

**GLOBAL CAPITAL'S LIEUTENANTS:  
AUSTRALIA'S SKILLED MIGRANT INTAKE AND THE  
RISE OF GLOBAL VALUE CHAIN PRODUCTION**

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The history and legacy of Australia's mass post-war migration program are of productive industrial labour – people recruited to sustain large scale and manual production particularly in primary extractive industries, manufacturing and construction. However, since at least the 1990s, the profile of occupations in Australia's migration program has changed significantly. There has been a rapid shift towards the recruitment of people in other occupations, notably management personnel, providers of professional services, and other 'market-ready' individuals. This shift reflects a deepening of international relations of production and exchange, facilitating the expansion of capital and creating a new international division of labour (Phillips, 2016). It is a process in which transnational corporations and Global Value Chains (GVCs) feature prominently (Phillips, 2016; Wilks, 2013; Derudder and Witlox, 2010).

Industrial labour has been increasingly concentrated in the Global South, often as a result of 'offshoring' of low value production to the *periphery*, while high value and 'value-added' activities have been concentrated in the core regions of the Global North (Milberg and Winkler, 2010; Milberg, 2008). Countries such as the USA, UK, Australia and Canada have recruited high skilled and educated workers to contribute to a post-industrial landscape marked by growth largely in services industries. Such highly skilled personnel are central to governance in and over GVCs (Gereffi, *et.al.*, 2005), and it is this governance that provides for the extraction of 'maximum rents' (Banga, 2014: 277). Successive Australian governments, like their counterparts elsewhere in the Global North, evidently anticipated economic benefits from using migration to help secure a place in the processes of governance over globally dispersed production.

This article analyses Australia's migrant intake in relation to the growth in Global Value Chain activity during the last two decades. It indicates how migrant occupational categories relate to class relations defined by Australia's engagement in the global market economy.

For this purpose, available data on GVC growth from 1995 to 2009, sourced from the IMF and OECD, is first presented. Data on the occupational composition of skilled migration to and from Australia during and beyond the same period (*i.e.* from mid-1990s) is then analysed, showing the radical shift in migrant occupational intake that has occurred. The majority of migrant visas have been provided to what are termed *non-productive* and *market-expanding* occupations, including managers and corporate professionals, business people as well as the independently wealthy.

The term *non-productive* labour draws upon Marxist value theory. This theorises labour's capacity to yield profit relative to its cost in the production of commodities. Productive labour directly contributes surplus value to the extent that the value of what is produced exceeds the wages that are paid to the workers. Non-productive labour contributes more indirectly to the production and expansion of capital. Duménil and Lévy (2011) advance the term 'profit-rate maximising' *labour* to help explain this stratum of a workforce who are not owners of production, but assist in either managing inputs to produce actual commodities or ensuring the exchange and circulation of those commodities. Certain administrative functions required by a firm to keep accounts might be one example befitting 'profit-rate maximising labour'. However, Duménil and Lévy contend that such clerical-administrators are of the same *political* class as wage labourers because they are 'dominated' socially (Dumenil and levy, 2011: 223). In other words, a hierarchical employment relationship determines the extent to which a non-productive occupation ultimately supports, or is in dialectical conflict with, capital.

Cleavages between labour and 'management' and capitalists are complex economic and social phenomena, particularly in post-industrialised neoliberal market economies such as Australia, and in globally dispersed forms of production. Deciding the point at which labour value is productive and when it is 'value-adding' or profit-maximising is complex, more so where globalised informational capital bears upon both labour process and product (Castells, 2000).

In other words, the transformation of materials into commodities via labour is now overwhelmed by a complexity of labour-displacing information and technology embodied within commodity production, within the knowledge practices used to control labour (*e.g.* contracts and labour law, skills and classifications, corporate cultures) and exchange its value in the global market (*e.g.* marketing and communications, logistics, capital, finance and credit knowledge). Adding further complexity, occupational hierarchies within a global value chain are socially and culturally specific, affecting degrees of control over dispersed and lower-value production.

Understanding how class relations in Australia are embedded in migration is impeded by the official terminology used to describe migration. This is largely technocratic, compounding the obfuscation of class relations. For instance, the official ABS data shows that most migration falls within the ‘skilled’ visa categorisation (where skill connotes an application to task). Looking at whether migrants arrive through an *employer* nomination scheme (ENS), or whether skilled migration responds to a ‘demand-driven’ ‘labour market’ (Wright, 2012; Hawthorne, 2006) tends to draw attention away from the occupational class relations. Meanwhile, analytical distinctions between permanent and temporary skilled migration that focus attention on job opportunity, livelihood and ‘precarity’ (Robertson and Boese, 2015) contribute to a generic perception that vulnerable labour comprises Australia’s migration intake (*cf.* Colic-Peisker, 2011). Perceptions about Australian migration as labour do stem from a genuine concern that the large temporary skilled visa category allows for the exploitation of ‘cheap labour’ in Australia (Woodley, 2015; Phillips, 2007). Indeed, migrant labour is often vulnerable, but recent shifts in Australia’s skilled migrant intake look quite different when studied in Marxian value and class terms.

A class-based analysis needs to consider how Australia’s migration programs relate to the exploitation of low-waged workers, both in Australia and abroad. This shifts the focus to seeing how the increased prevalence of skilled-professionals migration forms part of Australia’s participation in a global system of labour exploitation. In relation to global migration patterns, Peixoto (2001) refers to this grouping as a ‘cadre’. Bauder (2011) distinguishes ‘privileged labour’ to highlight differential treatment and opportunity for migrants developing and directing the global market. These are class-related concepts.

This article extends ideas about global value chain production as centred on the movement and state 'accumulation' of people who create, control and expand value. The focus is not on the global corporate elite who control value chains, but on the mobility of their 'lieutenants' or agents. These lieutenants include migrants whose recruitment, especially via temporary visa conditions, supports globalised production and its expansion as a feature of a neoliberal global market economy.

