Analysis Of Korean Migration

Looking at it from a national-level perspective, Kutsumi (2004), studies the formation of social organization and offers some estimates of the magnitude of Korean migration to the whole of the Philippines. Using data obtained from the Annual Report of Statistics on Immigration and Emigration Control of the South Korean Ministry of Justice in Seoul, reports collected suggest that there are more Koreans living in the Philippines than the estimated number of Filipinos working and/or living in Korea. Using South Korean statistics as well, Kutsumi (2004) further notes that the Philippines ranks tenth as the country of destination of Korean immigrants. To support this, Miralao (2007), further examines the Korean diaspora and looks into the nature of the Philippine-bound migration from South Korea and into the factors and developments in both South Korea and the Philippines that have given rise to this migration stream through review of data and statistics from different government agencies.

Zooming in on a more local or city-level, perceptions of the phenomenon were gathered through key informant interviews and participant observation. Makpil (2007) surveys the prevalence of South Koreans in Dumaguete City and notes that the natives refer to the growing population of Koreans in the city as “Korean invasion”. Makpil (2007), however, argues that the Korean presence in Dumaguete is still very small and that the “Korean invasion” is mostly imagined. The preliminary description suggests that there are a few emerging patterns that characterize the encounter between the Koreans and the Filipinos-- the Dumaguete residents express feelings of vague unease about the Koreans in the community while the Koreans express disinterest in building relations with the local community. According to Yoon (2005) , this is a characteristic feature of South Korean immigrants, further noting that wherever Koreans move in large numbers, they create their own enclaves.

Metro Manila is the first preferred area because of immense business opportunities. Other preferred areas are Cavite, Baguio, Pampanga and Rizal because of relatively cool climate and proximity to business centers. Filipino residents in these areas have mixed experiences and perceptions of Koreans – mostly negative. According to Kim (2015), to achieve economic miracle, former president Park Chung-hee inculcated pride and will power in Koreans, instilling in them the belief that they are of superior race. Existing literature suggest that the Koreans can be very nationalistic, instinctual, militaristic and goal-oriented to make money and these materialistic values spawned great anxieties with many Filipinos perceiving them as ‘bastos’ or rude and rough. However, Kim (2015) pointed out that Filipinos who learned of Koreans through other people’s stories hate Koreans, but Filipinos who learned of Koreans through Korean pop culture and Korean drama series learned to like Koreans.

As a focal point of Korean life in the Philippines, from what can be gathered from existing literature, as soon as the immigrants accumulate sufficient capital, they invest in their children’s education and they establish their own churches and this becomes the center of religious as well as social activities. Some instances in which the churches where already there before the business-oriented migrants came in.

Indeed, there is a growing number of Korean missionaries who come to the Philippines — a predominantly Roman Catholic nation — to attract locals to their Protestant denominations. While

the Roman Catholic clergy views these activities with a great sense of suspicion and dismay, many Filipinos are open to the foreigners. To cite an example, a field research on the Korean population in Dumaguete City conducted by Makpil (2007) found that the poor go to the Korean churches because they give handouts such as warm meals. Makpil (2007) attributes this isolation to communication problems, as initially only very few immigrants know English, not to mention the local dialects.

Barros (2006) likewise did in-depth interviews in an attempt to determine the cultural factors with how Koreans integrate in their host culture particularly in Baguio City and how the city landscape changes with it. Korean pastors, missionaries and students were randomly sampled for the paper and the study points to minimal changes in the cultural patterns, perceptions and communication styles of the Koreans. The study finds that they opt to retain their original or heritage culture while still actively participating in the host culture. With this, the impact on the cultural diversity of Baguio is reflected through the increase of Korean churches, schools and restaurants as well as the local community's adaptation of Korean fashion, interest in Korean soap dramas on TV, and slight acculturation of Filipino classmates and tutors teaching them English as a second language.

Song (2018) suggests that the inflow of Korean migrants has brought significant contributions to the Philippines. However, there seems to be a dearth of empirical information to support this.

Waves of Korean Migration to the Philippines

The political alliance between the Philippines and South Korea has a long history. During the Cold War, both countries were staunch supporters of the United States. The Philippine government was among the first to send troops to the Korean Peninsula to defend the South against the invasion from the communist North (Han, 2018). With this in mind, the first phase of Korean settlement in the Philippines consisted the Korean soldiers who came with the Imperial Japanese Army when it occupied the Philippines during World War II and the war brides of Filipino soldiers who fought on the side of the UN Forces in the Korean War.

