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North Korean Secondary Asylum in the UK

Abstract

The number of North Korean secondary migrants from South Korea has grown markedly in the last ten years. Drawing on semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory observation conducted between 2012-2017, this article explores the motivations for North Korean secondary migration and the role of transnational networks in the migration and settlement trajectory. Our findings suggest that many North Koreans in South Korea feel discriminated against due to their origins, and unable to engage in upward social mobility. We argue that North Korean secondary migration to the United Kingdom (UK) is not a linear process of push and pull factors but a highly reactive and unpredictable one that depends on information fed by brokers. The UK hosts one of the largest communities of North Koreans outside Northeast Asia. Most North Koreans in the UK are secondary asylum seekers from South Korea. Their life in the UK, however, comes with its own set of challenges, some of which mirror co-ethnic or ideological frictions among North Koreans themselves, with the Korean-Chinese, or with South Koreans. This paper contributes to debates on multiple migration, providing a migrant-centric perspective to answer why people who are offered material benefits in the country they arrive in choose to on-migrate to a place where life can be often more challenging.

***Keyword**: North Korea; secondary migration; asylum seekers; UK*

North Korean Secondary Asylum the UK

Introduction

Discontent characterises life for many new arrivals from North Korea in Asia's fourth largest economy. North Korean asylum seekers struggle to assimilate into South Korean society. Many are unhappy with the low status employment they are expected to perform, while others face problems adjusting to the demands of the South Korean education system. In response, a growing number of North Koreans have on-migrated to third countries (countries other than North or South Korea), in particular, the UK. This article explores the motivations for North Korean secondary migration[1] and the role of transnational networks in the migration and resettlement trajectory. Central to this research is the question of why are North Koreans on-migrating from the Republic of Korea (hereafter, ROK or South Korea)? Our findings suggest that many North Koreans in South Korea feel socially and politically excluded, stigmatised as representatives of a poverty stricken, international pariah state, and unable to engage in upward social mobility. We argue that North Koreans engage in secondary migration for the chance escape their marginalised status and in response to the promise of the upward mobility that eludes them in South Korea. Once they are in the UK, North Koreans feel it is possible to forge an identity hinging not on their socio-political background, but on their ability to consume and reproduce the forms of symbolic capital– the English language, education through an elite institution, and economic success. However, hopes that life in the UK will offer freedom from the stigma of being North Korean are dashed because North Koreans resettling in the UK usually find

work in similarly low paid, low status jobs offered by South Korean employees. The inter-ethnic dynamics that emerge subsequently mirror unequal Korean Peninsula politics. This paper contributes to debates on secondary migration, providing a migrant-centric perspective to answer why immigrants who are expected to quickly assimilate to the host society and who receive material benefits upon resettlement choose to on-migrate to a place where life is often equally challenging.

Onward Asylum: a global trend and a case from North Korea

Secondary migration, also known as 'two-step' migration and 're-migration' is a common feature of global movement in an increasingly interconnected world. The promise of increased economic opportunities play an important role in the onward movement of immigrants (Finch et al. 2009: 4). However, to reduce secondary migration to economics overlooks several key factors such as a desire for accumulating other forms of capital. Ayumi Takenaka (2007; 2015) cites evidence from foreign students and business people in Japan who on-migrate to the U.S. to argue that social and cultural capital accumulation plays a central role in the decision to on-migrate. The skills, knowledge, and resources that are developed in the initial country of resettlement may be imagined as holding greater value in another country. This is certainly the case with North Koreans who on-migrate from South Korea. Unlike the Tokyo-based Chinese businessmen and Korean students that Takenaka discusses, North Koreans develop an awareness of the challenges that confront them in acquiring social capital valued in South Korean society. They also become attuned to the transnational strategies many South Koreans pursue to accumulate these forms of

capital, namely migration to Western, Anglophone countries. Krassoi-Peach's (2013) study of immigrants in New Zealand who on-migrate suggests that timing is an important factor determining the decision to move. After two years, immigrants to New Zealand qualify for a visa that allows for the indefinite right to return to New Zealand, if the individual migrates to another country (2013: 31). North Koreans are similarly required to reside in South Korea prior to the government permitting them to exit the country. Out migration during the first two years a North Korean is in South Korea is uncommon, due to ongoing state surveillance and the debt many individuals have accrued to illegal migration brokers for their initial journey to South Korea.

As state strategies for managing complex migration patterns have become more sophisticated, so have the transnational networks of informal people movers become more responsive to shifting state policy. Takenaka concludes that secondary migration to the U.S. is part of a broader trend of migration to wealthy countries (2007). The migration networks that are established through early waves of outward migration facilitate the movement that follows. These findings accord with our research into North Korean secondary migration. As the informal people moving networks connecting North and South Korea through China have grown more robust, these networks have both fuelled and responded to demand for secondary migration from South Korea. The secondary migration of North Koreans targets destination countries that feature prominently in the South Korean imagination as affluent nations offering opportunities unavailable to ordinary Koreans. Consequently, the secondary migration of North Koreans follows similar patterns to the migration of South Koreans, connecting Seoul to places like London, Toronto, and Sydney.

The secondary migration of North Koreans has not been systematically recorded and studied. The number of secondary asylum seekers is unknown to the authors as it is not publicly available. There exists a handful of policy-oriented case studies on North Korean migration (Robinson 2010, Yuan 2011, Cohen 2012) and a growing corpus of ethnographic research speaking to North Korean secondary migration (Choo 2006, Chung 2008, Bell 2013a, 2013b, 2016, Jung 2013, Koo 2016).

As of November 2016, the UK hosts one of the largest North Korean populations outside of Northeast Asia. Research by the authors confirmed that a considerable number of North Koreans in the UK had previously applied for and succeeded in gaining asylum in South Korea before choosing to onward migrate to a third country. However, because acknowledging the fact that they had been offered primary protection under the South Korean government could void their applications in the UK, applicants do not tell this to British authorities. For the South Korean government, the secondary migration of North Korean refugees signals that the state-sponsored resettlement programmes for North Koreans are not working. According to the British Office for National Statistics, there were about 1,000 North Koreans holding resident status in the UK as of 2015 (Office for National Statistics 2015). The UK Home Office argues that secondary migrants are not genuine asylum seekers as they have availed themselves of a primary protector (South Korea).[2] However, the Home Office struggles to differentiate between the three groups of North Korean asylum seekers: those seeking political asylum via a third country outside the Korean peninsula; those who first sought asylum in South Korea and acquired South Korean citizenship; and ethnic-Korean Chinese citizens (*Chosŏnjok*) posing as North Korean.[3] A survey conducted by the Seoul-based Institute for Peace and Unification

Studies in 2007 found that 258 out of 415 North Korean asylum applicants in the UK were suspected to be Chinese nationals (Park et al. 2013).