### **Growth and Accumulation via Value Chains**

Focusing on global value chains provides a means of conceptualising and analysing the processes of production and accumulation. It draws attention to individuals, occupations and classes who create and exchange the value in commodities. Konzelmann *et.al.*, (2012), for example, note the growth in finance as an 'industry' in its own right but with particularities in countries such as Australia, the UK, USA and Canada. Relatedly, Peetz and Murray (2012) describe the financial elite's growing influence in the corporate world, while Parnreiter (2010) examines the controlling presence of real estate and legal firms from the global North servicing off-shore production in Mexico.

A constellation of global financial elites, investor groups and nation-states has driven and expanded global market capitalism, creating a halo of services, structures and ranks of business professionals present at different points in the chain. For Sassen (1991), among others (*e.g.* Derudder and Witlox, 2010), this constellation is conceptualized as the 'global city'. For others, (*e.g.* Wilks, 2013) transnational corporations (TNCs) are the preferred unit of analysis. Migration is often an implicit feature and sometimes explicit. Recent research by Sanderson *et.al.*, (2015) focusses on producer services in Global Cities rather than GVCs to demonstrate a direct link between concentrations of diverse and higher skilled migration and governance in and through global economy.

Growth in commodity or value chain production is not new to capitalist production, but it has grown in scale, making it a key component of post-1970s globalisation. The OECD's major review of GVCs lauds the production side of value chains for their efficiency and yet simultaneously fails to address the fundamental point of the unequal accumulation of value. That OECD report notes:

This international fragmentation of production is a powerful source of increased efficiency and firm competitiveness. Today, more than half of world manufactured imports are **intermediate** goods (primary goods, parts and components, and semi-finished products), and more than 70% of world services imports are **intermediate** services (Backer and Miroudot, 2013: 5).

Drawing upon OECD's Trade in Value Added data (OECD-TiVA, June 2015 release), it is evident that, since 1995, GVC participation rates for Australia have increased, notwithstanding the Global Financial Crisis of 2007-08. One indicator is the value of re-exported intermediate imports (REII). An intermediate import is one that has been part-processed one or more steps back in a value chain. That import is then further processed or part-processed for further export (REII) to a subsequent, possibly final destination in a chain. In the case of Australia, the value of REIIs more than quintupled from \$8.8 billion in 1995 to almost \$46 billion by 2011 (OECD-TiVA, June 2015).

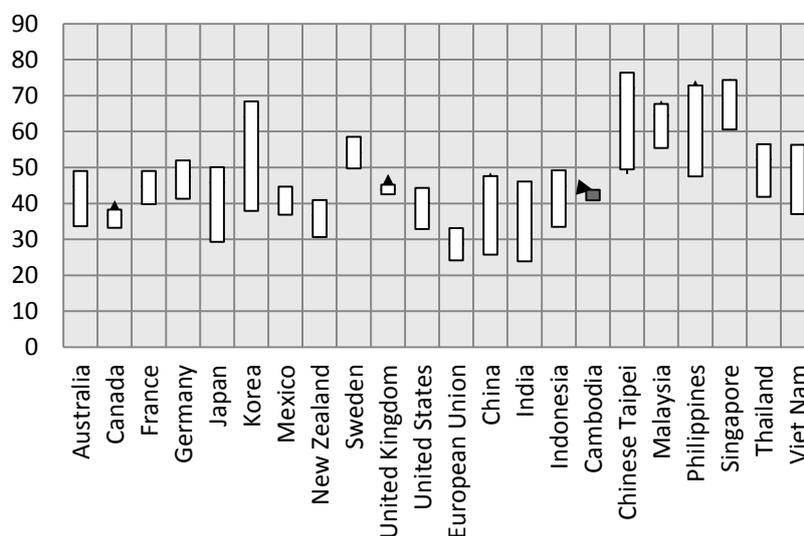
Another GVC participation indicator is the value of re-imported domestic value added content of exports. This is the value of commodities produced in Australia that are exported for further processing, re-imported to Australia, further processed and then exported again. While this represents a smaller share of Australia's overall export activity, its growth from 1995 to 2011 is significant – from \$50 million to \$360 million, a sevenfold increase (OECD-TiVA, June 2015).

Figure 1 (on the following page) shows how OECD countries vary in terms of their participation in GVCs. Participation is measured here in terms of the simple export of 'intermediates' (goods and services that are exported for further transformation and 'value adding'), expressed as a percentage of gross exports.

Working from the bottom of each bar (1995) to the top (2008), almost all countries represented in the figure have increased their GVC participation via the trade in 'intermediates' – on average between 10-20%. South Korea (31%), Taiwan (27%) and then the Philippines (25%) show the greatest growth in GVC participation over the period. Australia experienced a 15% increase in participation (from 33.6% to 49%) over the period 1995-2008. Independent calculations by Backer and Miroudot (2013: 12) provide similar conclusions. However, their inclusion of 2009 data emphasizes a rapid decline due to the Global Financial Crisis. From the OECD data, in 2009 Australia's exports of intermediate goods and

services (*i.e.*, part processed for further ‘handling’ or ‘value adding’ in the next country/stage in a chain) dropped slightly to approximately 41% of total exports. Imports of inputs for transforming these 41% intermediates into further export were approximately 12%. In other words, Australia transformed somewhat less than half its exports as intermediates but, of these, around 30% of the intermediates transformation process relied on additional foreign goods or services.

**Figure 1: Global Value Chain participation, 1995 -2008**



Data Source: OECD TiVA Database [online], May 2013 release.

