

# Chapter One

## Introduction

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On a cold morning in early 2008 I was travelling to the Gwacheon Government Complex to undertake an interview with the Korea Immigration Service. As so often happens, it was a chance meeting on this journey that crystallised neatly the context of this book. I was waiting in *Samgakji*<sup>1</sup> subway station in Seoul and was approached by a tall apparently non-Korean man who spoke to me in a thick Texan accent. The stranger struck up our conversation by enquiring about what I was doing in Seoul and where I was travelling to on this occasion.<sup>2</sup> After I made it clear that I was on a journey to interview officials about labour migration the stranger explained that he owned a small manufacturing operation in Incheon where he hired ‘a few Filipinos’ because Koreans ‘expected too much money’. He added that the changes to labour laws for migrants through the Employment Permit System (EPS) meant that he was considering relocation to the Philippines where he could get ‘four workers for the price of one here’. As our relatively one-sided conversation continued he informed me that things might get better if the then recently elected President Lee Myung-bak kept his promises and supported businesses over workers; otherwise, ‘everyone’ was going to leave. Inserted in this commentary was a quip about the ‘Filipino condos’ he had built for his workers (converted shipping containers where many migrant workers are housed), and a variety of racist comments about the backwardness of Koreans – defended as ‘not racist’ because his mother is Korean.

The issues discussed in this conversation are demonstrative of the way in which migration has come to be articulated through a distantiation of migrant lives. For the stranger, migration would appear to be a strategy for capital

accumulation – his investments in Incheon are an attempt to generate higher profits by employing workers for lower wages. As a mobile subject he is empowered by his American nationality, the business visa in his passport and the economic capital he possesses. His movement through local and transnational space appears to be relatively effortless and generated through individualised desires for capital accumulation. If circumstances do not suit he will simply relocate his business activities to a lower-wage environment. He framed himself as an agentive subject of migration. In contrast, the ‘few Filipinos’ who work for him may have work visas but may also be undocumented; they have much more limited access to migration and under this stranger’s logic face the prospect of chasing capital back to their homeland only to be paid lower wages for probably greater work. Rather than being enabled by forms of desire their migration is framed as an outcome of wage differentials and the force of global capitalism.

These migrations are also articulated unevenly through the urban spaces that different migrants come to inhabit. On the one hand, the processes of labour migration to Seoul often takes shape through a peripheralisation of migrant lives. Migrant mobilities link into work and life in distant parts of the Seoul Metropolitan Region like areas in Incheon where small manufacturing operations continue to have a significant presence. Urban life here is often characterised by precarity – living in ersatz accommodation like converted containers, working long hours often for substandard pay and sometimes subject to abusive or exploitative employment. Mobility appears constrained, not only in migration but also in everyday life in the city. By contrast, for the stranger and indeed myself as a visiting researcher, mobility comes to articulate with urban space in quite different ways. We meet by chance in one of the classic foreigner neighbourhoods in central Seoul, reside in comfortable accommodations during our short visits and without the temporalisations of factory work would appear to be able to direct our mobilities through urban space according to our own desires.

By the mid-2000s migration, and the uneven geographies of these and other migrant lives, was becoming an increasingly taken for granted feature of life in South Korea and especially Seoul and its broader metropolitan region, encompassing Gyeonggi Province and Incheon City (Kim, A.E. 2009). In 2007 the Korea Immigration Service announced with some jubilation that the foreign resident population in South Korea had surpassed one million, and that the country was now entering a ‘new era of multiculturalism’ (Kim, S. 2009); by 2016 the figure had surpassed two million (Korea Immigration Service 2017). For many in the media, politics and the general public, this represented a considerable departure from a national culture that has over the course of the twentieth century emphasised narratives of ethnic homogeneity and shared lineage (Han 2007). In the space of little over a decade, the presence of foreigners in South Korea had shifted from an interesting novelty to one of the critical issues facing society and its future (Kim, N. 2012). This was nowhere more the case than in Seoul, a city that has been represented as the crucible of indigenous economic development

for half a century (Kim & Choe 1997) and is now home to the largest number and diversity of foreign residents in South Korea.

*Global Asian City* explores the entanglement of migratory processes and metropolitan transformations in contemporary Seoul. It does so through an empirical focus on the migration and urban lives of three categories of migrants who have become a common feature of life in Seoul over the last three decades: ‘migrant workers’, ‘English teachers’ and ‘international students’. The migrants who people these categories have become significant in Seoul both numerically and also in terms of the role of migration in reconfiguring elements of urban life. In 2016 there were 279,187 people holding work visas through the EPS that governs labour migration in South Korea, 76,040 people on student visas and 15,450 people holding language instructor visas of whom English teachers form over 90%. Ordinarily, these migrant populations are addressed in discrete ways in both policy orthodoxy and migration scholarship within South Korea and internationally. They are seen as low-skilled, (potential) elite and middling respectively, and as a result are assumed to be drawn into migration for quite different reasons and to have distinct roles in urban life. Viewed separately, these migration patterns would appear to reflect quite different dimensions of South Korea’s recent political–economic history, from the growing labour shortages of the early 1990s (Kim, W. 2004), the transformation of nationally oriented universities into global institutions (Collins 2014a) and the increasing desire for English as a global *lingua franca* (Park, J.K. 2009). Despite their estrangement in scholarship and policy discourse I argue that these migrants and the precursors of their arrival must be conceived concurrently. Their presence, and indeed their socio-political position in Seoul, is very much entangled in processes of national and metropolitan restructuring and in particular the material and imaginative rearticulation of Seoul vis-à-vis national, regional and global assemblages.

