

Korean Immigrants in South Africa's Rainbow Nation

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The history of Korean im/migrants on the African continent is relatively recent and on a smaller scale compared to Korean diasporas to other continents. Migration from South Korea to South Africa does not fit the stereotypical migration pattern from a country in the Global South with a lower income to a higher income country in the North. Hence, it is difficult to explain by either conventional migration theory focusing on income discrepancies between the country of origin and destination, or the neo-classical and functionalist push and pull model. Drawing on in-depth interviews, the aim of this study is to map out the spatial trajectories of migration taken by Korean immigrants to, from, and within South Africa. Central to this work are the multi-directional and onward geographic migratory trajectories, which are fluid and evolve over the course of migrants' lives. Complex issues and motivations that have informed their embodied movements and migration trajectories are explored. In this study the term migration trajectory primarily refers to physical movement through global space, which consists of migrant embodied mobilities. In tracing the migration trajectories of Korean im/migrants to, from and/or within South Africa, the economic and socio-cultural dynamics of migratory trajectories and migrants' changing subjectivity are examined. This facilitates analysis of the way in which lifetime migration trajectories are meshed within the socio-economic and cultural circumstances of both origin and destination countries.