Notes to Figure 1:

1. The figures do not show actual value but only volume. Note that 2008 and 2009 data generally show a decline in all countries following a decade of growth. This is generally attributed to an overall contraction in production with the Global Financial Crisis.
2. The OECD refers to Chinese Taipei rather than what is generally known as Taiwan.
3. The hard black arrow heads indicate the highest percentage reached but not sustained into 2008. Six countries in this selection lost ground in 2008. Cambodia was the only country which experienced a steady decline from 1995; in other words, a contraction in GVC participation.

The OECD *et.al.*, (2013) highlights that domestic content includes *services*, and that services inputs have been on the rise as a share of value added content in the G20 since 1995. Services averaged 42% of domestic content of gross exports OECD member countries services component as of 2009. Australia experienced a slight decline in *services value adding to gross exports* between 1995 and 2009; as did Indonesia, Russia, Mexico and Turkey (*ibid.*: 14, fig.8). In Australia's case, in dollar terms, the growth in bulk extractive industries exports during the period partly explains this seemingly unimpressive performance in services relative to the OECD average.

When viewed from an employment perspective, however, services are clearly dominant. According to recent figures presented to the Reserve Bank of Australia, from the early 1970s to 2012, services was the only industry sector in Australia to have grown in employment terms, increasing over these four decades from almost 60% share of total national employment to almost 80%. Employment in manufacturing declined from around 25% to less than 10% over the same period (Lowe, 2012). A reading of Castells (2000) suggests this shift to services was because of the technological reorganization of work (networked information flows). Service industries span both productive and non-productive labour but grew largely within the burgeoning market economy context.

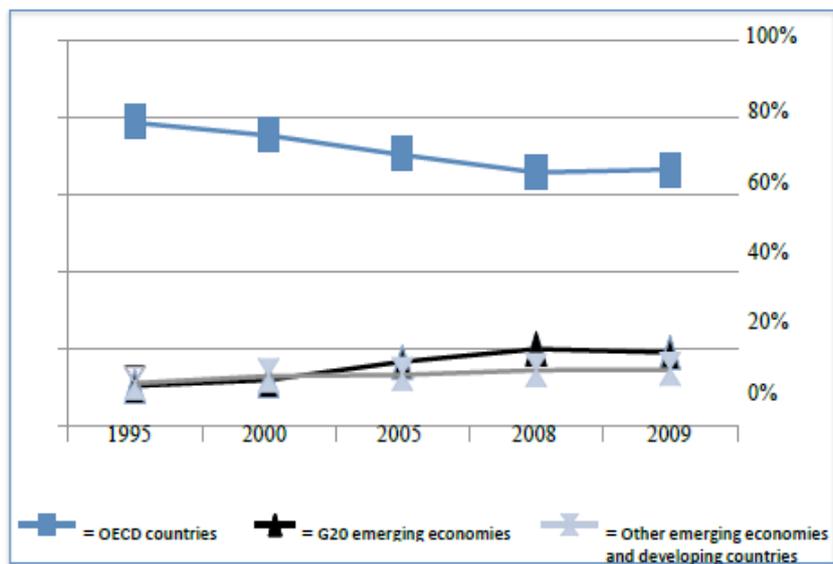
An important distinction can be observed in the extent of foreign and domestic content going into intermediate goods and services. For Australia, the USA, UK, Japan, Germany and France, there is a greater share of domestic content or 'value-adding'; for Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan and China but also Canada, foreign content is greater. The dominant trend is for advanced post-industrial economies to be adding more value through their own workforce relative to imports; while developing and industrialising countries, even those with vastly more workers involved in production, do not add as much to imported materials being processed for further work 'downstream'.<sup>1</sup> Any such comparisons, however, are limited without comparing country and

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1 Note that the GVC literature, particularly OECD, uses 'upstream' and 'downstream' counter-intuitively to the metaphor. Downstream *should* refer to the flow towards the end-process of a value chain, upstream to the origins of the value chain.

industry-specific information, including on the size of the workforce and its average share of value, represented in wages.

**Figure 2: Value Added Export Income, as Share of World Value Added Export Income<sup>2</sup>**



Source: OECD et.al., 2013: 14, figure 8.

Consistent with much of the of globalisation research, countries such as Australia, the UK, USA and Japan can be regarded as being further up the value chain in general hierarchical terms, both by the degree of value that is 'added' and/or appropriated (Backer and Miroudot, 2013) and by *final demand* value adding. For the G20 countries, between 1995 and 2009, the share of income from exports of final-value-added products

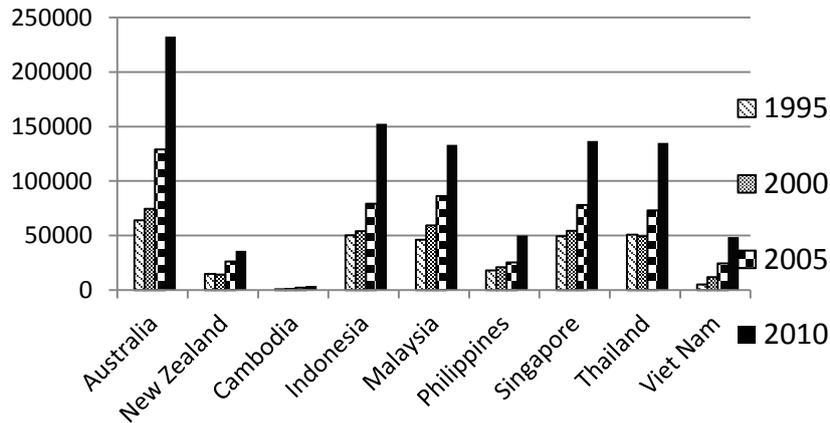
2 Note, the figure refers to income not volume of trade. The title of the table in the source document does not make it clear the data concerns value-added export income. The analysis contained in the source makes this clear, however, so I have amended the title to avoid confusion. But see also Banga (2014: 267-297) who compares domestic value added (DVA) against gross exports. A stronger analysis of DVA would be provided by separating and examining intermediate and final value added income taking account of the foreign value added component.

rose annually in real terms by an average 7.6%, while the remainder of Africa and Latin America ‘still account for a limited share of world GVC income’ (OECD *et.al.*, 2013: 14). Figure 2 aggregates all value added income, highlighting that the richest economies have continued to accumulate the lion’s share of world value added income.