This book seeks to bring the narratives that account for these different migrations together and in the process to advance understandings of the relationship between migration and cities. It does so by bringing to the fore the manner that migrants negotiate *both* migration *and* urban life, not as distinct spatial locations and temporal phases of pre-migration, migration and settlement but as always interlinked experiences. Focusing on the conceptual vocabulary of desire, assemblage and encounter, the key claim asserted here is that the urban is the spatial formation through which forms of migration are assembled but also drawn apart and made distinct. Urban spaces clearly play an important role in organising different forms of labour and their linkages into different categories of migrants that are established in the regimes that seek to govern migration. At the same time, the spaces, practices and subjectivities of migrants also need to be examined in terms of the active processes of desiring involved in migration, of seeking better futures, exploring alternative or unknown possibilities and transformations in one’s position in the world.

In this opening chapter I set the scene for this contribution by first discussing the recent growth in scholarship on the relationship between migration and cities.

Emerging within both geography and other social science disciplines this literature has advanced beyond a conception of migration as simply an addition of people to cities through a focus on pathways to incorporation, built environment changes and transnational linkages. Yet, the case I make is that there remains either a *migration-centric* or an *urban-centric* outlook in this scholarship where cities remain largely as a backdrop for migration, or the urban lives of migrants in cities are delinked from the generation and governmentality of migration itself. After exploring the geographical and historical backdrop of migration in Seoul and South Korea, the chapter then moves to provide a brief introduction to the conceptual vocabulary of desire, assemblage and encounter and its significance for studying migration and cities. Last, I introduce the research that informs this book, address the analytical challenges and potential of researching migration and cities through different experiences and outline the structure of the chapters that follow.

## 1.1 Migration and Cities

This book is about the relationship between different forms of migration and the making and transformation of cities. This is not a new concern for geographers or for social scientists. Indeed, the relationship between migration and cities is apparent in urban scholarship dating right back to the work of Robert Park and colleagues in Chicago who traced the arrival, settlement and succession patterns of migrants as part of their primary focus on ‘The Growth of the City’ (Park, Burgess & McKenzie 1925). Migration was understood as a process of populating cities, a pattern that has been observed in the role of international migration in the emergence of cities such as Chicago as well as processes of internal migration as part of urbanisation, that can be observed in rapidly growing cities throughout the world (McGee 1971). *International* migration has also often been observed for its impacts in specific parts of cities – the manifestations of ethnic enclaves (Portes & Jensen 1989), precincts (Rath 2007) or ethnoburbs (Li 1998) that capture a sense of not only additions to but also changes in the character of urban space. And, migration has formed an important part of arguments about international divisions of labour and socio-spatial polarisation that have been so central in claims about the emergence of global cities (Sassen 2001).

While migration has long been recognised as having a relationship with cities it is less clear that scholars have focused on the specific components of this relationship. Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009, 2011) argue that this has resulted from a lack of cross-fertilisation between the fields of migration and urban studies. In migration scholarship, for example, ‘there are many studies of migration *to* cities and the life of migrants *in* cities but very little about the relationship of migrants *and* cities’, while in urban studies migrants appear as members of communities and labour markets but not as key actors in city-making (Glick Schiller & Çağlar

2011: 2). Put another way, there is a tendency for either migration-centric or urban-centric scholarship where only one side of this pairing is properly examined. There is ample literature that sees the city as a backdrop to migrant lives, for example, but does not consider how urban environments are actually reconfigured in the process. Similarly, Chicago scholars and global city theorists alike have focused primarily on what happens after migrants come to the city, not the process of migration itself or its implications in people's urban lives.

Other attempts to explore migration and cities have advanced more focused conceptualisations of this relationship that draw attention to the positioning of cities and the implication this has for migration processes and experiences. Glick Schiller and Çağlar (2009, 2011), for example, have proposed a focus on varying pathways of 'urban incorporation' as key to exploring differences between cities and the varying ways in which migrants become part of urban life. Such an approach involves focusing not only on 'individual migrants, [but also] the networks they form and the social fields that are created by their networks' (2009: 179–180). Accordingly, migrants become 'incorporated' into urban life through different 'pathways' – work, neighbourhood, political and religious organisations for example. The availability of these pathways will differ depending on histories of migration and the 'varying position of cities within global fields of power' (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009: 178). Another similar set of arguments has been offered by geographers Price and Benton-Short (2008) who make a case for re-examining the 'immigrant gateway city' concept in a manner that can address the dynamics of contemporary urban life. Here cities are interpreted as 'critical entry points, nodes of collection and dispersion of goods and information, highly segregated settings, sites of global cultural exchange, turnstiles for other destinations, and immigrant destinations and settlements' (Price & Benton-Short 2008: 31). In both propositions, there is a clear sense of the ways in which cities influence the directionality and form of migration as well as scope to consider the broad implications of different types of migration on urban life.