Data and methodologies

Drawing on semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory observation,[4] this article explores the complex and competing motivations and experiences of North Korean secondary migration from South Korea to the UK between 2005-2016. Fieldwork for this research combined semi-structured interviews in Korean and in English, focus group workshops and outdoor group activities that took place over two weeks, annually, between in 2011 and 2016 in New Malden, Cambridge, London, and Swansea in the UK, and Seoul and Ansan in South Korea. In 2011-2012, preliminary interviews took place with 57 individuals (see Annex 1). These preliminary interviews were the basis for the planning of the focus group discussion and outdoor activities that took place in 2013-2014. Participants for focus groups were self-selected. A call for focus group participants was advertised through North Korean community leaders and the social network mobile media called *Kakaotalk*. The size of each focus group was limited to 15 to generate more informal settings. All sessions took place in New Malden for the convenience of the participants who lived there. Six participants attended all five focus group sessions. These core participants were over 35 years old, with higher education in North Korea and good English communication skills. Of the six core focus group participants, four stood out in presenting a high level of curiosity, learning, adaptability and self-organisation skills in new environments. In 2015-2016, we carried out follow-up interviews with these four individuals to learn more about their self-organising skills and path dependence. The interviews took ten

days in total, over two years, 6-7 hours a day. Most participants had secondary or university education and used to live in the Northeast provinces of North Korea. All participants escaped across the Sino-Korean border and spent varying amounts of time in China before on-migrating to South Korea.

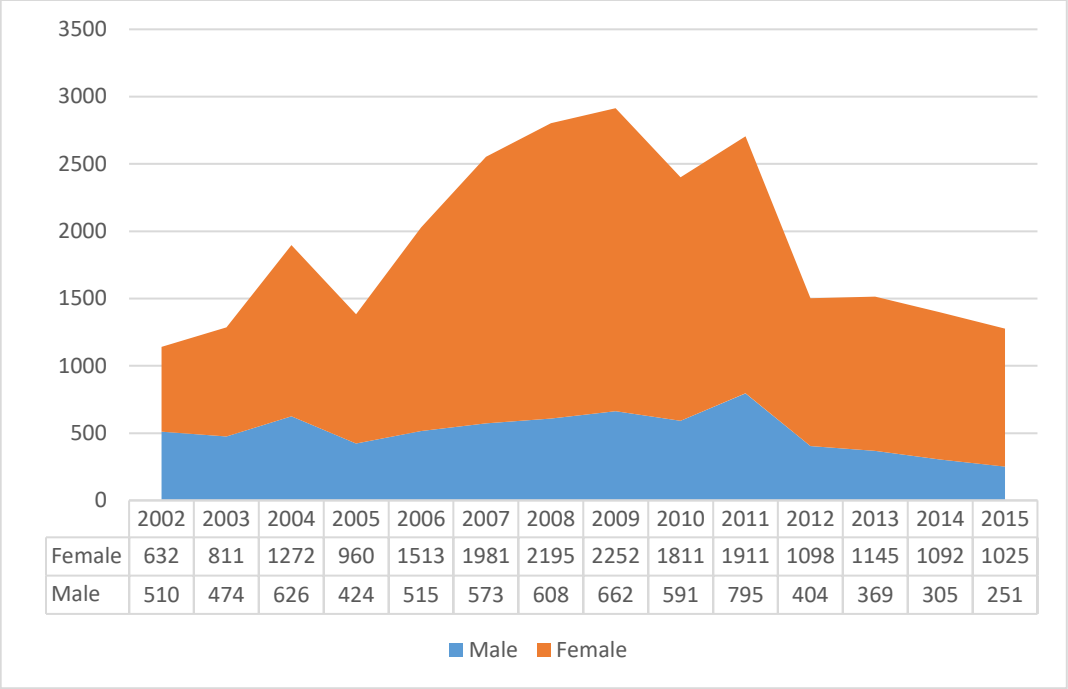
The main body of this paper is organised as follows: first we discuss why so many North Koreans struggle to adapt to life in South Korea, suggesting that mismatching expectations, government resettlement strategies, and the inability of most North Koreans to achieve upward mobility in South Korea encourages secondary migration. We proceed by drawing on quantitative data to analyse patterns of North Korean secondary migration, and conclude that South Korea has shifted from a 'destination country' for North Korean asylum seekers to being a hybrid 'destination/transit country', through which a large number of North Koreans are planning their onward movement. We further suggest that data from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and South Korea's Ministry of Unification illustrates that the transnational networks facilitating North Korean secondary migration are highly responsive to changing migration policies in destination countries in the Western world. We conclude by focusing on the experiences of North Korean secondary migrants in the UK, their motivations for migrating to and staying in the UK, and the challenges that life in their new home presents.

Failed Integration in South Korea

As of 2017, there are around 30,000 North Koreans living in South Korea at present (see Figure 1 below).[5] This figure is marginal, given South Korea's 50 million population or even

North Korea's 25 million (World Bank). In South Korea North Koreans are not treated as refugees in accordance with international law. Rather, North Koreans are regarded within their own, special category, as displaced persons. This has been the case since the ceasefire to the Korean War, in 1953. Compared to the total number of refugees resettled in South Korea between 2004 and 2016, from Myanmar, Bangladeshi and Ethiopia,[6] the number of North Koreans resettled in South Korea is significant. The ROK government spends a considerable amount of taxpayers' money on resettlement programmes for North Koreans. These programs include long-lease rented housing, basic settlement expenses, affirmative action for tertiary education, and employment incentives to encourage North Koreans to enter the workforce as swiftly as possible (The Ministry of Unification 2014). Despite the generous resettlement package, a large number of North Koreans are opting to on-migrate from South Korea. South Korean Ministry of Unification officials we interviewed in 2011 and 2014 explained that the government regards North Koreans on-migrating from South Korea as an "embarrassment".[7]

[Figure1. North Korean Arrivals in South Korea]



	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
Female	632	811	1272	960	1513	1981	2195	2252	1811	1911	1098	1145	1092	1025
Male	510	474	626	424	515	573	608	662	591	795	404	369	305	251

[Source: Ministry of Unification at http://www.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=1440]

Gender, class, political background, and economic status crosscut North Koreans' migration and resettlement experiences. Despite similarities with South Koreans in terms of language, culture, and history, North Koreans are not migrating to South Korea in the same sense that 'roots migrants' (Wessendorf 2007) return to the homeland after generations away. The unexpected challenges associated with life in South Korea exacerbate feelings of alienation and unsettle an already tenuous ethnic solidarity with the host society. North Koreans in South Korea struggle to achieve the upward mobility anticipated prior to arrival (Lankov 2006). In 2012, 46.7% of North Koreans living in South Korea fell below the poverty line and were receiving basic subsistence from the government (Kang 2012). One North Korean interlocutor we interviewed during a workshop in New Malden stated that South Korea's MoU support was "just enough for us [North Koreans] to get by, but not nearly enough to succeed".[8] Scholarship relating the experiences of North Korean refugees

in South Korea describes a mismatch of expectations on both sides: the host society expects North Koreans to perform the subservient role of grateful asylum seeker, and new arrivals expect access to the opportunities they heard are available in wealthy South Korea. Park et al. (2013) describe this relationship as a double-edged sword, whereby ordinary South Koreans regard the new arrivals as both helpless victims escaping a repressive regime and as a burdensome tax drain.