Saad-Filho (2014: 587) observes a related trend (from earlier OECD data), noting that, in 1990, trade *within* the Global North was nearly 60% of all global trade, while trade within the Global South was ‘barely reaching 8%’. By 2008, intra Global North trade had declined to 40%, while intra Global South trade had risen to 20%.

A more focused analysis of a hierarchy of value accumulation between the Global North and South can be obtained from examination of aggregate *final demand* processing and the character of the workforces. Figure 3 below compares Australia’s performance both over time and with ‘developing’ economies of the Asian region, where Australia’s trade burgeoned in the 1990s. Asia was also the principal source region for Australia’s permanent skilled professional and also business migrants during the 1990s (Brownlee, 2012).

**Figure 3: Domestic Value Added for Final Foreign Demand, Asian Developing Economies, 1995-2010; 5-year intervals (\$US millions)**



Source: OECD TiVA database, June 2015 release

As Figure 3 shows, Australia is a major supplier of final-product value-adding among countries in the region, qualitatively more so given that its total available workforce is smaller than Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. While Australia's final-process value adding in dollar terms doubled between 1995 and 2005, its available workforce did not grow anywhere near as fast. This was in spite of a new and rapid increase in temporary migration from the mid-1990s. What did grow rapidly were professional and managerial occupations, detailed in the subsequent section of this article.

Nevertheless, a summary analysis, correlating labour force with GVC final demand, highlights productivity growth. The total labour force increased by approximately 14% between 1995 and 2005 in Australia (ABS, 2006: Table 3)<sup>3</sup>. The total hours worked increased steadily between 1995 and 2005, also rising by 14% overall (ABS, 2006: table 21). As Figure 3 indicates, GVC 'Domestic Value-Added' increased by around 50% over the same period. In relative terms, therefore, greater workforce productivity may have contributed to the increase in Australia's final export value-adding. In fact, the ILO calculates that, since 1999, 'average labour productivity has increased more than twice as much as average wages in developed economies' (ILO, 2013: 45). The growth for most of the countries shown in Figure 3 is even more remarkable for the five years to 2010: notwithstanding the impact of the GFC, there was growth of around 80% in that last 5 year period, as measured by gross income. This surge in GVC output, as compared with the decade 1995 - 2005, might be accounted for in varying ways: market expansion, technological production factor intensity, and/or sourcing lower cost labour.

Australia, of course, is not prominent as a source of low-cost labour: its average wage rates are the highest of the countries in the region. Historically, this reflects its stronger, albeit waning, tradition of organized labour, as well as the advanced skill base of its workforce. In 2010, Australia's overall average hourly wage rate was over \$28, double Singapore's approximately \$13, and nearly ten times the Philippines rate of \$1.41 per hour (ILO, 2013: 11). Workforce participation rates for the selected countries – that is, the percentage of people of working age who

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3 More recent US Bureau of Labor online data indicates a 17% increase in Australia's workforce between the same period.  
See <http://www.bls.gov/fls/#laborforce>

are in the workforce – have the opposite feature: Australia’s participation rate of 63% for the period 1995-2005 was lower than the other countries shown in Figure 3, except Malaysia (*data.worldbank.org*, 2014). This makes Australia’s ‘value-adding’ performance between 1995 and 2005, seem yet more remarkable. Australia’s high growth continued in the subsequent five-year period to 2005-10, in spite of the Global Financial Crisis.

Relating these labour statistics to GVC participation rates points the way for a more nuanced approach to estimating ‘value’ within value chains. Importantly, it qualifies arguments, such as Banga’s (2014), that domestic value-adding activity in and of itself will increase a country’s overall value share. High wage countries with higher productivity relative to labour force size are set to continue to amass wealth in relatively higher proportions, *ceteris paribus*. The connection between global value chains and labour (productive and non-productive) is crucial. Hence the need to consider the extent to which the global pattern of value accumulation is connected with a global division of productive and non-productive labour and other occupational strata that support the management and expansion of capital.

This brings us to a key contribution of this article – to explore whether and how advanced economies such as Australia have experienced a greater share of total income from GVCs (*Figure 2*) through higher participation rates in ‘downstream’ and final-value-adding activities that involve expert and professional information-rich services, including financial planning, market analysis and design, contract resolution, quality assurance and human resources, software programming, etc. In other words, the question is to what extent a country’s relative performance in the global value chain is due to its specialized workforce including more personnel engaged in global market expanding activities rather than directly productive labour. The next section highlights how Australia’s occupational profile changed significantly since the 1990s.

### **Migration and the Agents of Capital**

Research on skilled migration often conceptualises the recruitment of educated and experienced labour as part of nation-state competition for resources, with the state acting on behalf of an overall economic demand structure (Massey *et.al.*, 1993). Concurrently, neoclassical theory

emphasizes individual rational choice in the decision to migrate, attempting to distinguish human capital as 'skilled' from labour as 'unskilled' (Castles *et.al.*, 2014; Massey *et.al.*, 1993). Wright (2012) adds that the importation of skill via migrants, favoured by (neo) liberal market economies since the 1990s, corresponded with a retreat from state- and industry-sponsored formal training. This compelled both companies and individuals to bear greater responsibility for their own training and development.