Another set of contributions focuses on the role of migration in urban restructuring and its effects in the built environment of cities. Mitchell's (2004) and Ley's (2010) studies of transformations in Vancouver through migration from Hong Kong are indicative of this genre. Focused on discourse, neo-liberalism and built form (Mitchell 2004) or the unevenness of migrants' economic place in the city (Ley 2010) these studies show the ways in which Vancouver's turn to the Pacific Rim involved not only the arrival of new migrants but also significant implications for the lived experience of urban spaces. Migration was associated with political rationalities of globalisation, economic success and development that would reconfigure the city as a safe space for footloose entrepreneurs. Migration also brought changes however, in the redevelopment of inner city areas, skyrocketing property prices and their association with migration and fear of 'monster' houses changing the character of 'traditional' neighbourhoods. Smith (2000: 5) who has provided his own account of migration, globalisation and built

form in Los Angeles captures some of this dynamic in the notion of *Transnational Urbanism*:

[A] marker of the criss-crossing transnational circuits of communication and cross-cutting local, translocal, and transnational social practices that ‘come together’ in particular places at particular times and enter into the contested politics of place-making, the social construction of power differentials, and the making of individual, group, national, and transnational identities, and their corresponding fields of difference.

Like Ley (2010) and Mitchell (2004), Smith offers a sense of the transnational dimensions of urban life and in particular the ways in which migration can link together different places and can shape the form and experience of cities.

Lastly, there are studies concerned with the co-presence of migrants and other residents in cities and practices and policies of urban diversity and inclusion. Much has been made, for example, of Vertovec’s (2007: 1025) focus on ‘super-diversity’ as a marker of overlap between ethno-national differences and ‘divergent labour market experiences, discrete gender and age profiles, patterns of spatial distribution, and mixed local area responses by service providers and residents’. Migration’s diversification in relation to contemporary immigration controls demands a renewed focus on class, gender, race and other axes of social difference in the city (Ye 2016a) that potentially alters presumptions about the pathways of urban incorporation available to migrants (Grzymala-Kazłowska & Phillimore 2017). For Hall (2015), such urban multiculturalism also provides scope to explore more precisely the reconfiguration or indeed making of cities through the quotidian practices of migrants as ordinary urban residents (see also Collins 2012). In such ‘migrant urbanisms’ resides scope to move beyond the framing of migrants as particular kinds of ethnic others and to see the daily lives of people on the move as part of the reconfiguration of places rather than only additions to what already exists.

The approach developed in this book contributes to this growing interest in the relationship between cities and migration by foregrounding a conceptualisation of *both* migration *and* urbanisation or urban lives that links the drivers of migration to the different positions that migrants hold in society and the contested politics of everyday life. While the focus on urban multiculturalism, particularly in its quotidian manifestations, offers scope to examine the everyday constitution of space and the role of migrants as urban actors this is often disconnected from the very conditions that shape migration. In part, this limitation has emerged because research on migration and cities has focused primarily on western immigrant cities as a site for theory making (Collins 2012). In these urban contexts, scholars often take the drivers of migration as obvious (economic advancement, lifestyle, settlement and citizenship) because migration itself is so well established as part of the peopling of settler societies and cities. The experience, direction and

implications of migration cannot be taken for granted however, and there is a need to examine how the imaginations of migrants, their desires and aspirations in migrating and the infrastructures that support their movements also reach into the daily constitution of urban life. Moreover, migration cannot be read as a flat experience of similar forms of mobility but rather there is also a need to focus closely on the different statuses accorded to migrants, the temporary forms of migrant entry that predominate in many parts of the world and how its regulation shapes the urban lives of migrants.