Migration began to take on a more economic character. Industrialization in Korea in the 1960s and 1970s increased the cost of living and many Koreans moved to the urban cities to earn higher income. The 1990s saw an expansion in the variety of Korean businesses in the Philippines and South Korean business people not from just manufacturing companies, but from import-export businesses, restaurants, and construction companies, expanded in the country.

Beginning in the late 1990s and 2000s, the number of Korean students started to increase. The influx of students coincided with a more relaxed visa policy of the Bureau of Immigration aimed at attracting foreign students. It was also marked by growing influence and engagement by the various Korean associations with mainstream Philippine society.

Movement Typologies

Migration for Education

Since the 1990s economic boom, the phenomenon of fewer numbers of children expanded income among middle class households in East Asia and education of children has become a

significant “project” or priority to improve a family’s well-being and upward social mobility (Huang and Yeoh 2005, 2011; Waters 2005; Lee and Koo 2006, as cited in Kim and Thang 2016). The desire to improve English likewise increased as being able to speak the language symbolized personal excellence and competence (Moon 2009 as cited in Kim and Thang, 2016).

As expected, Western countries was the preferred choice in terms of study abroad destination. However, lower cost of living and educational expenses, availability of suitable schools, and other incentives such as loose visa policies in Southeast Asia made it a second choice destination. In addition, the geographical proximity of former colonies of the English-speaking west such as the Philippines made it more attractive. Thus, the wave of migration to the Philippines that followed the business influx in the 2000s was the wave of Korean students (Kim and Thang, 2016).

Indeed, Koreans constitute the highest proportion of foreign students in the Philippines, with Cebu hosting 88% of special study permit holders in 2010 (Palaubsanon 2010). This type of migration is more likely to be temporary, with the number of recorded migrants being greater than the actual number of students since parents or mothers come with their sons and daughters to attend pramary and secondary schools.

Migration for Retirement

Korean retirees were traditionally taken care of by their children. This is somehow part of the traditional Asian values and can be observed in other parts of Asia as well. However, fast industrialization caused the transformation of the Korean society and this traditional family values and bond has been weakened. Thus, retirement migration appeared in the mid 2000s.

The remarkable rise in the number of Koreans retiring in the Philippines seemingly started in 2005 when a Korean newspaper, The Dong-A Ilbo, reported how a married couple moved to Baguio City after their retirement. The newspaper reported, “We are enjoying a comfortable and satisfactory second life here,” Jeong Won-yeong, 61, and Kim Sun-ok, 60, said. They have described their lives in the Philippines as busy and pleasant and have claimed that they plan on staying in the country until they die, visiting Korea a couple of times per year to see their sons and daughters. The couple, at that time, was receiving a monthly allowance of 2 million won or around P100,000.

From 1,000 applications in 2005, the number of Koreans who applied for Special Resident Retiree’s Visa (SRRV) increased to 8,000 in 2014, according to the Philippine Retirement Authority (PRA). The SRRV provides foreign retirees special privileges such as the option to retire and live in the Philippines, enter and exit the country as often as they want, tax exemptions, business investments and use of foreign health cards in accredited hospitals or clinics.

Koreans ranked second among top 10 foreign nationals under the PRA in 2013. First are the Chinese while third to fifth are the Taiwanese, Japanese and Americans. As of 2014, there were 27,000 foreigners from 107 countries who retired and were living in the Philippines under the SRRV program.

South Korea’s Pension Scheme

Korean elder’s economic condition after retirement can be described as not as stable like the Japanese’s. Korean national pension scheme began in 1988 only and for a person to qualify for pension, they must be at least 61 years old with at least ten years of contributions. In addition, the benefits nay not large enough to cover living expenses for a person of that age given the necessary living expenses including medical bills and maintenance. Furthermore, Korea’s government policy for the elderly is not well developed-- with little provision for job opportunities for the elderly in South Korea.

Householding and Social Reproduction

Social reproduction includes how food, clothing and shelter are made available for immediate consumption, the ways in which the care and socialization of children are provided, the care of the infirm and the elderly, and the social organization of sexuality.

Households make up one of the key institutions of the capitalist world economy. Household consumption is the principal driver of national economies. Therefore, it is important to consider its role in social reproduction and the reflexive relationship between the household’s capacity to generationally sustain life and the social, political and economic context in which it is imbedded. After all, it is the household where it all starts-- it is the indissoluble link to territory, to kinship, to co-residentiality, and overall identity.

