

Migration and the Future of Work



Delayed, disrupted or reconfigured? Aspirations and infrastructures for migration in pandemic times

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In recent years, researchers have increasingly drawn attention to the significance of aspirations and desires and the role of various infrastructures and industries in generating, directing and conditioning migrant mobilities. These interventions problematize orthodox conceptions of decision-making by emphasizing that migration is not the result of one-off decisions or constituted by singular movements, and also that migration itself is shaped by a range of actors and platforms that induce, articulate and direct decisions and mobilities. This presentation looks at the aspirations and desires and the industries and infrastructures that can inform our understanding of migration in and beyond pandemic times. To do so, the presentation examines the context of Aotearoa New Zealand where responses to COVID-19 have included border closure, suspension of immigration processing, as well as incremental extensions to temporary migration status, with a focus on people on temporary work and study visas. The presentation highlights how the pandemic will have both immediate and long-lasting effects across migrant lifetimes but also draws attention to the constant reconfiguration of migration possibilities that is enabled by industry actors who pivot to new opportunities, as well as the social circulation of significant information and misinformation about potential migration futures.