Figuring the drivers of migration alongside the varying conditions under which migration takes place is particularly critical to exploring the relationship of migration and cities in Asian contexts. This is not least because of the way that recent patterns of migration in Asia have been tied to the development and globalisation of cities like Hong Kong, Seoul, Singapore, Taipei and Tokyo that have rapidly become important nodes in migratory circuits (Collins 2012; Wong & Rigg 2010). Aside from Singapore, these are not cities with extant histories of international immigration or places that have been long established as desirable destinations for migrant mobilities. What then are the driving forces of migration in this context? How do states seek to manage and modulate migration? And what are the implications for the everyday lives of migrants and other residents in these cities? *Global Asian City* addresses these questions by focusing on the ways in which different types of migration have become viewed as an indispensable dimension of twenty-first-century Asian urbanisation (Battistella 2014; Lai et al. 2013; Ong 2007; Ye 2016a). Migration in many Asian contexts also poses fundamental challenges to extant modes of social and political life, particularly in nations like South Korea and Japan where notions of citizenship are built on seemingly inherent entanglements of race and nationality (Han 2015). Accordingly, the governmentality of migration in Asia has operated through forms of differential inclusion (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013), incorporating migrants as workers, students and spouses but minimizing or eliminating possibilities for other kinds of social and economic interpenetration (Lindquist, Xiang & Yeoh 2012; Seol & Skrentny 2009). *Global Asian City* focuses on the differences established between migrant types; as workers, professionals and students, the way in which they work through the desires migrants express to be mobile as well as shape the lives they can live in migration and the city.

## 1.2 Migration and Modernity in Global City Seoul

Migration needs to be situated in relation to the varying position of cities vis-à-vis national, regional and global reconfigurations (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009). In the case of Seoul, this means accounting for the wider transformation of South Korea in the four decades since the end of the Korean War, a period regularly described as an ‘economic miracle’ characterised by ‘compressed modernisation’

(Chang 1999). Under the authoritarian governments of Park Chung-hee and his successors, the Korean government invested heavily in export oriented industrialisation, encouraged rapid internal migration and enforced strict external controls on outward and inward migration. In the process, South Korean economy, society, culture and politics underwent radical change: a condensed period of industrialisation and economic growth; a subsequent alteration in social and cultural norms manifest most obviously in reshaping of urban life in Seoul and other major cities; tension and competition between familial and societal norms that cut across traditional, modern and seemingly 'postmodern' articulations and a compressed political transition from colonial rule, authoritarian dictatorship to a new political aristocracy operating under the banner of democracy (Chang 1999).

The growth of Seoul was extraordinary during this period as its population increased from 1.6 million in 1955 to 9.7 million in 1985 and in the decades since has sprawled into the wider metropolitan region of Gyeonggi Province and Incheon City where 25.5 million people live, nearly 50% of the country's population. The city already held significant imaginative potential through its history as the Joseon Dynasty (1394–1910) capital of Hanyang and Japanese colonial (1910–1945) capital of Kyeongseong. But industrialisation and enhanced circulation of overseas culture fundamentally reshaped imaginings of the city during this period (Kim Watson 2011). As Jo (2015: 89) notes in her account of poverty and shame in twentieth-century South Korea, 'the city of Seoul was presented as a place of opportunity and hope, embodying a sense of zeal and the heartfelt aspirations of people for a better future'. The city generated a desire for migration and its possibilities that drew at its peak over 300,000 people to the city annually during the 1970s. Unsurprisingly, urban and national governments struggled to cope with this growth: the housing supply ratio reached a low of 53 percent by the mid-1980s and concerns around sanitation, access to toilets and pollution from heating were widespread (Gelézeau 2008). In an indicative precursor to contemporary migration patterns, the reality of everyday life, especially for the large numbers of working migrants in Seoul, rarely met the idealised excitement of a modern metropolis but was rather often articulated through struggles to survive in the uneven and fragmentary spaces of the city. Indeed, as Kim W.B. (1999: 13) put it in his millennial reflection on Korean urbanisation, 'cities were bases for production, rather than places of living.'

If the reconfiguration of Seoul in the mid-twentieth century involved economic, social and cultural extensions into the Korean countryside, then its articulation into the early twenty-first century articulated a transnational augmentation (Moon 2000). By the late 1980s and early 1990s urban challenges of housing, sanitation and heating were beginning to be resolved and the economy was shifting from intensive manufacturing towards high-technology supported by increasing levels of education amongst youth cohorts. The 1986 Asian Games and 1988 Olympic Games drew South Korea socially and culturally into a wider

set of connections through increased tourist circulation and when emigration controls were lifted in 1989 also enhanced possibilities for travel and migration. Globalisation also emerged on the national political agenda, captured most evocatively by former President Kim Young-sam's flagship policy of *Segyehwa* (literally globalisation):

Fellow citizens: Globalization is the shortcut which will lead us to building a first-class country in the 21st century. This is why I revealed my plan for globalization and the government has concentrated all its energy in forging ahead with it. It is aimed at realizing globalization in all sectors – politics, foreign affairs, economy, society, education, culture and sports. To this end it is necessary to enhance our viewpoints, way of thinking, system and practices to the world-class level. ... We have no choice other than this (Kim, S.S. 2000: 1)

*Segyehwa* was a nationalist project of securing the South Korean nation in the future in ways that seem paradoxical with many of the dominant narratives of globalization (Elden 2005). Rather than seeking to alter the social and cultural fabric of the nation, the policies of *seggyehwa* have been first and foremost economic and when they have moved into social and cultural areas the focus has more often been on 'upgrading' Koreans' capacity to operate in a wider world rather than dismantling the national project itself (Kim, S.S. 2000; Koo 2007). Globalisation, in this respect, was configured around potential deterritorialisations of economy, society and culture but always with an eye to shoring up the nation, to reterritorialising or stabilising the Korean nation as a transnationally distributed but nonetheless coherent arrangement.