Following their arrival in South Korea, North Korean asylum seekers, described in the South Korean media as "defector/escapees (*talbukja*)" or "new settlers (*saetomin*)", are taken to secret detention centres in Seoul and interrogated by ROK state security for around two months. Following their interrogation, in preparation for living in South Korea, all new arrivals go through cultural education in the government operated *Hanawon* facility. The training they receive at the Hanawon centre is supposed to prepare them for everyday life in South Korea. For example, they learn how to use ATM machines, how to use the subway, how to avoid being defrauded, and how to open and use a bank account. However, this training offers little consideration that new arrivals may wish to stay in touch with family who remain in North Korea. All Koreans in South Korea are forbidden from contacting or communicating with "a member of an anti-government organisation" by the National Security Laws.[9] For North Koreans in South Korea, contacting their family members who are still in North Korea can be a breach of the National Security Law. Although the Inter-Korean Exchange and Cooperation Law[10] allows inter-Korean communication with government pre-approval, it is very rare that North Koreans in South Korea would report to the South Korean authority when they contact their family members back in North Korea. All North Koreans

are under state surveillance for several years following their arrival, this includes monitoring their communications with family and friends outside the ROK.

For many North Koreans, life in South Korea is challenging without adaquate skills and education. In 2011, the unemployment rate among North Koreans resident in South Korea was 12% (Hana Foundation 2015), compared to that of South Koreans' 3.4% (Statistics Korea 2011). In 2017, the unemployment rate among North Koreans improved to 7.2% (South Koreans at 4.3% during the same period), according to the Hana Foundation, a government agency that helps settle North Koreans. However, two in five new arrivals are engaged in temporary work. During our focus group discussions, many participants explained the difficulties they had experienced in adjusting to life in South Korea; some felt unable to be themselves, forced to hide their North Korean identity in public. Others described the discrimination they had experienced in South Korean schools and workplaces. One focus group participant, during a discussion on culture and values said, "It's ok to live here [in the UK] as one of many second-class or third-class citizens. There are yellow, brown, and black people here and I'm just one of them. However, in South Korea, I can't handle being treated like a second-class citizen by my fellow Koreans. It's unbearable." Life in London is imagined as offering greater anonymity for the North Korean migrant. In moving to a third country, North Koreans extract themselves from South Korea's 'hierarchical nationhood' (Seol and Skrentny 2009), in which they compare poorly in relation to immigrants from wealthier, more affluent countries. South Korean state settlement strategies further contribute to North Koreans' difficulties in resettling.

Transplanting the Village

The South Korean government commonly houses new arrivals in state apartment complexes throughout the major cities of South Korea. Individuals who are allocated an apartment on the outskirts of Seoul are settled in complexes housing thousands of other immigrants from North Korea. These complexes are also home to working and middle class South Koreans. Housing North Koreans in close proximity to each other allows ROK police officers and social workers, designated with keeping an eye on new arrivals, easier access to their charges. Unintentionally, the ROK housing strategy also recreates social conditions in North Korea. The majority of North Koreans to arrive in the south are from the northern provinces of the country and, to some extent, ROK government resettlement transplants these communities to the outer suburbs of Seoul. As such, many North Koreans feel that migration to South Korea does not entirely remove them from the social controls extant in North Korea. Surrounded by individuals from the hometown and in close geographical proximity to the DPRK, life in South Korea fails to permit North Koreans to escape what Caroline Brettell refers to as 'the mechanisms of village social control' (2003: 68). The feeling expressed by many interlocutors interviewed in Seoul was that, although they no longer live in North Korea, North Korea continues to loom large in their life in South Korea. The social surveillance they experienced in North Korea continues in South Korea. For individuals who have family in North Korea, worries that what they say and do could be reported back to the North Korean government by informants adds to the alienation of life in South Korea. During visits to the homes of North Koreans in Seoul, interlocutors explained that they rarely went a single day without meeting others from North Korea, either in their apartment block or in the surrounding neighbourhood. Because of the importance of maintaining their privacy and, in

many cases, their anonymity, living in 'transplanted North Korean villages' provokes similar anxiety as living in North Korea.

Stories of individuals who on-migrate to Canada, the UK, or the US are common within the transplanted North Korean communities in South Korea. Through such stories the possibilities imagined through secondary migration exercises a strong pull on North Koreans. Secondary migration to Western countries is imagined as a welcome alternative to a marginalised, surveilled status in South Korea. The material benefits expected through secondary migration to Western countries is a further driving pull factor for North Koreans in South Korea.

Symbols of Prestige

What opportunities do North Koreans in South Korea imagine are made available through secondary migration? For North Korean secondary migrants the emphasis is on the acquisition of symbolic capital and the chance to engage in upward social mobility that appears out of reach in South Korea. Brettell describes the economic and cultural representations of upward mobility as 'symbols of prestige' that are accorded to migrants who are able to ascend the social ladder (2003: 68). The desire for prestige is universal, but the means by which migrants procure these symbols and the expression the symbols take vary from place to place. North Koreans' desired social and cultural capital is constituted by middle class South Korean aspirations – the accumulation of financial capital and the attendant conspicuous consumption; competency in the English language; education qualifications from an overseas (preferably Anglophone) institution; and overseas experience. One outdoor activity participant says: "South Korean parents send their kids

overseas to study English, but we [North Korean parents] can't afford to send ours. It's expensive. But we know we can send ours alone or come with the kids and claim refugee status. At least we can stay for 3-6 months and learn English for free while our asylum applications are being processed. Even if we fail, at least we get those 3-6 months' free education and housing before we're sent back to South Korea."[11]

For North Koreans unhappy with conditions in South Korea, secondary migration is imagined as the only means for achieving economic success and the attendant upward social mobility. The accumulation of economic and cultural capital requires an audience to acknowledge these successes (Basch, N. et al. 1994, Schiller and Fouron 2001, Espiritu 2003). Many North Koreans subsequently illustrate their successes by sending financial remittances back to family in North Korea. Another means of showing their successes is by posting pictures on social media that speak to their new lives in London[12]. The following section draws on quantitative data to illustrate the scale of North Korean transnational secondary migration networks. Transnational migratory networks, highly responsive to shifting state policies in destination countries, play a significant role in feeding the desire for success through secondary migration.