Despite the fact that migration invokes sovereign regulation, some recent analysis focuses on corporations and enterprises, seeing these as arbiters and drivers of migration policy concerning skilled recruitment (Pittman, 2015; Boucher and Cerna, 2014; Locke, 2013; Peixoto, 2001). Concepts of 'brain drain', 'brain gain' and 'brain circulation' have popularised the inequitable relationships and contest between the *countries* sending and receiving this skilled labour (Castles *et.al.*, 2014; Young, 2011; Jöns, 2009). Brain circulation is sometimes viewed as redressing the imbalance caused when developed states attract ready-made talent away from other and often less developed nation-states. But brain circulation might also follow GVCs where specialists and entrepreneurs oversee whole networks of variegated value creation and transfer. This marks a distinction with early dual labour market theory of migration, where the skilled are held to be recruited for productive sectors in constant demand, separate or distinct to lower skilled workers deployed to industry sectors with seasonal or fluctuating demand (Massey *et.al.*, 1993).

Applying the lens of globally dispersed and flexible production typical of the global market economy, the demand for low skilled productive labour remains roughly constant in industries ranging from IT assembly to food processing and garment making. Low skilled productive labour within the global market economy is made precarious instead (or also) by the strength of corporations able to move production capabilities to the most favourable wage price locale (Milberg and Winkler, 2010; Milberg, 2008).

More recent attention to migration-as-circulation stems from the growth in temporary migration (Collins, 2011; Hugo, 2006). Temporary migration has grown in volume since the 1990s, following macroeconomic deregulation and services sector growth, particularly in the business and service professionals categories, in line with a greater flow of capital. Temporary high skilled occupational-related migration

consequently has become associated with neoliberal forms of regulation and flexibility, and casualised work (Wright, 2012; Collins, 2011; Hugo, 2006; Ley, 2003; Mitchell, 2001).

Australian migration trends can be considered against the backdrop of these features of the global value chain economy. While the nation-state is responsible for the migration program, that role can now be contextualised within the growth in the GVC production form and the historical dependencies of the global market economy more generally. The key proposition being advanced here is that Australian government policy since the 1980s was instrumental in re-positioning the country's workforce to participate as high-value adding in GVCs, not only through investments in skills and training and as a result of relatively high wages, but through extensive recruitment of entrepreneurs and business people (including through the business skills and later 'significant investor' sub-visa categories), SME and corporate professionals and managers.

By the mid-1990s, the post-war Australian immigration policy of recruiting productive labour and supporting 'family reunion' had been turned on its head. For instance, whereas in 1980-83, permanent arrivals of (skilled) Metal Trades workers averaged 4,300 per annum, between 1983-86 it averaged only 1000; while the intake of electrical and buildings trades workers experienced a similar decline. Overall, the proportion of immigrants classified as Labourers fell from 16% of total immigration intake in 1980-83 to less than 6% in 1992-93 (BIPR, 1993; DILGEA, 1986: 42-43).

In contrast, the most rapid growth in permanent entrant migrant occupations came under what was generically titled as 'skilled', including professionals and managers and what were termed in the late 1980s as 'business migrants' arriving under the permanent Business Migration Program and skilled independent category (Brownlee, 2012)<sup>4</sup>. This corresponded also with a sustained growth in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Between 1983 and 2001, Australia's small business sector grew annually by 3.5%, such that, by 2001, they represented 97% of all private sector business. There were some 21,800

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4 This was a specific Business Migration Program that was established in the late 1970s, then re-vamped under the Labor government of Bob Hawke and ran until mid-1991. Thereafter it was termed the Business Skills Program then the Business Skills Category. It was intended specifically for migrants who were expected to establish a business in Australia.

exporting businesses in Australia by 1997-98, for example, and of these 77% were considered small enterprises by size of their workforce (ABS, 2002). A greater number of occupations were becoming engaged more directly in the market as business managers and entrepreneurs.

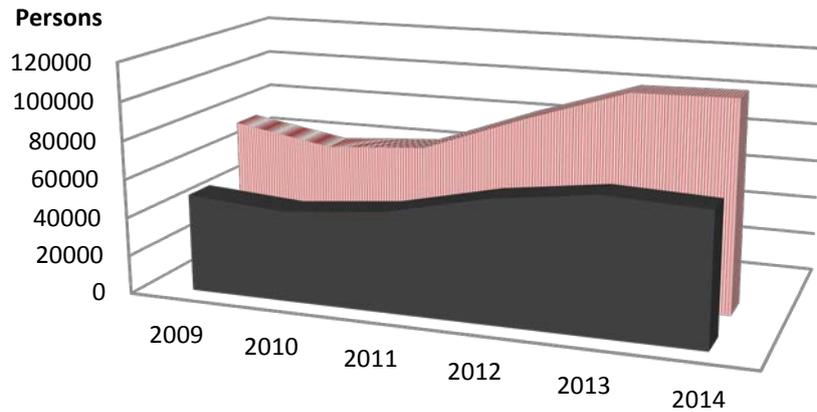
Temporary migration, facilitated by new visa rules introduced in 1996, showed the shift in the migration occupation intake even more dramatically thereafter. Around 200,000 temporary (short *and* long-term) skilled visas were issued in 1995-96, a figure which steadily increased to around 530,000 by 2007-08. Of that 530,000, about 20% were long-term (1-4 years) 'business visitors'. Conversely, *permanent business* (entrepreneur) visa entrants declined from 15% of the total intake in 1996, to around 6% by 2007-08. Entry of migrants in the combined *permanent skilled* category nevertheless increased and at a much greater rate than family migration (ABS, 2009: 4). Business and skilled migrant recruitment patterns were increasingly favouring shorter duration movements, in principle geared for greater circulation and global market relations. Many temporary skilled and business entrants were issued visas for up to 4 years, while many other skilled entrants, notably those under the 'tertiary student' category applied onshore for permanent residency, referred to as two-step migration (Boucher and Cerna, 2014; Hugo, 2006). The impacts of this on Australia's social and cultural legacy of settler citizen migration are the subject of separate research on social cohesion (*e.g.* Robertson 2014; Bertone, 2013; Colic-Peisker, 2011).