It is also at this time that *international* migration first emerged as a feature of life in Seoul and South Korea more generally in ways that link to the lives of present migrant workers, English teachers and international students. By the late 1980s, many smaller firms, particularly in labour-intensive sectors like garment manufacturing, were facing widespread labour shortages that related to wage increases demanded by an empowered union movement and increased automation and transnationalisation of production in large corporations in particular (Kim, W. 2004; Park, W.W. 2002). Small and medium sized firms in the '3D sectors' (difficult, dirty and dangerous) faced an increasing shortage of Korean workers who were willing to accept the wages or conditions that had previously made these firms internationally competitive (Lim 2003). Transnational migrant labour, initially arriving undocumented but eventually regulated in different ways, provided the solution, a pool of labour that remained cheap and was not subject to the same regulations and rights as Korean workers.

Despite the absence of a labour-importing scheme, records suggested that there were some 6,409 migrants working in South Korea in 1987, many of whom were likely to have arrived on the relaxed tourist visas created for the Asian and Olympic Games (Seol 2000). The number of migrant workers would grow

considerably over the following years, to 14,610 in 1989, 21,235 in 1990 and 45,449 in 1991. In the early years, these migrants came from a small number of South Korea's Asian neighbours; China (particularly Korean-Chinese), Vietnam, Philippines, Indonesia and Bangladesh (Kim, A.E. 2009). The government responded through forced repatriation and penalties for employers but they also moved towards providing legal avenues for labour migration through the establishment of the Industrial and Technical Training Program (ITTP) in 1991. Based on the Japanese migration regime, the ITTP allowed for migrants to enter as 'trainees' and then effectively be employed as ordinary workers but without any of the associated legal rights. Over the course of the next decade, the number of labour migrants would increase to 384,000 by 2002 including some 189,000 undocumented (Lim 2002). Under the reformed EPS that will be discussed in Chapter 3 as well as the revised 'Visit and Employment' scheme for Korean-Chinese, these numbers have continued to increase to over 500,000 combined since 2010, including at least 50,000 undocumented workers according to official sources.

It is also over this same period that the number of English teachers began to increase as South Korea became more visible globally and as part of an increasing emphasis on forms of 'global' education signalled in the rhetoric of *segzehwa* (Park, J.S.Y. 2009). While English has been taught in Korea since at least the late nineteenth century it is only since the late 1980s that both Korean businesses and the state have viewed the acquisition of English as crucial to social and economic success. As larger Korean firms began to shift to less labour-intensive, more service oriented and high-tech activities they have increasingly viewed English as an essential skill in targeting export markets and engaging with foreign companies (Collins & Pak 2008). Essentially, for many large private sector companies 'English is taken to be a sign that the worker is well positioned within the modern world and worthy of a company that aspires to expand globally' (Shim & Park 2008: 148). As a form of 'cultural capital' for operating in a global world the learning of English clearly demands conversational competency that is associated with exposure to 'native' forms.

The focus on communicative competence amplified the emphasis on conversational ability and English-only approaches to the classroom. 'Native speakers' became idealised as the best teachers of English, particularly in relation to Korean English teachers who may have been experts in linguistics but were often unable to teach English through English language itself. A significant private English education industry started to grow during the 1990s involving the recruitment of university graduates from several predetermined 'western' nations. In 1985 there were only around 600 individuals on the 'teaching and research' visa that covered language instruction and other education based migration at that time. The numbers remained low until the mid-1990s, reaching 1,136 in 1993 on the new E2 'language instructor' visa, 4,230 in 1995 and 7,607 in 1997, before declining heavily in the wake of the financial crisis and then reaching 6,414 by 2000. The growth in the number of foreign language instructors increased steadily during

the 2000s, to reach 12,439 in 2005 and 23,317 in 2010. This resulted not least from government initiatives like the English Program in Korea (EPIK), and the provincial Gyeonggi English Program in Korea (GEPIK) that sought to place native speakers in the public schooling system. Since 2010 there have been incremental declines in the number of E2 visa holders to the current number of 15,450 in 2016.

More recently, this emphasis on educating ‘global subjects’ (Kang 2012) has also become incorporated into the restructuring of universities as ‘world class institutions’, through an increasing emphasis on research output and rankings and the related attraction and retention of international students. International students are particularly valued for the role they play in transforming campus spaces, and in providing Korean students in domestic institutions with exposure to a wider range of cultural and linguistic forms (Moon 2016). Moreover, international students are also being viewed as future skilled labour in training, and their presence has been conceived in terms of their potential role in ‘future international business and trade relations’ (Kim, S.K. 2013). Many international students originate from parts of Asia and their cross-cultural skills and training is claimed to open opportunities for them in an increasingly transnationalised Korean economic sphere (Shin & Choi 2015). In contrast to migrant workers, then, who are positioned at the bottom of labour market hierarchies, and English teachers who occupy a unique middling niche, (graduating) international students are often construed as key contributors to the present and future transnationalisation of Korean political–economic life.