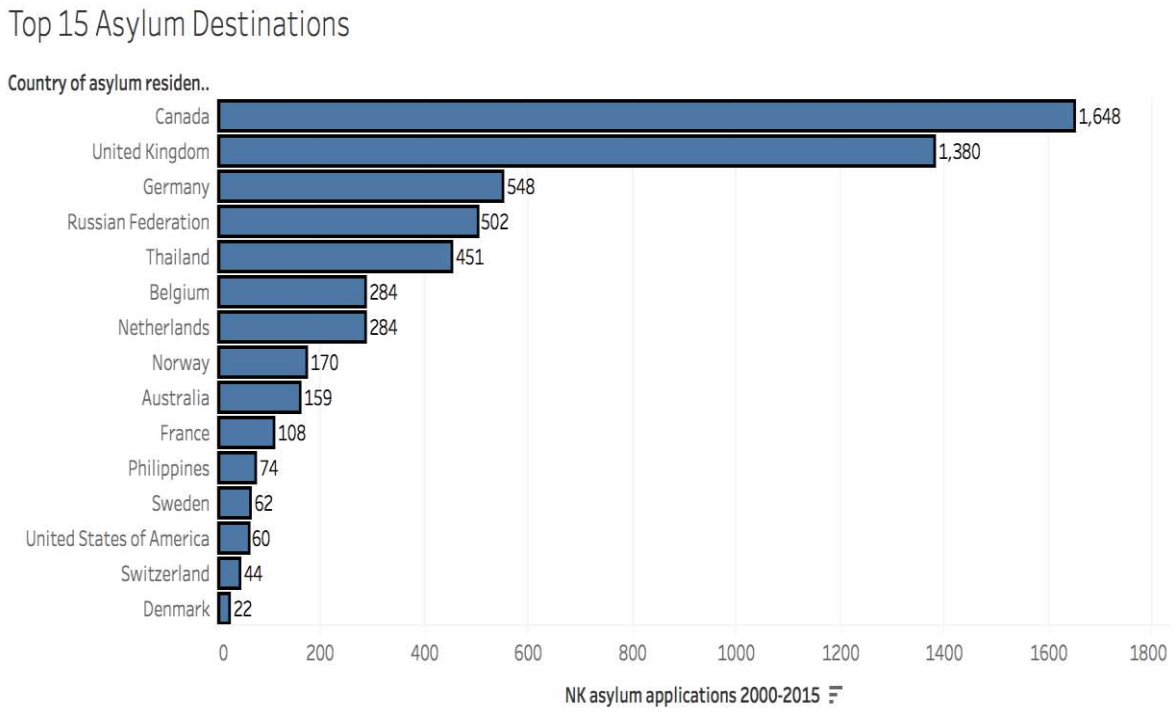
The Scale and Trends of North Korean Secondary Migration

North Korean Migration to Transit and Destination Countries

In illustrating why North Koreans on-migrate from South Korea, it is important to also understand the broader trends of North Korean migration, this includes North Korean

migrants' relationship to 'transit' and 'destination' countries. Transit countries are places to which North Koreans migrate in order to claim asylum and, after varying periods of time, on-migrate to other destinations. Thailand, Myanmar, and Mongolia are examples of places commonly used as transit countries by North Korea asylum seekers. Destination countries are final target countries in which North Koreans desire resettlement. Examples of destination countries include South Korea, Canada, the UK, and Germany. According to the UNHCR, the number of asylum applications from North Koreans between 2000 and 2015 are highest in Canada, followed by the UK, Germany, Russia, and Thailand.

[Figure 2: Top 15 North Korean Asylum Application in 2000-2015]



[Source: UNHCR Population Statistics 2016]

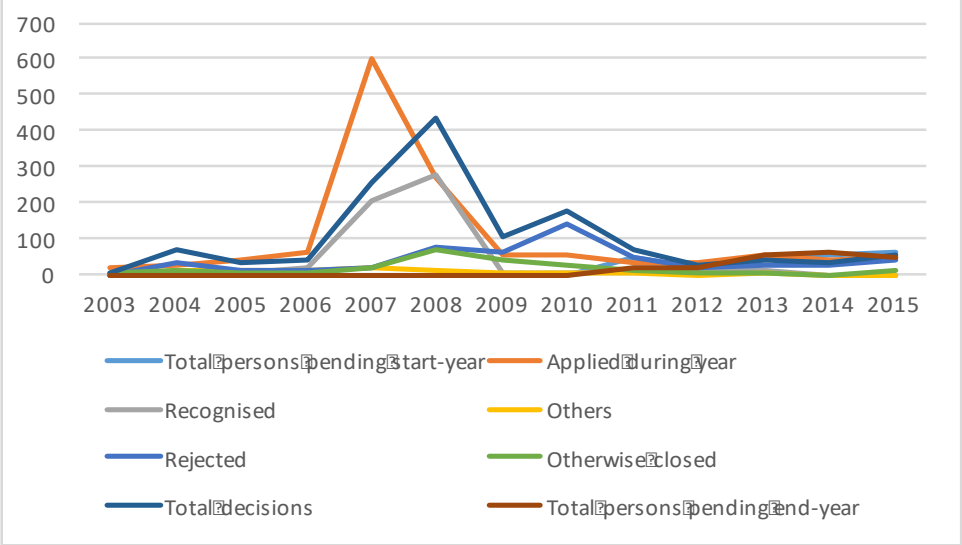
The majority of North Koreans who resettle in South Korea stay in South Korea. However, recently, South Korea's premier position in North Koreans' migration strategies has shifted from not just being a destination country to a hybrid destination. The largest community of North Koreans living outside the DPRK resides in China or South Korea. Furthermore, a number of North Koreans using South Korea as a transit point for onward movement to Europe and North America has grown over the years (Song 2015). The majority of North Korean asylum seekers in Western Europe, North America, and Australia are secondary migrants from South Korea.

Figure 1 illustrates the number of North Korean asylum applications in the UK since 2003. According to the 2015 UNHCR data, there were 620 North Korean refugees and other humanitarian migrants living in the UK. Between 2006 and 2007 there was a notable increase in the number of North Koreans claiming asylum in the UK, from 61 to 602 (see Figure 1). There are two possible explanations for this increase. First, there is a relationship to the increased number of arrivals in South Korea: the more North Koreans that have arrived in South Korea, the more secondary migration has increased. Finch et al. offers similar explanations for the increased re-migration of immigrants from the UK back to their home countries (2009: 3). Indeed, the number of new arrivals in South Korea jumped from 1,384 in 2005 to 2,028 in 2006, according to the MoU.

