

Workshop I: Demographic Realities, Policy Responses and Intercultural Urban Governance in Canada and Korea (8:00pm -9:30pm)

1. Immigration policy for a shrinking world: A case study of demography and immigration in Canada

Author: Daniel Hiebert, Emeritus Professor of Geography, The University of British Columbia

Abstract

In this paper, I will set the context by situating Canada within a general overview of global demographic trends. We are entering a new era when global fertility will soon decline below the replacement level. Demographic momentum will mean that the global population continues to increase but at a diminishing rate. This process is highly uneven and the world is fragmented between areas of high population growth vs those characterized by stasis or even decline. Everywhere, populations are aging. With a total fertility rate of 1.25, Canada is in the lowest quintile of countries in terms of global fertility and will begin to experience negative natural increase by the end of this decade – a pattern that is projected to persist for at least 50 years. Canada has increasingly turned to immigration as a means of achieving both population and economic growth. However, this policy has been built on the twin assumptions of an endless supply of potential immigrants and a domestic population that is open to significant cultural change. How will the supply of immigrants change in the new era of global demography? Can a high rate of immigration be sustained in an age of increasing political polarization, and at a time when public confidence in Canada's immigration system has eroded? What are the challenges for Canada's demographic future given these changing global and domestic circumstances? I will conclude by offering some policy recommendations for Canada as it seeks to engage, productively, with a shrinking world.

2. Immigration and Multiculturalism: Canadian Tensions and Comparative Relevance

Author: Yasmeen Abu-Laban, Professor of Political Science, The University of Alberta

Abstract

Today Canada is often upheld as a model of multiculturalism and successful immigrant integration. However, as this paper will illuminate through historic and contemporary examples, this representation belies the reality of tensions and contradictions. As a settler-colony with a pre-existing Indigenous population Canada has relied on immigration, although until the 1960s immigration policy was explicitly ethnically and racially discriminatory. Today, at both nationally and provincial levels, immigration has been politicized in negative ways by politicians and publics, and many newcomers experience inequities. Likewise, while Canada has had an official policy of multiculturalism since 1971, for much of its history Canada supported the assimilation of minorities into the dominant ethnic group (what is also called "Angloconformity"). Today multiculturalism has also been

subject to backlash, and racism remains an issue. Consequently, it is argued that uncritically treating Canada as model not only belies complexity but inappropriately runs the risk of treating Canada as exceptional. In contrast, a more realistic comparative approach and use of the Canadian case can attune us to recognizing the tensions between closure and openness evident in all societies in a globalizing world, as well as the real choices facing publics, politicians and policy-makers.

3. Beyond a Singular Category: Homeland Homogenization and the Misrecognition of the Koryo-saram

Authors: Jihye Son, Institute of Asiatic Studies, Korea University & In-Jin Yoon, Professor of Sociology, Korea University

Abstract

This paper examines how Koryo-saram are frequently treated in South Korea as a single, homogeneous ethnic group despite their diverse national, linguistic, and historical backgrounds. Although the term “Koryo-saram” is widely used to refer to post-Soviet ethnic Koreans, it often obscures important differences shaped by country of origin, migration trajectory, legal status, language competence, and generational experience. By grouping them under one undifferentiated category, the homeland reproduces a simplified and often essentialized understanding of co-ethnic returnees.

Drawing on sociological perspectives on ethnicity, boundary-making, and return migration, this presentation argues that such homogenization produces a form of misrecognition. Koryo-saram are symbolically included as members of the Korean nation, yet they are simultaneously evaluated through narrow and standardized assumptions about belonging, adaptation, and identity. This dual process reveals how ethnic affinity does not automatically translate into social recognition. The presentation highlights the limits of homeland-centered ethnic imagination and calls for a more differentiated understanding of Koryo-saram that takes seriously the plurality of their lived experiences. In doing so, it contributes to broader discussions on diaspora, return migration, and the politics of ethnic categorization.

Northeast Asia, Mutual Perceptions of North Korean Migrants and South Koreans, Trends and Tasks of Studies of Koreans Abroad, and the History of Koreans Abroad, History of Overseas Koreans, International Migration and Multiculturalism in Northeast Asia, Reflections on Multiculturalism in Korea and Its Prospects. His research interests include social psychology, minorities, international migration, and multiculturalism.

4. Branding Cultural Diversity: The Intercultural City and the Politics of Global Recognition in South Korea

Author: Youjeong Jang, Researcher, Geography, The University of Auckland, New Zealand

Abstract

In South Korea, there has been an increasing call for a 'local turn' in managing cultural diversity, driven by the growing number of international migrants. This highlights the significance of local autonomy, where cities move beyond being mere transmitters of nation-state diversity policy initiatives to play pivotal roles in policy-making and implementation. Such a shift partly explains the circulation of the Intercultural Cities Programme (ICC) of the Council of Europe in Korea - an urban diversity policy implemented by over 160 cities worldwide to facilitate migrant integration.

Starting with Ansan - the city with the largest migrant population in Korea - three more Korean local governments have joined the ICC since 2020. Despite its stated purpose of fostering locally specific approaches to diversity management, the implementation of the ICC in Korea often serves to construct the city's image as a 'global city'. Focusing on this gap, this presentation demonstrates how joining the ICC has been used as a strategy for cities' pursuit of global recognition in the Korean context, and how the rhetoric of the 'intercultural city' has been mobilized to project the city's image of symbolic tolerance and inclusiveness.