Unlike both migrant workers and English teachers, there remained relatively few international students in South Korea until the early 2000s. In 1985, for example, there were only 433 people on study visas, the largest number of whom were from the USA and Japan, reflecting the role of exchange and area studies under Cold War geopolitical settings. In 1990 the number had increased to 803 and then to 1,487 in 1995 and started to include a wider range of nationalities, including Malaysians who represented about 8% of all students. It is not, however, until the following decade that international student numbers increased considerably and started to follow the current nationality trends. In 2000 there were 3,762 students, 20,683 in 2005, and then increasing quite rapidly to 69,600 by 2010. International students are now also much more likely to come from within Asia than they did in the past. Some 95% of all international students are of an Asian nationality, with about 40% coming from China and significant numbers of other students from Mongolia, Vietnam, Japan, Indonesia and India (Korea Immigration Service 2017).

The growing number of migrant workers, English teachers and international students in Seoul and South Korea over the last few decades reveal the manner in which the transformation of this city has involved an extension into previously unfamiliar territories of economic activity, educational forms and social and cultural possibilities. They are particularly indicative of the manner in which the city of Seoul stakes a claim to be global, signalling the ongoing robustness of

manufacturing, the linguistic and educational transformation of young people and a new role as a global centre of knowledge production and circulation. Other migration streams that are beyond the scope of this book and the research that underpins it have become significant during this period as well. Most notable has been the growing number of international ‘marriage migrants’ in South Korea, particularly women from other parts of Asia marrying Korean men. Often established through brokered relationships and directed at least initially towards rural areas, marriage migration has been prominent in public, political and scholarly discussions of migration and multiculturalism in South Korea in recent decades (Kim, A.E. 2009; Kim, M. 2013; Lee 2008). This is not least because of the role that migrating women have been expected to play as mothers of the next generation of Koreans in a context of ultra-low fertility. While this text does not extend to examining these lives, they are significant for apprehending the reconfiguration of the Korean nation around migration. Indeed, as will become clear in later chapters there are instances where marriage migrants transform into independent labour migrants and vice versa, and the discourses of multiculturalism often operate through reference to the centrality of marriage migrants over those who ostensibly come to labour and study.

### 1.3 Desiring Migration and Urban Encounters

As the foregoing discussion has demonstrated, the city and urban space more broadly represent the critical conjuncture of the different migratory flows that are now occurring through South Korea. Seoul is not simply the ‘context’, ‘entry point’ or ‘setting’ (Price & Benton-Short 2008) of *migration*, the point at which movement stops and a more sedentary life begins, but is rather entangled in the multi-scalar process of mobility, where large-scale movements intersect with smaller ordinary events of everyday life. This is a key claim that is extended throughout this book, that the urban is a spatial formation through which the uneven, or discrepant, experiences of migration are assembled. Urban spaces play a critical role in organising different forms of migration, from the political-economic transformations that manufacture demand for labour to cultural, economic and technological imaginings of the city as a space of desire. At the same time, the variegated landscape of migration, the different rights, tenure, tempo and futures of migrants, emerge most obviously through their place in the city, from prominent roles in the stylish sectors of the urban core to seemingly marginalised roles that represent the ‘underbelly’ of globalisation (Ong 2007). This distanciation of migrant lives is obviously demarcated first at the border, and through the different modes of entry that migrants take to national space, but as this book will demonstrate, the border cannot be conceived as a singular point or moment but rather as a technology that extends into the everyday lives of migrants and their prospects for incorporation in the city (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013).

The migration regimes that have been established in South Korea over the last three decades play a significant role in constituting a cultural politics of migration that is animated by both aspiration and anxiety. Migration expresses aspirations by nation states to be part of flows of knowledge, capital and actors and a wider national desire for economic development and global emergence. There is then a desire for freedom and circulation in migration regimes that promotes movement between places whether of diasporic returnees, mobile professionals and labour, or international students. This desire, however, also clearly runs in tension with anxieties about order, national security and cultural homogeneity, the deterritorialising effects of migration on local populations and social milieus. The identities of migrants are inscribed in this tension as they traverse and reside in the urban spaces that emerge in articulation with migration regimes. In the process, they are subject to graduated forms of incorporation, they are marked as more or less desirable forms of labour, as amplified symbols of global status or derided and made invisible through their peripheralisation, and differentially positioned socially and geographically in relation to locals and other mobile subjects.

