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Transnational Migration, Gentrification, and Displacement: The Case of South Korea

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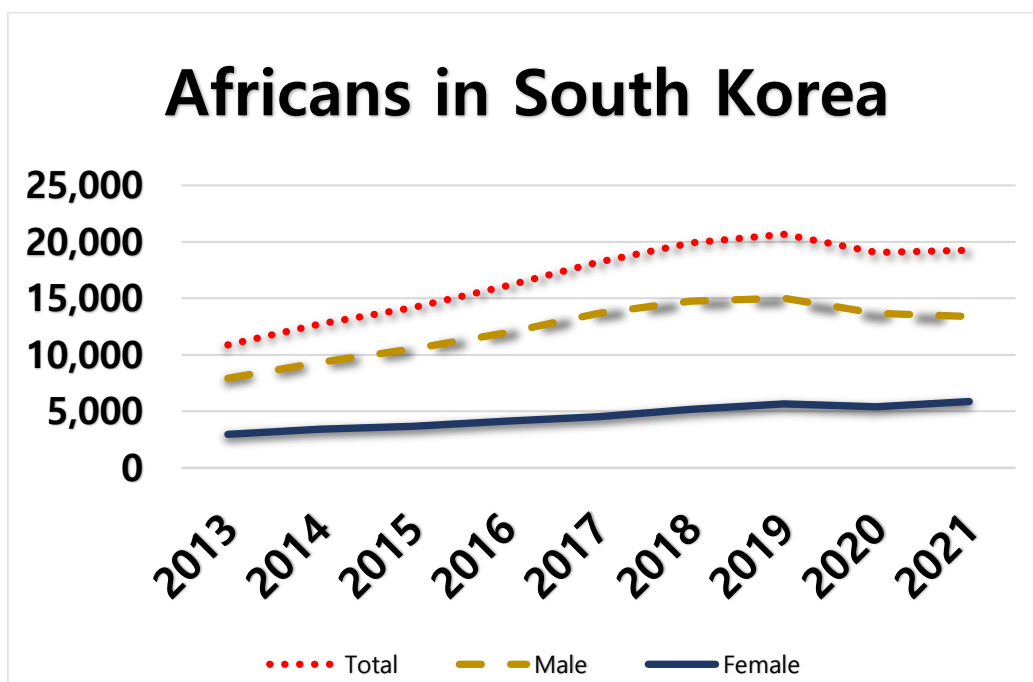
- There has been a trial to quantify international migration (Abel, Guy J. and Nikola Sander (28 March 2014). "Quantifying Global International Migration Flows" Science 343. 1520.)
- Displacement of Koreans in History
 - Over 6.8 million Koreans settled across 170 countries since 1860. This history is divided into four distinct periods, with the first three highlighting displacement through migration (Yoon, 2012).
 - First Period: Early Migration (1860s - 1906)
 - Choson farmers and laborers migrated to China, Russia, and Hawaii due to political and economic hardship.
 - Second Period: Japanese Colonial Era (1910 - 1945)
 - Displacement of landless farmers to Manchuria and Japan.
 - Political refugees and activists seeking asylum.
 - Manchurian Incident (1931) doubled Korean population in Manchuria.
 - Forced migration and drafting of Korean men for wartime labor and military service (Han 2002: 107).
 - Third Period: Post-War Migration Policy (1945 - 1962)
 - Establishment of South Korea's first migration policy.
 - Students, war orphans, and interracial families move to North America.
 - 6,000 Korean women married to US soldiers relocate to the US.

