A 'soft-migration' approach:

'Home and host' experiences, opportunities and challenges among Korean residents in New Zealand

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Background

Human migration – A form of human need?

▶ 'population of almost *every* country is nowadays *a collection of diasporas*' (Bauman, 2011)
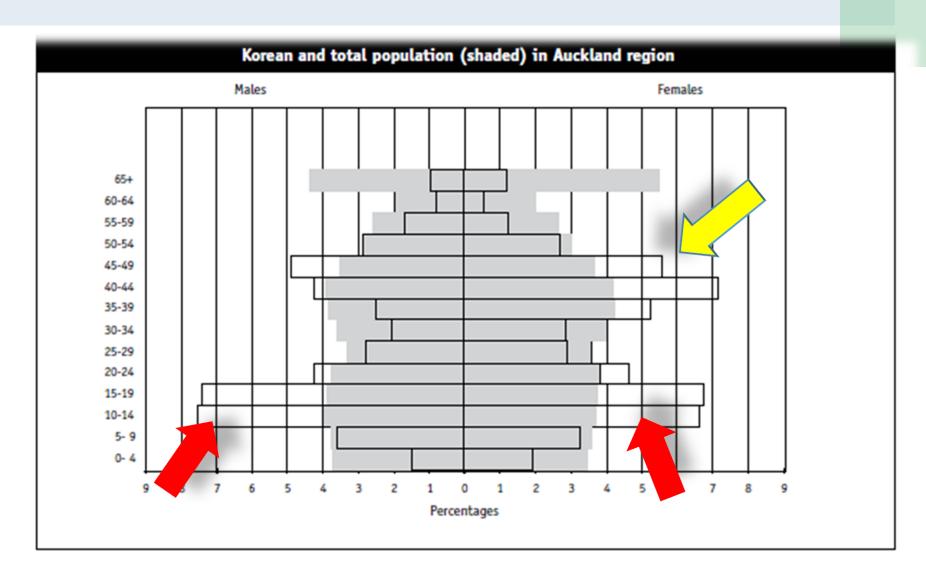
Global connectivity continues to increase and the nature of 'new migration' in the digital age

▶ Human migration is becoming less constrained by geographical distance, language barriers, and cultural differences

▶ Then, how traditional understandings of human migration are applicable to the reality the world experiences nowadays?

Korean Residents in New Zealand

- 1950: Kayforce to Korean War

- A few Korean families arrived in New Zealand after the Vietnam War

- 1991: 930 Koreans

- 2013: 30,171 Koreans

- Fourth biggest Asian community in New Zealand

- About 3,000 newcomers, new-goers every year (stop-over or return migration)

Korean Population in New Zealand

Korean and total population (shaded) in Auckland region

Diversity in Unity

- ▶ Permanent residents

- ▶ Work-permit holders

- ▶ NZ citizens

- ▶ Working holidayers

- ▶ International students

- ▶ Over-stayers

- ▶ Short-term visitors

- ▶ Return migrants

Research Projects

Four serial studies with more than 170 Koreans in the Korean community – still being expanded

- 1st study: 80 interviews (2007-2008)

- 2nd study: Survey of 60 adults (2010-2011)

- 3rd study: 14 key informant interviews (2013)

- 4th study: 20 interviews plus 19 in Australia (2014-2015)

Methodological Approaches

▶ Mixed methods approach – using both qualitative interviews and quantitative survey

▶ Key informant research approach to interviewing of knowledgeable participants

- Also serving as a check on the information obtained from other informants

▶ An 'insider' research approach – as a member of the study population

▶ A 'sarangbang' discourse model – cultural protocols for interviewing community members

Findings: The Korean community in NZ

▶ Diverse, flexible, mobile, and inherently associated with advanced technologies physically and virtually

▶ Information technologies and social media have afforded a growing mobility of people, offering new path for migration across nations

▶ Korean residents are unlikely to consider moving to New Zealand as a 'crossing of the Rubicon' (i.e., there is no going back)

  • While harbouring thoughts of return migration and potential re-migration to a third nation

What's Most Commonly Heard

"No, I am not Kiwi [New Zealander], I am still Korean," says 39-year-old Devonport cafe owner Denny Kim, who came here five years ago so his children could have a better education.

"At the moment, I am happy to live in New Zealand, but when my son and daughter go to university I will go back to Korea."

Features of the Korean Community

➢ Consisted of different groups of residents – temporary, permanent and naturalised members

➢ Created and developed by 'mushrooming' small groups and organisations

- Churches serve as an anchor point

➢ Became visualised through promoting religious and civic participation beyond the community

- Double-resourced through utilising 'telecommuncation' and 'transnationalisation' between the two worlds

Gatherings, Groups, Organisations

Leisure groups

Sports clubs

Senior clubs

On-/Off-line Korean Community

Churches

Social support

Discussion: 'Soft Migration' in the Digital Age

- 'Soft migration' can refer to the human movement of ethnic individuals and groups who have left, but maintain virtual and physical ties with their homelands regardless of their legal status and citizenship in the adoptive society.

  - This type of migration is more diverse, flexible, mobile and liberal than usual, and inherently associated with advanced technologies.

Nature of 'soft migration'

▶ Economic/Non-economic choice

  • Education migration, tourist migration …

▶ 'Soft-landing' relocation and resettlement process

▶ Double presence or belonging ('soften' and flexible belongingness)

▶ Fluid (soft) acculturation

▶ Virtual identity formation

▶ Return migration/ re-migration

Issues with 'Soft Migration'

Migration and diaspora in the digital era

- Double empowerment – transnational activities and engagement

- Digital empowerment – utilizing technological developments and online social networks

- Negative empowerment – inequality among migrant/diaspora members

- Digital anomie – breakdown of norms or creation of speedy achievements

New migration requires a paradigm shift!

Because the influence of technology is "undeniable":

It [technology] facilitates the flow of people across the planet and the formation, growth and maintenance of diaspora communities and family ties. In particular, the personal computer, the cell [Smart] phone and access to the Internet have become quotidian resources among migrants who use them to develop, maintain and recreate informal and formal transnational networks in both the physical and the digital worlds, while reinforcing and shaping their sense of individual and collective identity.

(Oiarzabal & Reips, 2012, p. 1334)

Concluding Comments

New migration in the digital age raises critical questions about how traditional understandings of human migration are applicable to the reality the world experiences nowadays.

Then a cooperative approach?

- mutuality, connected, interdependence, 'both-and' orientation

- not 'either-or(selective)', 'evolutionary' approach

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