The current situation depends substantially on the role of Australia's 457 temporary migrant visa as a means of entry. This scheme covers all occupations, with the facility to preference occupations deemed to be in demand. Figures for the years 2009-2014 confirm a trend that has prevailed for almost the whole life of the temporary migrant program. Approximately two thirds of all 'skilled' visa holders are in either the Manager or Professional class, as categorised by Australia's occupation classification system, ANZSCO. This evidence is presented in Figure 4, showing data on primary applicants for 457 visas, providing a generalised indicator of the bias towards managers and professionals, or non-productive occupations in Australia's temporary skilled component.

The categories of managers and professionals, however, are not sufficiently fined-grained to be robust indicators of occupation and class. The next step in the data analysis separates the managers from the combined managers and professionals grouping. This is based on the

assumption that the ‘managers’ occupational title is reasonably reliable as a means of identifying migrants who are mainly responsible for business outcomes and circulating capital, rather than being employed directly in value-creating occupations.

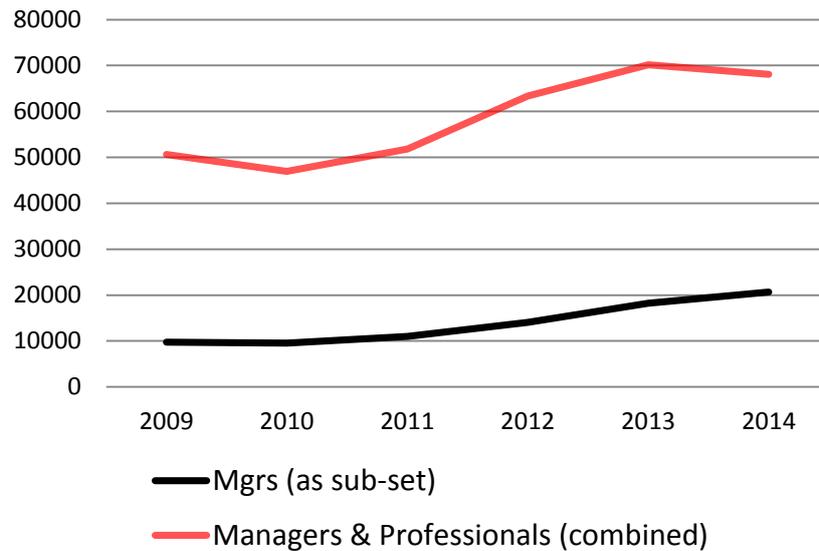
**Figure 4: Managers and Professionals as a Share of Total Skilled Visa Holders, Primary Applicants, 2009-2014.**



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
■ Managers & Professionals (combined)	50624	46947	51820	63335	70191	68103
■ Total 457 Primary	77327	68402	72031	91052	107973	108869
M&Ps as a percentage of total 457 primary visa holders	65	69	72	70	65	63

Source: Subclass 457 Visa Holders Quarterly Pivot Table 31 March 2015 (DIPB)

**Figure 5: Numbers of Managers and Professionals with 457 Visas**



Source: Subclass 457 Visa Holders Quarterly Pivot Table 31 March 2015 (DIPB)

Figure 5 shows that managers as a visa category doubled over the last six years to 2014, from around 10,000 to 20,000 primary applicants annually. At the same time, there has been a downward trend in the combined professionals and managers cohort. Evidently, the decline in the last two years, 2013 and 2014, resulted from a reduction in professionals and not managers. Overall, the professionals group was much larger but much more slowly growing than the managers group, increasing from around 40,000 to 48,000 persons annually (DIBP, 2015).

The data on global value chain production in the earlier section of this article concentrated on the period up to the GFC. Corresponding with that data, analysis of the trend in migrant occupational categories entering Australia from the mid-1990s (see Table 1) is drawn from

official Immigration departmental data published by Hugo *et.al.* (2006)<sup>5</sup>. The same bias towards professionals and managers can be seen: between 1997 and 2004, an average of around 60% of migrants in these classifications constituted permanent and long-term arrivals combined. Labourers and tradespersons combined represented only 16% of permanent entrants and less than 10% of long-stay entrants. Clerical and service administration was a significant intake category but numerically less than the professional categories.

**Table 1: Australian Permanent & Long Term Arrivals by Occupation, July 1997 - June 2004**

Occupation	Settler Arrivals	Long-term (1-4 yr) Arrivals		
	Number	%	Number	%
<b>Managers &amp; Administrators</b>	36665	12	126880	16.7
<b>Professionals</b>	132162	43.1	335573	44.1
<i>(sub-total)</i>		<i>(56.1%)</i>		<i>(66.8%)</i>
<b>Associate Professionals</b>	25704	8.4	71386	9.4
<b>Tradespersons</b>	41225	13.4	52256	6.9
<b>Advanced Clerical &amp; Sales</b>	8615	2.8	24613	3.2
<b>Intermediate Clerical &amp; Sales/Service</b>	32310	10.5	96590	12.7
<b>Intermediate Production &amp; Transport</b>	9199	3	12278	1.6
<b>Elementary Clerical &amp; Sales</b>	12987	4.2	32010	4.2
<b>Labourers</b>	7904	2.6	9403	1.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>306,771</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>760,989</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: Hugo *et.al.*, (2006: 219)

5 Immigration data has been made available under different authorization and published inconsistently over many decades. Immigration bureaucracies and the Australian Bureau of Statistics have been responsible for different data releases on migrants. Only more recently has a searchable database of actual occupations been publically accessible; notably it currently only extends as far back as 2009.

Migrant *productive labour*, as reflected by the classifications, was clearly not as inwardly mobile nor as actively sought by the Australian government as engagement with the global market economy increased.