The second explanation is drawn from the theory of cumulative causation that explains how migration changes the structures of sending and receiving states. Douglas Massey explains that, over time, migration network expansion becomes self-perpetuating. Key to this process is the role of 'enterprising agents, contractors, and other middlemen [who] move to create migrant-supporting institutions' (1999: 306), and earlier migrants, who

lay the tracks of movement and made it easier, cheaper, and safer for those who followed. Formal and informal networks facilitate secondary migration from South Korea to the UK. North Korean's migration to places like New Malden echo the movement of South Koreans who moved decades before them, for what was imagined as better education, business, and lifestyle opportunities[13]. Established migratory infrastructure are evident in London's Korea Town. Travel agents on the New Malden high street advertise, in Korean script, discount flights to Seoul and express delivery of goods direct from the UK to Korea. For North Korean secondary migrants, the 'enterprising agents, contractors, and middlemen' connecting Seoul to London are North Korean migration brokers. These individuals combine the promise of financial success in a wealthy Anglophone country with assurances that life in London will not be an alien experience due to the established Korean population to entice individuals to the UK. We discuss these networks further in the section which follows.

[Figure3.North Korean asylum applications in the UK: 2003-2015]



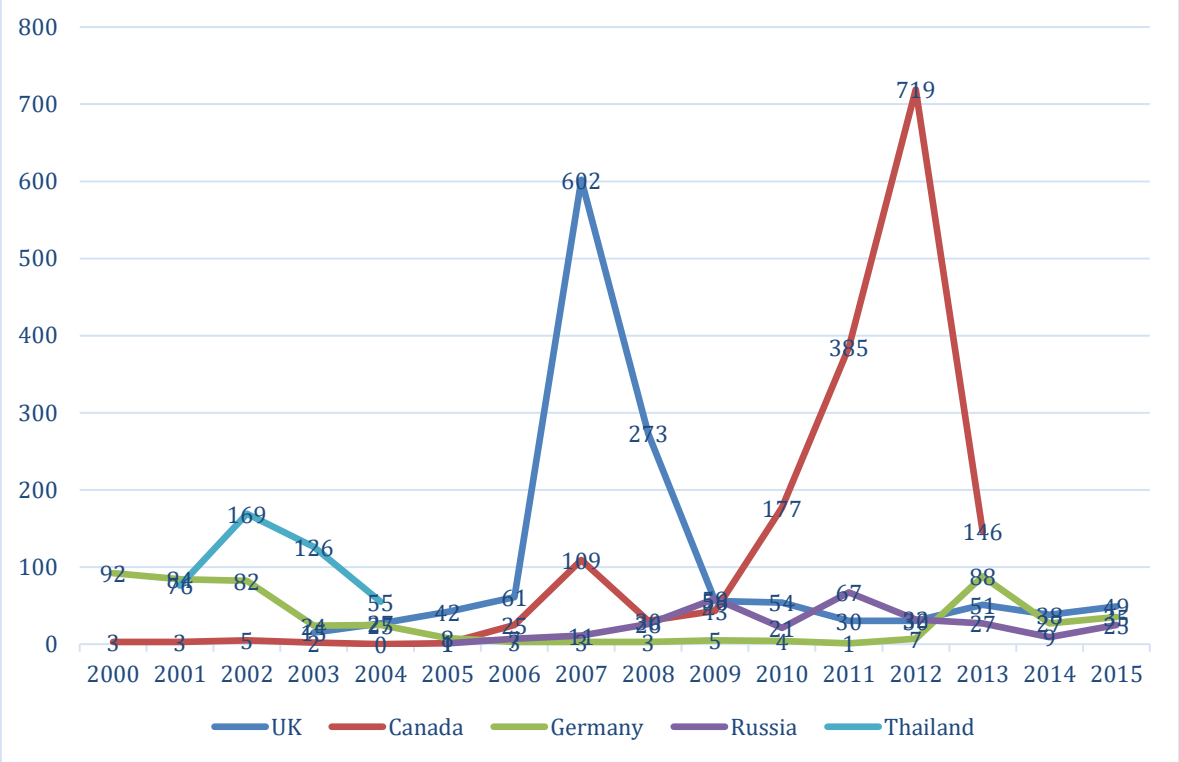
Year	Total persons pending start-year	Applied during year	Recognized	Others	Rejected	Otherwise closed	Total decisions	Total persons pending end-year
2003	0	15	0	0	0	1	1	0
2004	0	27	6	11	36	13	66	0
2005	0	42	4	12	12	5	33	0
2006	0	61	20	11	8	4	43	0
2007	0	602	204	19	19	15	257	0
2008	0	273	279	10	77	68	434	0
2009	0	56	3	1	60	42	106	0
2010	0	54	1	6	141	28	176	0
2011	45	30	8	4	46	8	66	15
2012	15	30	9	0	15	4	28	17
2013	40	51	10	2	25	1	38	56
2014	56	38	-	-	23	-	33	59
2015	59	49	0	0	43	9	52	47
Total	**215**	**1328**	**544**	**76**	**505**	**198**	**1333**	**194**

[Source: UNHCR Population Data, http://popstats.unhcr.org/en/asylum_seekers]

Of further significance are the 'push-down and pop-up' effects of North Korean onward-migration to Western countries, as illustrated in figure 2. When the number of asylum seekers in Canada was pushed down in 2013, the number subsequently increased in Germany. A similar pattern can be seen when the number of migrants to the UK dropped in 2009 and the

number in Canada subsequently rose in 2012. The correlation between the rejection rate and the application rate, and the push-down and pop-up effects illustrate that North Korean secondary migration networks are not only self-perpetuating, they are also reactive and adaptive to state level legal and political changes. For example, the number of North Korean asylum applications in the UK dipped to 56 in 2009. At the same time, the applicant rejection rate increased from the lowest point of 7.4%, in 2007 to 80.1% in 2010. This sudden drop in applications occurred in response to the British and South Korean governments sharing the biodata of registered North Koreans claiming asylum in the UK. The knock-on effect is evident in the increased number of North Korean asylum seekers subsequently entering Canada (see Figure 2).

[Figure 4: Top 5 Destination Countries of North Korean Asylum Applications: 2000-2015]



[Source: UNHCR Populations Statistics Asylum Seekers]

Responsive Transnational Networks

North Koreans' decisions, in relation to where and when to on-migrate, are shaped through interactions with migration brokers, other North Koreans, and state immigration policies. In South Korea, many North Koreans socialise through civic organisations and church groups.[14] Further, several members-only online communities share information about secondary migration to Western Europe and North America.[15] Information on potential obstacles to on-migration, such as the fingerprint database sharing agreement between South Korea and the UK, is quickly spread amongst participants on and offline. Families, relatives, friends and *Hanawon* (the MoU resettlement centre) alumni form a broad social network using social media to circulate and exchange information on the best strategies for onward-migration and the destination countries most receptive to asylum claims at each moment.

