



Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) Scheme: The Discourses of Paternalism, Managerialism and Racialisation

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Today's talk ...

- Overview of the Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme
- Theoretical underpinning: Neoliberal immigration/labour regimes & racial politics
- Discourse analysis
- Key discourses: paternalism, managerialism, racialisation



Recognised Seasonal Employer (RSE) scheme

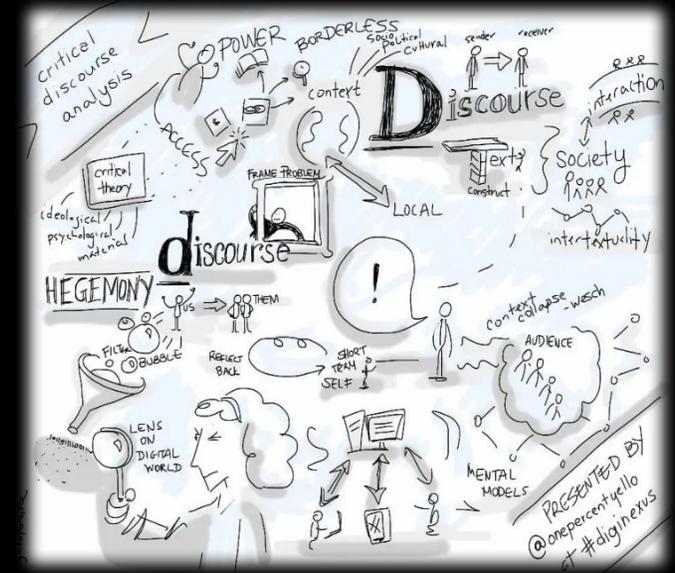
- Seasonal labour mobility programme launched in 2007
- Emerged from international/UN-level dialogue: migration as development pathways
- Critical role in relieving seasonal labour shortage in viticulture and horticulture industries
- The RSE cap: 5,000 places in 2007 to 19,000 in 2022/23

Immigration, neoliberalism and race

- Neoliberalism has modified how race functions and is understood (Roberts & Mahtani, 2010)
- It is “muted” (Dána-Ain Davis, 2007); “subtle” (Bonilla-Silva, 2014);
- ‘Non-racial’, liberal framings (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; 2014)
- Immigration system is shaped by neoliberal rationalities, producing racialised bodies (Bauder, 2008; Jaskulowski & Pawlak, 2022)
- “an erasure of immigrants as social and moral agents; they are recast as primarily economic agents or commodities whose main purpose is to benefit the economy” (Lehman et al., 2016, p. 46).

Discourse analysis

- Examining policies to identify dominant, marginal, oppressive, and alternative discourses (Fairclough, 2012; Cummins et al., 2020)
- Revealing hidden preoccupations, assumptions and unrecognised ideologies shaping the policy (Fairclough, 2012, 2013)
- We scrutinise the discourses, framings and underlying assumptions of RSE policies



Paternalism

- “Encourage economic development, regional integration, and good governance within the Pacific by allowing preferential access to workers who are citizens of eligible Pacific countries.” (The Guide to Becoming a Recognised Seasonal Employer, 2022, p.2)
- “Development obligations in the Pacific”
- Triple win /Co-development: “mutual benefit”, “collective ambition”
- “Friendship” and “partnership” with the Pacific countries



Managerialism

- “Well-managed immigration is essential to our economic and social success as a country”(Cabinet Paper, 2018, p. 5)
- Social quarantining of RSE workers (Horgan & Liinamaa, 2017)
 - “Currently, around half of all accommodation provided by RSE employers is purpose-built. Purpose-built accommodation is preferred as it reduces demand on other accommodation types.” (Cabinet paper, Increasing the cap for the RSE scheme p. 6 2017/2018)
- Technocratic excellence and management: “rigorous evaluations”, “most effective development interventions”, “productivity analysis”



Racialisation

- “Reliable”, “consistent”, “enthusiastic”, “productive”, and “dependable”
- Construction of good migrant workers (see Findlay et al., 2013)
- “98% rated them positively for their enthusiasm compared with 10% of new workers sourced from Work and Income. Ninety-six percent rated them positively for their dependability compared with eight percent of workers from Work and Income, and 94% rated them positively for their productivity compared with nine percent of new workers from Work and Income.” (RSE Survey 2019, p. 18)
- “Suitability”:
 - “Because of the conditions of the RSE workers’ visas and employment, T&G can be confident that the workers will be available when needed and will work the whole season. Experienced, returning RSE workers require little introduction to the tasks they perform.” (Immigration Fit for the Future: Final Report, April 2022, New Zealand Productivity Commission, p. 43)



Conclusion

- Discourses of 'co-development' overlook NZ's imperialist vision & projects in the Pacific (see Mallon et al., 2012; Pickles & Coleborne, 2016)
- NZ's sovereignty in administering the circular labour mobility programme
- Obfuscating the discussion of exploitation, human rights violations
- 'Triple-win'? Or, Dead-end? (see, Skeldon, 2010, 2012; Wickramasekara, 2011; Horgan & Liinamaa, 2017)
- Produces conditions of *permanent* temporariness (Collins, 2012)
- Construction of "good" migrant workers reinforces racial stereotypes, marginalisation, and a cycle of dependency

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