A comparison with the previous pattern of Australian immigration is illuminating. In 1980, for example, there were 630,000 'managers and professionals' among the stock of immigrants in the population, compared with 1,455,000 'tradesmen, production-process workers and labourers'. Among these, migrants from Anglophone or Commonwealth countries – the largest migrant grouping – contributed 100,000 managers and professionals, but 172,000 tradesmen, production-process workers and labourers. Figures for southern European migrants were even more skewed towards industrial and productive labour occupations (ABS, 1981: 12, Table 9).

### **Occupation-Level Analysis**

As literature on geographies of globalisation has demonstrated, the burgeoning of transnational production shown in the presence of foreign affiliates and subsidiaries in global cities (Derudder and Witlox, 2010). Sanderson *et.al* (2015) confirms Sassen's (2001) theorisation that subordinate services providers and lower-skilled occupations also gravitate to these global cities; and that the global 'periphery' does exist within as well as outside national boundaries. Between July 2012 to June 2013, for example, the intake of (semi-skilled) cooks to Australia doubled to become the number one occupation that was granted a 457 temporary visa (DIBP, n.d. [2014]: 2). Taking a longer view, between 2006 and 2010, there were six times as many (professional) accountants as there were cooks in the permanent skilled stream (DIAC, n.d [2011]: 12). Variances in occupational demand in any one year are of interest but do not provide for reliable analysis against the trend data.

All manner of supporting professional services, such as those supplied by chefs, media and entertainment personnel, fashion designers and retailers are required to provide specialist services that are a product of, and support, the social reproduction of, the global model of production and accumulation. Many such service professionals may become independent or small business operators, elements of a deliberately fragmented system of global production. In one way or another, many professionals in Australia can be connected with the global value chain form of

production, reinforcing the global division of labour between North and South.

Nevertheless, not all professionals, as defined in the immigration data, are in non-productive or market-expanding roles. The categories need to be broken down further to develop the argument about the recruitment of non-productive and market-expanding occupations in support of capital accumulation. The classification ‘professional’ does not necessarily indicate that the person is engaged in the expropriation of value from productive labour or competitive activity for gaining market share, whether working in a global corporation or as a SME.

A refinement of the recent (2009-2014) immigration data can give a sharper focus on those occupations within the professionals group that are either senior managerial, non-productive and/or market-expanding. For this purpose, we can exclude all professional (and subordinate non-professional) classification occupations in health, education, agriculture, construction, mining, entertainment and hospitality from the data set in order to minimise ambiguity over occupational class and function<sup>6</sup>. This is not to say that sectors such as construction or health do not participate in the global market economy, including through value chains. Indeed, the privatisation of health, or the controlling influence of medical intellectual property concomitant with its growth as an export industry is

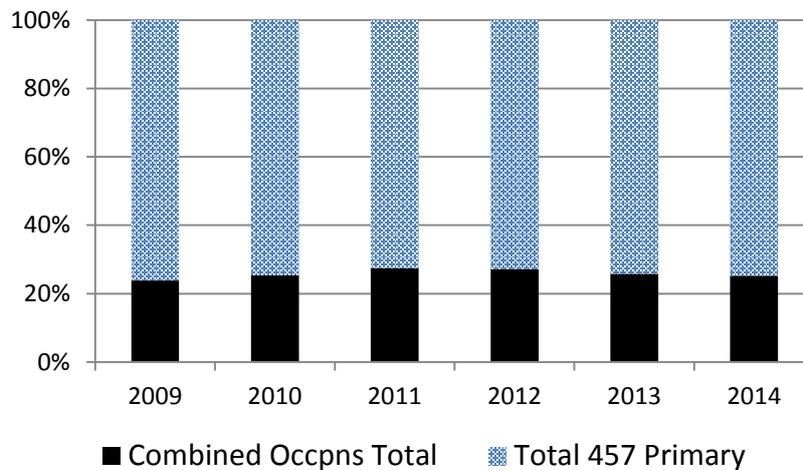
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6 The main professional and Managerial Occupations *excluded* in the refinement were: Aquaculture farmers, crop farmers, livestock farmers, construction managers, engineering managers, manufacturers, child centre managers, health and welfare managers, school principals, other educational managers, commissioned officers, all catering and recreational managers, retail managers, entertainers, designers and architects, all education professionals (scientists, teachers and lecturers), chefs (and cooks). ICT Support and Engineers, Programmers and Web Developers in the professional category also *excluded*. The only occupational categories *included* in the refinement were: Chief Executives and Managing Directors (MDs), General MDs, Advertising, PR and Sales Managers (Mgrs); Corp Services Mgrs, Finance Mgrs, Human Resources Mgrs, Policy & Planning Mgrs, R&D Mgrs, Importers, Wholesalers, & Exporters, Production Mgrs, Supply & Distribution Mgrs, ICT Mgrs, Other Information & Organisational Mgrs, Transport Services Mgrs, Accountants, Auditors, Company Secretaries and Corporate Treasurers, Financial Brokers & Dealers, Financial Investment Advisers & Mgrs, Human Resources Professionals, Economists (not Academics), Intelligence and Policy Analysts, Land Economists and Valuers, Management and Organisational Analysts, Sales Representatives, as well as all legal professionals and executives, ICT and business systems analysts and Computer Network Professionals other than those noted in the exclusions.

acknowledged (Correa, 2009; Kay *et.al.*, 2009; Labonte, *et.al.*, 2009). The expanding health export sector requires its proportion of medical market directors, lawyers, human resource managers and recruiters, chief financial officers, sales and marketing professionals and supply chain innovators. In such an environment, even doctors and senior nursing staff are not immune to the competitive disciplining of their skills, or engaging with pharmaceuticals markets (Young, 2014).

The results of this refinement of the data for the managers and professionals' group are provided in Figure 6. This highlights the proportion of specific professional occupations within the total 457 visa classification, theorised as integral to the growth in global market economy and GVCs.