The destination countries of North Korean secondary migrants are predominantly liberal democracies, obliged to keep their economies and societies open to trade and migration, this includes asylum seekers (Hollifield 2004: 897). These countries exhibit comparatively favourable attitudes towards North Korean asylum seekers, as demonstrated by a social welfare system that offers support for successful claimants such as unemployment or disability benefits and a state funded education system. If a government starts to regulate migration more tightly, demanding stricter controls, or a destination country becomes less receptive towards applicants, indicated by a shift in public opinion, North Korean migrant networks respond accordingly. The flow of on-migrants to one destination country shifts to

another, redistributing pressure on receiving states by channelling asylum seekers away from unfavourable countries towards countries with more favourable policies.

North Korean informal migration networks exist as part of a self-perpetuating transnational migratory system, sensitive to the shifting domestic and international conditions within the countries selected as destination countries for on-migration. Within this system, brokers are successful in trading their 'migratory cultural capital' (Van Hear 1998) – their knowledge of how to go about migration – for financial gain. We spoke with a former migrant broker, who facilitated the movement of North Korean refugees to China, Laos, and Thailand. He told us that he offered secondary migration packages with which, for a price, North Koreans can travel to destination countries with ready-made stories of conflict or persecution to claim refuge in Western Europe or North America. The former broker had extensive transnational networks in China, South Korea, UK, Germany, Canada, and the US. He was well informed of each state's immigration and asylum policies as well as the success rates in each for asylum applications. He is one of many brokers working within the emerging North Korean diaspora who function as "nodes" of information, facilitating and encouraging the onward movement of North Koreans from South Korea. North Koreans' negative experiences in South Korea have been capitalised on by informal people movers who offer secondary migration as a means to satisfy the desires North Koreans held in regards to South Korea.

Life in the UK

Dual Nationality, Multiple Identities

One of the principal legal questions when assessing North Korean asylum claims in third countries is the dual South Korean and North Korean nationality of applicants (Song 2013). Article 3 of the ROK Constitution states, 'The territory of the Republic of Korea (the ROK) shall consist of the Korean peninsula and its adjacent islands.' The Constitution underlines the ROK's claims over both the land and the citizenry of both Koreas. Subsequently, all Koreans in 'northern' Korea are not stateless because they are ROK citizens. As ROK citizens they are not entitled to claim refugee status or asylum in a third country. Arguing that North Koreans are not eligible for asylum in a third country because they are both 'North Korean and South Korean' is at odds with the temporary nature of the truce that was signed by North Korea, China, and the United Nations (U.N.), in 1953. Andrew Wolman (2012) examines recent court cases on North Korean asylum applications from Australia, Canada, and the UK and how these countries consider the issue of North Koreas' dual nationality. Wolman calls for the principle of 'effective nationality' rather than merely formal nationality, arguing that, although South Korea may claim North Koreans as citizens, North Koreans' ROK citizenship does not offer adequate support prior to and following their arrival in South Korea.

For North Koreans who struggle to resettle in South Korea, their newly acquired citizenship becomes an instrument for secondary migration. Aihwa Ong writes, "[t]he multiple passport holder is an apt contemporary figure; he or she embodies the split between state-imposed identity and personal identity caused by political upheavals, migration, and changing global markets" (Ong 1999). Ong explains that transnational practices promote a flexible attitude towards citizenship. The ROK passport that North Koreans acquire underlines the bio-political contest between two competing states. North Koreans who escape

their country embody diverging state identities characterised by confrontational Cold War ideology. As representatives of the divided Korean people and an enemy state, the body of the North Korean stands in opposition to South Korean claims over North Korea. We suggest that North Koreans' instrumentalisation of the ROK passport is not a rejection of the ethnic community. Rather, it is emblematic of their prioritising freedom to define their own identities and perceived opportunities in third countries over a marginalised existence in South Korea. These North Koreans have become a highly resilient population. Having survived several irregular border crossings in China and Southeast Asia, and accumulated agency of their own in South Korea, North Korean secondary asylum seekers adapt to precarious conditions by taking further risks for what is imagined as long term gain.

Highly responsive transnational networks, characterised by nodes composed of migration brokers, facilitate the secondary migration of North Koreans from South Korea to destination countries. As advised by migration brokers, North Koreans usually come to the UK as visa-free tourists with South Korean passports and apply for humanitarian protection visas. While the UK Home Office reviews their application, the claimant stays in the UK with state funded housing, a subsistence allowance, and English language lessons. Pending the outcome of their application, secondary migrants often change their names and further obfuscate the details of their life prior to arrival in the UK. After five years with UK protection visas, asylum seekers are entitled to indefinite leave to remain in the country. A year after they are granted indefinite leave, they are also eligible to apply for British citizenship (GOV.uk n.d.). With the exception of asylum seekers over the age of sixty-five, refugees in the UK are required to take a 'Life in the UK' examination and pass an English

language qualification. This constitutes one of many distinct challenges for North Korean secondary migrants, as they usually have little to no English communication skills.

The little North Korean bubble in New Malden

Most North Koreans in the UK live on the outskirts of London, in the so-called 'Korea Town' in New Malden. This is the most populous Korean community in Europe. The main street of New Malden has a large number of Korean restaurants, travel agents, and supermarkets, and there are several locally produced Korean language newspapers. Many South Koreans in New Malden own small to medium sized businesses that serve the local Korean population. Commonly, North Koreans, regardless of their legal status, work in these businesses as cheap, unskilled labour. Many of the North Koreans we met said they were 'self-employed', working as cleaners, cooks or shop assistants in low-paid positions. The social and spiritual needs of the Korean community are served through ethnic Korean churches in which the pastors conduct services in both Korean and English. Within New Malden, Korean-Chinese were once the main labour pool for South Korean capital. Korean-Chinese now compete with North Koreans willing to work for less remuneration.

Myron Weiner (1996) wrote, 'the more benefits we offer asylum seekers (legal aid, free housing, medical care, food, employment), the more people are likely to seek asylum'. North Koreans who on-migrate from South Korea contradict Weiner's claims that benefits are a strong enough factor keeping refugees in the place they are offered asylum. There are a number of motivations for the secondary migration of North Koreans to the UK, not limited to the promise of state housing and employment, age, and welfare packages. However, the South Korean government also offers these benefits. North Koreans on-migrate to third

countries in the hope that they will improve their chances of achieving the upward mobility that eludes them long after their arrival in South Korea. Among the perceived symbols of success are access to an Anglophone education; knowledge and participation in local politics; the opportunity to accumulate financial capital, and the perceived greater symbolic value of a Canadian or British passport in comparison to a ROK passport.