The key argument posited in this book is that in their imaginaries, migration and everyday lives, migrants transcend these migration regimes and their attendant politics of truth. In their very being and becoming in the world, migrants both appropriate and rework the territorialising powers of migration regimes – they become both the labouring and learning bodies desired in these regimes but also active human subjects whose presence can never be completely contained. This reflects the force of desires involved in generating migration and sustaining migrant lives, not just in the initial impetus of departure but also across the spatial and temporal horizons of movement and possibility. Migration is caught up in a ‘desire to circulate’ (Raghuram 2013) that results from individual relations with collective imaginaries about the value of movement and the attributes of particular destinations. Migration is then necessarily strategic even though it can never be known or completely planned in advance; migrants take opportunities they are presented with and seek to materialise their desires in place while governments actively seek to shape those desires. As this book will demonstrate, whether workers, teachers or students, migrants manoeuvre between the governmental will of migration regimes and their own embodied desires to perform, transcend or escape this will. They become in circulation in ways that cannot be fully circumscribed but also are never completely knowable to themselves in advance.

In the discussions that follow in this book I take up this tension between constraint and possibility in migration and urban life by linking ideas of desire and assemblage with a focus on the encounters that constitute urban life. This framework extends current understandings of migration and cities by addressing how the generation of migration (desire) occurs across the mobilities and lives of migrants, is shaped by shifting urban, national and global forms and regulation (assemblage) and has consequent impacts on the everyday lives and encounters of migrants in the city. In empirical terms, this approach draws attention to

Seoul's present reliance on migrants and the way in which it is situated in its histories and geographies of modernisation and globalisation; how shifting imaginative geographies of Seoul and South Korea are generating new forms of migration that are marked by considerable spatial, social, legal and economic divisions; and how the arrival of diverse migrant populations is altering not only the fabric of particular parts of Seoul but also its prospects for a globally oriented future. Put theoretically, I read migrant mobilities through their biographical background, movement across borders and everyday lives; examine the city as an assemblage that has historical depth but also varying spatial extension manifest through these mobilities; and position encounters with urban life and residents as part of the coupling and decoupling of migrant and urban futures.

This focus on desire, assemblage and encounter makes two interlinked contributions to migration and urban geographies. First, introducing a focus on *desire* as a social force provides an alternative conceptualisation to the still common reading of migrants as utility-maximising individuals who, when provided with full access to information, can make migration decisions that will serve their own interests in a goal-oriented manner (Nail 2015). While migration scholars rarely explicitly advocate this principle there has been little theoretical advancement of the drivers of migration (Carling & Schewel 2017) and in the absence of alternative conceptualisations 'the utility-maximizing notion underlying decision-making has not been fundamentally challenged' (De Haas 2011: 20). Scholarship on migration and cities has effectively taken this utility-maximising model for granted by focusing discretely on the role of cities in migratory patterns or the everyday lives of migrants rather than seeing these as interlinked from the outset. In contrast, I advocate a reading of desire as a social force as the basis of an alternative conceptualisation of migration that goes beyond the utility-maximising approach and links the generation of migration with differential incorporation into urban life.

Inspired by the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1983, 1986), desire is conceived here as the energies that draw different bodies (human, non-human, symbolic) into relation with each other and in the process leads to shifting social and material formations, such as cities. Desire is evident in the way that migration occurs through strategic planning, opportunism and fancy that lead individuals to move locally, nationally or internationally, to achieve or avoid (un)desirable futures. The focus on desire as a more embodied and socially connected force is important for migration geographies for three reasons: (1) it displaces the presumption that migration results only from calculated economic rationalities; (2) it reveals the way that seemingly individual 'decisions' are generated in wider imaginative and social circulations; and (3) it demonstrates that what we call 'decision-making' does not occur at a single point in time but is rather stretched across the migration individuals undertake and is constantly reconfigured through encounters across and within places. In *Global Asian City*, this focus on desire makes it possible to conceive of what appear to be very different forms of

migration – workers, teachers and students – as part of similar processes of encountering the idea of migration and the possibility that exists in Seoul as an emerging global city. Rather than viewing these migrations as completely incommensurable at the outset, the focus on desire shows that it is the encounter with the globalising urban assemblage of Seoul, and more broadly the nation state of South Korea, that amplify discrepancies in these migrations and their effects in everyday life.