**Figure 6: Selected Non-Productive and Market-Expanding Occupations, as a percentage of all 457 Visa holders (primary applicants)**



Source: DIBP (2015) Subclass 457 quarterly pivot tables

The solid dark section of each column in Figure 6 represents a revised percentage of those high skilled occupations that could reasonably be

considered oriented towards non-productive work in support of the global market economy and the value chain production system. On average, over the last six years to 2014, 25% of the *total* 457 intake can be identified strongly with corporate, non-productive and market-expanding occupations, or those integral to the global circulation of capital. This comprises approximately 38% of the combined managers and professionals grouping that dominate the 457 visa intake (Figures 4 and 5).

Sampling data from the early 2000s, and focussing on the key sector of finance, occupations in this sector added 1,172 permanent and long-term stay migrants classified as 'Financial Dealers and Brokers' between 2000 and 2003 (Birrell *et.al.*, 2004). A further 722 arrived as what were then termed 'business visitors' (for a stay of up to 3 months). Notably, there were also 1,410 resident 'Financial Dealers and Brokers' *departing* Australia in this period, highlighting the apparent circulation of such professionals. Separately, there were 557 'Financial Investment Advisers' arriving as permanent or long-term stay migrants, and another 325 such business visitors. On the other hand, 475 resident 'Financial Investment Advisers' left Australia in this period. In total, between 2000 and 2003, this section of the finance sector saw a net gain of 15% in numbers of people recruited (see Birrell *et.al.*, 2004: 91-2). Nevertheless, there was significant circulation of such professionals (Hugo *et.al.*, 2001: 48). Calculations of *net* migration (arrivals minus departures) provide for greater appreciation of the global dimension of temporariness and the circulation of capital and its *lieutenants*.

Why did Australia recruit so many highly skilled market-ready professionals from the 1990s? Australia's demand for such occupations up to at least until the 1970s was lower in an economy reliant on protected, primary and industrial production. The restructuring of the economy which commenced in earnest under federal Labor governments between 1983 and 1996 embraced, or was developed especially in relation to, the growth economies of the Asian region (Brownlee, 2012; Cotton and Ravenhill, 1999). The challenge, as seen by these and successive pro-globalisation governments, was to reposition the Australian economy in relation to the larger but cheaper labour supply in countries such as those to its North. This required certain legal, cultural, geospatial and logistical market knowledge resources to compete and expand. In addressing these needs, the Australian state played a role in the rapid growth of globally-dispersed mass production, exploiting and

entrenching a global division of labour and historical accumulation of value. New migrant recruitment policies targeting managers, entrepreneurs and myriad other market-expanding occupations are an important feature of this process.

### **Conclusion**

Global Value Chains (GVCs) are a telling contemporary feature of Australia's experience of globalisation. Despite the illusion that they facilitate the circulation of capital, global value chains as a system of production concentrate capital's accumulation and reinforce established North-South dependencies. This process can be measured in gross wealth or value-capture but also, supplementarily, in the migration of agents of capital – professional and entrepreneurial occupations concerned with (global) competition and the expansion of capital. The data on Australia over the last quarter century illustrates that migration is no longer principally about *productive labour*, skilled or unskilled. The largest growth in Australian permanent and temporary migration over the last 25 years has been in the amorphous 'value-adding' service categories that attract business and skilled corporate professionals, SME entrepreneurs and managers.

This analysis indicates that the term 'migrant labour' should be used in very qualified terms in describing Australian migration trends and the impacts of migration on that country's political economy. Understanding global value chain production can help explain the context for disaggregating productive labour from non-productive and market expanding occupations.

Consistent with Held's and Saad-Fihlo's arguments about historic patterns of transnational accumulation, Australia has benefitted from affiliations with the Anglophone market hegemony of the UK and USA, maintaining comparatively high wages and growing its latter-stage value-adding service inputs. A broader claim supported by the analysis is that advanced capitalist economies supportive of the global market system no longer recruit principally for *nation*, but to be better positioned in the hierarchy of global value chains of production (and ultimately consumption). While Australia has maintained a migration program to ensure a minimum population growth rate for the continued expansion of capital, the targeting of market economy professionals by successive

governments was and remains a deliberate and explicit commitment to position Australia within the club of developed economies that have historically governed and benefited most from global capitalist production.

The related concern of this article is establishing ground for an approach to class, including the problematic distinction of productive and non-productive labour for both GVC and migration analyses. Throughout the article, 'occupation' has been emphasised in order to highlight the categorisation and process of 'value adding', whether through corporate-scale services professionals or SME operators and suppliers. The analysis of Australian migration data suggests that business operators and entrepreneurs, highly skilled salaried and market economy professionals all fall within, or rather on one side of, a transnational division between (productive) labour and (non-productive) *occupations*. The latter's role is in expanding capital by sourcing and putting productive labour to work for maximum value extraction, especially in the global 'periphery' and, by pursuing the various value-expanding and value appropriation strategies mostly from within the 'core', *e.g.*, aiding interest-bearing capital, foreign direct investment, intellectual property creation and control.

Because the role of migrant entrepreneurs and market professionals supporting or advancing the interests of corporate transnational production and financialisation is essentially about replicating competitive market and class relations, and not about their role as labour, their economic and social agency is pre-figured fundamentally in other ways. They are 'economic citizens' of a global market so long as they help construct the social milieu in economic terms, although whether they then act consciously as a 'class' is a moot point, as capital is driven by competition between such actors.

Further research is necessary on these matters. The circulation of non-productive and market-expanding occupations needs closer examination in relation to stages of value – arranging and ensuring for value's creation across multiple sites of production, 'adding to' value largely via governance and market expanding service inputs, the finance of internal chain transfers and exchange, and the competitive pursuit of further expansion of capital. Where the OECD provides gross data on intermediates and final-demand, there is significant scope to follow the examples of Smith *et.al.*, (2002), Vind and Fold (2010) in an anatomical

analysis of specific value chains, just as research on global elites effectively follows individuals through their intricate webs and interlocks.

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