There is a notable education gap between North Koreans and South Koreans (Yi, Cho et al. 2009, Kim 2016). Young North Koreans struggle in South Korea's highly competitive education environment. This is further exacerbated by the long period of time many North Korean children spend outside of formal education, while in transit or in informal employment. All interviewees and focus group participants for this study arrived in the UK as a family unit. One participant for the outdoor activity in the Westminster Abbey said: "I pray for my kids every day. Coming here [the UK] is all about the kids' education. Nothing else. I want them to go to a good university. They both speak good English now, so hope they go to a good school [university] and become a lawyer or something. South Korean kids don't know they're North Korean. It's a secret."[17] Won-hwan Oh points to the British education system as a factor in the decision to on-migrate from South Korea (Oh 2011). Another participant in the tour to the University of Cambridge said: "No matter how hard you study in South Korea, the best university you can do is Seoul National University, which is not even in the world's top 50. Private tuition is so expensive in South Korea. You probably spend less time studying in the UK than you would in Korea, but you can still go to Cambridge University, which is the world's number one." Many in the group agreed. Most school-age children of North Korean secondary migrants in the UK are either born in South Korea or in the UK, and attend British state schools. They speak English among themselves and to their

classmates and use Korean, of varying ability, to their parents. The younger generation, embedded as they are in their everyday lives in the UK, often have a better understanding of the host society than their parents do. When in public, young second generation North Koreans are more familiar with the British approach to such things as shopping, using public transport, and interacting with English speakers. Children often act as their parents' interpreters when required. There is a notable generational difference in how new arrivals relate to the host society (Imoagene 2012, Kim 2013).

Some parents expressed concern that their children were losing their North Korean identity and, in the future, communication would become a struggle. One workshop participant put it: "I'm worried about my younger children. The first one speaks good Korean but the younger ones don't. That's why I started Saturday schools to teach them *Chosŏn- ŏ* (North Korean language). I don't want them to be ashamed of where they're from, or rather, where I'm from. Many North Korean youngsters hide their North Korean identity because they're ashamed and want to avoid discrimination against them by South Koreans here [in the UK]."[18] However, even with the distance put between the Korean Peninsula and themselves, some North Koreans continue to grapple with a cognitive dissonance in regards to their North Korean background in their everyday lives. The British media frequently depicts North Korea in a pejorative fashion and young North Koreans try to hide their origins out of a fear of being bullied. Two participants under the age of eighteen explained to us that they tell their British and South Korean peers that they are from South Korea and not from the North. These concerns mirror the identity crisis that many North Koreans in South Korea experience and underline that secondary migration to the UK does not free North Koreans from the stigma of their national origins.

Many North Koreans we interviewed supported a state-run economy, free education, and free healthcare. Many also agreed, that even during financial crises caused by the private sector, the state should be responsible for fixing the problem, while basic necessities including food, health, and education should be provided by the state. One participant went as far as to claim that the North Korean system is better than the South Korean system, despite the fact that the North Korean regime was unable to deliver the goods and services to its people. This participant explained that she had come to the UK to make use of the country's social welfare system. Another participant swiftly refuted, "I came here for freedom, not for freebies. Here I can do anything I want." A third participant said none of these things mattered; she emphasised that she came to the UK for her children's education. "At least it's in English," she added. Many of the other participants with school-age children agreed with her comment.

Political literacy in the host society is important to the North Koreans we met during our research. Participants during our focus groups were divided when it came to discussions on political economy: Issues related to democracy, capitalism, and socialism were cause for vigorous debate. North Koreans are attuned and sensitive to power and power holders in the host society. One interlocutor explained, "Socialism is good, but North Korea didn't do it well. The UK is doing it better." While another refuted, "No, socialism is terrible and so outdated. There is no true socialist country nowadays. The UK is not socialist".[19] During a focus group session, another topic sparking heated debate was on whether the North Korean community leaders had the political clout to influence British immigration policies. North Koreans in the UK choose community leaders who can best represent their needs in the host

society. However, even in the UK, Korean Peninsula power dynamics are reflected in the ethnic Korean community.

Co-ethnic Conflicts among North and South Koreans, and Korean-Chinese

Tensions exist within the North Korean community, and between North and South Koreans in New Malden. 'Bordering practices' (Lee and Chien 2016) are reproduced within the ethnic Korean community, leading to frictions. Interlocutors reported growing schisms between New Malden North and South Koreans. Interviewees told us that South Korean restaurant owners in New Malden paid their North Korean employees below the minimum wage.[20] Such reports illustrated a relationship dynamic similar to that experienced by North Koreans in South Korea. The tensions reproduce, on a micro-level, Peninsula divisions within the diaspora and reflect the co-ethnic exploitation practiced by South Koreans towards North Koreans. Such practices are not unique to the Korean communities in the UK (Zhou 1998, Li 2015). South Koreans in New Malden have expectations regarding the North Koreans they employ or socialise with. Tensions arise when North Koreans accumulate cultural capital – English language skills, political acumen, transnational awareness, and advanced education – that is emblematic of an upward mobility. As North Koreans acquire the symbolic aspects of South Korean modernity and success, it exacerbates underlying frictions with immigrants from South Korea because it challenges the accepted role of the South Korean as being culturally and economically superior to the ostensibly "poor and helpless North Koreans".[21] Many of them are surprised when they hear those same North Koreans they would like to help have economic means to survive, and considerable wealth accumulated in South Korea or in the UK.

What makes the co-ethnic conflicts between North and South Koreans in the UK more complicated is the presence of the Korean-Chinese in between. This is not the focus for this study. However, a considerable number of Korean-Chinese have applied for asylum in the UK, disguised as North Koreans. The authenticity of North Korean identity has been contested among the Korean communities in the UK. This adds one more layer of complication in the co-ethnic dynamics in New Malden.

Conclusion

North Koreans engage in secondary migration to the UK because they calculate a multitude of socio-economic and symbolic factors in deciding their next destination. However, the co-ethnic dynamics that arise, and the social and economic challenges that confront them in their new home illustrate that secondary migration may fall short of meeting their expectations. In spite of the difficulties that await individuals who on-migrate from South Korea, transnational migration networks, highly responsive to the shifting policies of destination countries, encourage North Koreans to leave South Korea. The apparent ease of secondary migration is compounded by the disappointment of life in South Korea and the desire to achieve the social and economic success that was expected prior to leaving North Korea. The symbols of success desired by North Korean secondary migrants are also familiar to ordinary South Koreans. North Koreans' desire to accumulate linguistic, economic, and cultural capital are a means to becoming what they understand as modern, successful, post-division Koreans. In choosing to accumulate symbols of prestige, they pursue a flexible form of citizenship that prioritises cultural and social symbols of South Korean modernity over political symbols of division such as a ROK passport and

citizenship rights.