- Around 5,000 children, including war orphans and adoptees, move to the US.
- 6,000 Korean students in the US, many settling permanently.
- Groundwork for future immigration post-1965 US policy changes (Yu 1983: 234).
- Modern Displacement of South Koreans – Gentrification
 - Capital reinvestment and commodification of space lead to displacement (Clark, 2005; Lees et al., 2008).
 - State-Led Urbanization in Seoul
 - Korean developmental state's role since the 1960s in shaping the urban landscape.
 - Urban redevelopment collaboration between real estate and property owners.
 - High-density construction driven by speculative market (Shin, 2009; Shin, 2011).
 - Socio-Economic Hardships and Socio-Political Dynamics of Displacement
 - **Redevelopment** improves physical conditions but imposes hardship through displacement.
 - **Affordable housing demolition** to make way for middle-class infrastructure (Porteous and Smith, 2001).
 - **Struggle** against forced eviction and housing rights (Kim et al., 1998; Shin, 2008).
 - However, in the current Seoul's unique gentrification path, displacement issue not a major political concern (Shin and Kim, 2015; Davidson and Lees, 2010).
- Modern Displacement of non-Koreans in South Korea through Gentrification
 - Korea's Demographic Shift
 - From a homogeneous society to a multicultural one.
 - The rise in foreign residents and multinational marriages.
 - Transformation into a Labor-Importing Nation
 - Emergence of Residential Enclaves
 - Development of distinct ethnic communities within urban settings.
 - Introduction of cultural diversity in a historically uniform society.
 - Case of Africa business enclave in Itaewon, Seoul, South Korea shows **displacement through gentrification**

African migrants showed movement across borders and within borders.



- Transnational Migration - From Africa to South Korea
 - Since the late 1980s, increase in migration especially from countries in sub-Saharan Africa.
 - - Acceleration and diversification of emigration out of Africa, driven by economic opportunities and social transformation.
 - The number of African migrants in South Korea is steadily growing.



- Africa business enclave in Itaewon
 - Itaewon, Seoul's Multi-ethnic Enclave
 - With the **US military base, embassies, and Seoul Central Mosque**, Itaewon hosts residential and commercial functions for foreigners in Seoul.
 1. Emerged in the 2000s
 2. Low rent in the old Ihwa Market street and Hookerhill
 3. Dissolution of Africa Street started in 2012 due to gentrification.
 - The displacement of African migrants at Itaewaon was due to state-led gentrification via the development of Hannam-dong New Town in 2004, an urban development project led by the government (Choi, 2024).
 - Indirect, direct, and symbolic displacement impact on the ethnic enclave.
- Understanding Displacement in Gentrification
 - Gentrification transforms urban spaces, often resulting in the displacement of existing users and owners by more affluent groups, categorized into direct, indirect, and symbolic forms (Shin et al. 2016; Janoschka et al. 2014).
 - Direct Displacement
 - Direct displacement involves the immediate expulsion of residents due to physical actions or economic pressures, such as eviction or unaffordable rent increases (Shin et al. 2016).
 - Indirect Displacement
 - Indirect displacement occurs gradually, through increased living costs and property values in surrounding areas, making neighborhoods inaccessible to original residents (Marcuse, 1985; Davidson and Lees 2010; Lees et al. 2008).
 - Symbolic Displacement
 - Symbolic displacement refers to the erosion of the cultural identity and sense of community among long-term residents, leading to feelings of alienation (Atkinson, 2015).
- Conclusion
 - Introduction to South Korea's Demographic Shift
 - Historically homogeneous, South Korea is now experiencing significant transnational migration.
 - Inflow of African Migrants
 - African migrants are becoming increasingly prominent in South Korea.
 - Many choose to work and live in urban areas, notably due to the absence of work permit visa requirements.

- Development of an African Enclave
- An African enclave has developed in the Itaewon area.
- A business enclave known as 'Africa Street' has emerged, serving as a cultural and commercial hub.
- Impact of Gentrification
- Gentrification and state-led urban development have led to the fading of Africa Street.
- African migrants face displacement due to these gentrification efforts.
- Dual Displacement Challenges
- African migrants in South Korea encounter dual challenges: displacement from their countries of origin and from their places of settlement due to gentrification.
- This reflects broader themes of socio-economic dynamics of transnational migration, displacement, and gentrification.
- Policy Recommendation
 1. Be cautious in conducting development in a society
 - There can be gentrification as a result of development.
 - Simply speaking, poor and original residents are likely to be expelled from the place of origin
 - They are likely to be displaced after development.
 2. Government need to prepare a new place for the socially weak such as migrants and people of place of origin before government or developers try development.

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