Tying these two concepts together, education migration may be temporary but could be a factor in the permanent migration decision-making process eventually. Householding, as coined by Douglas (2006, 2012 as cited in Kim & Thang, 2016), is the movement of one may sometimes trigger mobility in another, resulting in the orchestrated movement of grandparents and grandchildren transnationally.

Neoclassical Theory of Migration

The neoclassical migration theory views migrants as individual, rational actors, who decide to move on the basis of a cost-benefit calculation. Assuming free choice and full access to information, they are expected to go where they can be the most productive, that is, are able to earn the highest wages. This capacity obviously depends on the specific skills a person possesses and the specific structure of labour markets (de Haas, 2008).

Gravity Model

Geographic proximity may explain why many South Korean tourists choose to come to the Philippines. They are the leading customers in many popular tourist areas such as Boracay, Bohol, Cebu or Palawan. With the famed Philippine hospitality, they are likely met and taken care of by Korean-speaking guides, with hotels and many restaurants providing Korean food, alcoholic beverages and Korean entertainment. According to official statistics, 370,000 South Koreans visited the Philippines in 2004.

Apart from the short-term tourists who usually stay less than a week, Philippine media estimate the number of South Koreans who choose to permanently live in the country at 46,000.

Typically Korean migrants are businessmen or traders, students or missionaries. It is hard to overlook the growing number of Korean restaurants, grocery stores and other businesses established in Manila, Cebu and other parts of the Philippines.

On the contrary, South Korea is not a preferred destination of Philippine migrant workers. It is well known that the Philippines is one of the major exporters of labor on a global scale: The 2.3 million OFWs (overseas Filipino workers) who earn a living outside the shores of their own country make up about two percent of the population (PSA, 2017). Their remittances have become a pillar of the local economy. However, due to a restrictive immigration policy, according to media reports, there are about 36,000 Filipinos in South Korea, nearly half of whom are undocumented. It could be inferred that though several Filipinos would like to seek employment in South Korea, if for no other reason than it is a neighboring country that can be reached easily by plane in less than four hours.

From East Asia to Southeast Asia

Educational migration in the reverse direction of East Asia to Southeast Asia is a phenomenon that has become increasingly visible in the recent decade, especially among middle class families in South Korea and China. Similarly, reverse retirement flow is becoming prevalent triggered by the increasing longevity in East Asia (Kim & Thang, 2016).

These are less discussed forms of migratory flows that could add new dimensions to human security issues in both East Asia and Southeast Asia and to the role of migration in ASEAN community building . Compared to the conventional labor migration, the economic position of transnational retirees and students is more secure in that they usually bring in economic resources from home. Cultural and social positions, however, could be perceived as less stable-- as they are usually in their teens or late fifties and above. These age groups are less likely to be equipped to adapt to foreign environment, could be at a disadvantage in terms of linguistic capacity and communicative skills, and are severed from the most important relationship needed for transition from adolescence to adulthood -- the family.

The Philippines as a Destination Country

The image of the Philippines before the international community has of late been suffering bad press. Concerns about the peace and order situation and the overall stability of the country have been raised. Despite this though, there is a perceived increasing influx of foreigners (Robles, 2018), mostly from East Asia, who still choose to come, either on a temporary or on a permanent basis. What does the Philippines have to offer these people? What attracts them to the Philippines? Why do they choose to remain while others do not? Answering these questions could give Filipinos a new light-- for the locals have so long indulged in self-criticism and self-flagellation.

As examples, the Japanese have established many businesses in the National Capital Region and Region IV, mostly in the manufacturing industry. A lot of them have also opted to retire in the country permanently. South Korean businesses have sprouted in the metropolis and Korean missionaries have established many churches mostly in Region VII, particularly in Cebu, Dumaguete and Bohol. Some Philippine schools offer Special English Programs for South Korean students specifically and every year, they keep coming back in droves. Likewise, some

Vietnamese refugees in Palawan who fled the Vietnam War have chosen to stay permanently, establishing a little Vietnam known as the local tourist site Viet Ville on the site of the former refugee camp (Penamente, 2017).

The aforementioned cases are but a sampling of the many foreigners who choose to come to the Philippines and eventually adopt the Philippines as their own home. That the Philippines is actually a destination country for some of the world's peoples is a novel fact that, until now, has largely been ignored and unexplored. It is about time to take advantage of this phenomenon and make use of what can be harnessed. The Philippines may just have something to offer to the world as much as it can learn and benefit from it.