This article has demonstrated how and why North Koreans in South Korea choose to on-migrate using transnational networks of brokers, family, and friends in a migratory system that organises migration into transit and destination countries. Further to the allure of Western destination countries, as they feature in the imaginaries of North Koreans, are disappointing resettlement experiences in South Korea and feelings of social discomfort due to the relocation of North Korean 'village' life to the suburbs of Seoul. We have argued that secondary migration to the UK allows migrants the chance to foster an identity hinging not on their socio-political background, but on their ability to consume and reproduce forms of symbolic capital valued in South Korea. However, resettlement in the UK is the beginning of another struggle for North Korean asylum seekers. North Koreans in the UK start over in a social, cultural, and political terrain with which they are largely unfamiliar. As some North Koreans in New Malden begin to improve their lives in the UK, tensions arise between the newcomers and already established South Koreans. These co-ethnic intra-Korean dynamics in foreign soil reproduce Peninsula divisions that reflect a geo-politically unequal relationship embedded in the context of power and Cold War politics between the affluent South and the comparatively undeveloped, isolated North. North Koreans who perceive themselves as 'making it' in their new home are less willing to play the subordinate role to South Koreans in the host society. Our findings underline that generous resettlement packages for refugees are not enough to facilitate the successful long-term assimilation of even individuals who share a language and cultural practices with the host society. If new arrivals feel marginalised in their attempts to improve their lives, they will be more willing to on-migrate in the hope that the next move will satisfy their desires. In

the case of North Koreans in South Korea, informal, transnational people moving networks have developed that promise North Korean asylum seekers something many feel they failed to achieve in South Korea – economic success, access to reputable learning institutions, and the respect of their ethnic brethren.

[Annex 1. Interviews 2011-2017]

	North Korean refugees	South Korean religious leaders	South Korean government officials	UK government officials	
UK	17 (5 community leaders)	3	4	3	
South Korea	4	-	2	-	
Total	21	3	6	3	33

[Annex 2. Focus Group Discussions and Outdoor Activities 2013-2014]

	Focus Group1	Focus Group2	Focus Group3	Focus Group4	Focus Group5	Outdoor1	Outdoor2	Outdoor3
Topic	History	Politics	Economy	Culture and Values	Archaeology	Higher Education	Religion	Thames River archaeology
Location	New Malden	New Malden	New Malden	New Malden	New Malden	Cambridge University	London Westminster Abbey	London Tower Bridge
Number of participants	9	8	12	6	16	58	41	5

*Due to the sensitivity associated with such questions, data on the participants' sex, age, education and previous residence in North Korea were not collected.

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[1] In this article we use the expressions, 'on-migration' and 'secondary migration' interchangeably to refer to individuals who migrate to South Korea and then migrate again with the intention of resettling in a country other than North or South Korea. This concept becomes more slippery if we consider that some North Koreans may be on-migrating to the UK with the intention of either further migrating or one day returning to South Korea.

[2] European Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea, "Refugees in the UK," 19 June 2015 https://www.eahrnk.org/articles/blog/refugees-in-the-uk

[3] During the entire period of this research, the UK Home Office had no in-house expertise to verify the authenticity of hundreds of asylum seekers claiming North Korean identity. The government instead outsourced this task to South Korean interpreters, very few of whom have expertise on North Korea. Consequently, the UK Home Office has issued more than 600 humanitarian protection visas for individuals initially determined to be North Korean refugees but who later turned out to be South Korean or Chinese citizens.

[4] Researchers' gender and age identities and the Korean language had a significant impact on qualitative data collection for the study of the North Korean diaspora. The asymmetrical power between researchers and research participants works against younger female researchers. Further, the Korean language is hierarchical and highly relational. Strangers decide the forms of prefix, the choice of vocabulary, and the use of honorific endings, depending on the age and social status of the speaker at the first meeting. Korean inter-personal relations are more or less determined by its hierarchical language. Not using an interpreter may increase the trust level between a researcher and participants. However, it can also create another layer of obstruction for the researcher using the Korean language.

[5] According to the ROK Ministry of Unification, the number of North Koreans in South Korea reached 30,500 as of March, 2017 http://www.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=1440 (accessed May 9, 2017).

[6] South Korean Ministry of Justice, Immigration Policy, Annual Statistics, 2017.

[7] Personal Interview with a MoU official, October 2012, Seoul, Korea. In 2016-7, there were a number of returnees cases from South Korea back to their homes in North Korea, which added further embarassment for the South Korean authorities. The number of returnees is unknown. Consequently, return migration cannot be generalised as a trend at this stage.

[8] Focus Group Discussion, 9 July 2014.

[9] National Security Law, National Law Information Centre at http://www.law.go.kr/법령/국가보안법

[10] 남북교류협력에 관한 법률, 국가법령정보센터 at http://www.law.go.kr/lsSc.do?menuId=0&p1=&subMenu=1&nwYn=1&section=&tabNo=&query=남북교류협력에%20 관한%20 법률#undefined

[11] Conversation in a bus to the outdoor activity at Cambridge University, 20 July 2014.

[12] *Facebook* or *Kakao* are particularly popular with North Koreans outside of the DPRK.

[13] For more on the Korean diaspora and its impact on South Korea see Hye-Kyung Lee, 2005. 'The Korean Diaspora and its Impact on Korean Development', *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal*, 14(1-2), pp.149-168.

[14] Bell's scholarship on the resettlement of North Koreans has highlighted the significance of secular and religious civic groups to resettling North Koreans in South Korea and Japan Bell, M. (2013). "Manufacturing Kinship in a Nation Divided: An Ethnographic Study of North Korean Refugees in South Korea." The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology **14**(3): 240-255, Bell, M. (2016). "Making and Breaking family: North Korea's Zainichi Returnees and "the Gift"." Asian Anthropology **15**(3): 260-276.

[15] Interview with a former broker in New Malden, UK, December 2011. *Shuimto* [Rest Place] at http://www.toxjals.com and *Talbukja Dongjihoi* [North Korean Defectors' Association] at http://nkd.or.kr are the two examples.

[17] During the outdoor activity at the Westminster Abbey, 2 July 2014.

[18] Focus Group Discussion, 10 July 2014.
[19] Focus Group Discussion, 8 July 2014.
[20] Informal focus group discussionNew Malden, 18 May, 2017.
[21] Personal Interview with a South Korean religious leader in New Malden, 11 June 2013.