a job again, whether or not they’ll take me back or I’ll do my own thing. [...] You can’t take a break with these visas. You always have to be doing something [...] The whole time your mind’s like, “Okay, I’ve got 18 months, 17 months, 10 months,” you know?

(Abigail, Malaysia)
You know, with every job there’s an up and down [...]. Being in real estate ... it’s very high turnover. And I love my friends that I make, but then they go, and you get other people that you don’t want to work with, and that’s when the job becomes so heavy. [...] There are times where I’m like, “I wish I could just get out of the company and go somewhere else,” but you know, I wouldn’t. I know I wouldn’t. And forcing myself to stay somewhere, that sucks. [...] I feel like they own me. You know, I can’t do anything. It’s not like they treat me badly or anything. They don’t. But I just do feel like I owe them or, yeah, they could pretty much tell me to do anything and I’ll just jump. How high, you know? And for, yeah, two years and more it’s a long time yeah.

(Abigail, Malaysia)
The year that I view extremely long was the year I studied the secondary teaching qualification, because it was really full on, study, assignment after exam after prac, like no break at all that year. And just meant that I couldn’t have any social life that year. So that was an extremely long year, because lots of [migration] policies were changing at that time just ensure, and it’s like going through a dark tunnel or you don’t know what’s at the end.

(Colleen, China)
I again started in the food services. But here it was like casual base and I was getting work for only like three shifts in a week and it will be like 12 hours. I had to work full-time [as a condition of my visa]. So it wasn’t enough […]

So I find work same in the food service in another place too and then after I was meeting my visa conditions. […] I was working two different places, I had non-stop work for one year, I didn’t take a single day off, it was like 6:30 to 2:30 at one place, I use to go straight from this place to another place and start work again at four o’clock and I use to finish at 9:30 at night, come back home, have dinner and sleep. […] Seven days a week. […] More than 70 hours in a week, because being casual what happens is if you refuse like […] if you start refusing the work maybe the next week you will not have anything, so I will not say no, whatever comes in I’ll just grab it.

(Sima, India)
Oh it was so slow, it was very slow. When I arrived after leaving him [my son] there [in India] it was like this time has stopped, and then I kept myself so busy with the work I didn’t feel like it is Monday or Tuesday I was just going to the work. As soon as I got up in the morning I wasn’t sure like am I going to workplace number one or am I going to workplace number two, what is the date today?

It was like as soon our alarm beeps go brush your teeth, get ready for the work, you know it was just one focused work and work that’s it. [...] I forgot that it was my birthday. It was in November and I really forgot and one of my friend she rang me at 12 o’clock midnight, “Happy birthday my dear.” And I said, “What?” She rang me from Sydney and I was like “Is it my birthday? I don’t even remember.”

(Sima, India)
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Youth Mobilities, Aspiration and Pathways Project (with Prof. Anita Harris & Prof. Loretta Baldassar)
www.ymapproject.org

Journal of Intercultural Studies Special Issue: Mobile Aspirations? Youth Im/mobilities in the Asia-Pacific
https://www.tandfonline.com/toc/cjis20/39/6