Second, then, *Global Asian City* also extends recent efforts to conceive of cities as urban *assemblages* by drawing attention to the importance of migration in the transnational extension of urban connections and their territorialisation in everyday life. I argue in particular that urban spaces play a critical role in generating and organising different forms of migration, from the political–economic transformations that manufacture demand for labour to cultural, economic and technological imaginings of the city as a space of desire. At the same time, the variegated landscape of migration, the different rights, tenure and tempo that is generated in the regulation of migration, emerge most obviously through their place in the city, the different politics of encounter that are generated and experienced by migrants. While theorisations of assemblage urbanism (McFarlane 2011a; Edensor 2011) and postcolonial readings of cityness (Simone 2010) remain open to the role of migration, they have not to date explicitly explored the role migration plays in the constitution of urban life. This empirical gap also provides scope to advance theoretical understandings of assemblage because migration reveals how desires emanate from particular assemblages such as cities and nations, and their economic, social and imaginative potential. In *Global Asian City*, for example, the focus on desire reveals how the imaginative geographies of an advanced and desirable Seoul/South Korea circulates widely in Asia to generate the migrations of workers and students, while in the case of English teachers these imaginative geographies typically subsume Seoul and South Korea into wider imaginings of Asia or the East. These expressions of desire matter not only for generating migration, but also for then shaping how individuals become part of urban assemblages in their daily lives – their perception of what Seoul and South Korea should be like, their orientation to individuals they encounter and their visions for their own futures.

The analytical connection between notions of desire and assemblage rests on carefully examining the *encounter* between individual migrants and urban life, the effects of national migration regimes, and the influence this has on the negotiation of everyday spaces. Encounter is not simply the meeting of two separate entities, migration and cities or people from different places, but rather emphasises a process of becoming and change (Amin & Thrift 2002; Simone 2010; Wilson & Darling 2016). Migration is having a fundamental role in altering the present position of Seoul vis-à-vis other territories and in turn migration and migrant lives are also modulated in important ways by their encounter with Seoul and South Korea. In *Global Asian City* this is exemplified by drawing attention to

each migrant group's position in the schema of ethnic difference dominant in Korean society, the impact of different visa statuses, the range of encounters that different individual migrants have at work, study and in public life, and the possibilities that exist to create a new place in the city. Often these encounters align with the regulatory distinctions between workers, students and teachers but *Global Asian City* also emphasises how gender, race, age and geography cut across the lives that migrants have in Seoul. Most importantly, *Global Asian City* emphasises that desire expressed in migration and the encounter of migrant lives with the city exceed the actual event of this encounter (Karaman 2012). In this sense, focusing on encounter highlights transformations that emerge in the rhythms of daily life as well as the future possibilities manifest in connections between migration and the city. The narratives in this book reveal the ways individuals negotiate alternative futures as long-term residents or as mobile cosmopolitan subjects. For Seoul too, the encounter with migration implies a reconfiguration of the urban assemblage in ways that remain under examined to date, the emergence of new alliances and subjectivities, the transformation of local spaces and the re-imagination of what it might mean to be a *Global Asian City*.

## 1.4 Approaching Discrepant Lives

The narratives of migration and urban life presented in *Global Asian City* emerge from fieldwork conducted in Seoul and its surrounding areas between 2008 and 2012 and a subsequent period of six months in 2015. The research comes from two projects that had quite different empirical scope. First, material on migrant workers and English teachers emerges from a project on *Mobility, Social Difference and Urban Incorporation*. This project was explicitly comparative and sought to explore the migration and urban lives of migrant workers and English teachers and their role in urban transformations in the Seoul metropolitan region. It included 40 biographical interviews with migrant workers from four Southeast Asian nations, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam, which at the time of the research were the four largest nationalities within the EPS. In order to capture the depth of meaning in migrant narratives, the interviews were undertaken with research assistants from the same national backgrounds as migrants and in their native languages. As part of the same project, 41 biographical interviews were undertaken with English teachers from Australia, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, the UK and USA. The interviews for both groups were guided by a general biographical structure that focused on key points before migration, during life in Seoul and future projections, although the interviews themselves always diverged into wider questions raised by migrants about their own individual trajectories, their subjective transformations and their sense of place in Seoul.

The second body of research material that informs the discussions in this book comes from a collaborative, multinational study of *Globalising Universities and*

*International Student Mobilities in East Asia*. This project explored the restructuring of nine leading universities in the East Asian region and the narratives of international students moving through these institutions and the cities and nations in which they are positioned. Two of the nine case study universities in this project were Korea University (KU) and Seoul National University (SNU), arguably the most prestigious private and public universities in Korea (the study included seven other universities in China, Japan, Singapore and Taiwan). Within this study 40 biographical interviews were carried out with international students at KU and SNU. I conducted 20 of the 40 interviews in English and in some cases partially in Korean; the remainder were conducted by other team members in Mandarin and English. Although these interviews focused on specific issues related to educational migration they were also guided by a similar biographical structure that included opportunities for participants to develop narratives about their experiences prior to coming to Seoul, their everyday lives both on and off campus, and their future projections. The interviews from both of these projects have been transcribed and where necessary translated into English prior to analysis through an open-coding schema.

The integration of research across different migrant populations and indeed drawing from different research projects clearly raises methodological questions that pertain to the claims that can be made in this book. There is, first, a variation in depth of engagement with different research participants. As noted, I was only involved in some of the interviews with international students and worked to train research assistants to undertake interviews with all of the migrant workers in this study. There were many reasons for this design, including the importance of using languages that participants can confidently communicate through as well as creating research encounters that were meaningful and comfortable. Research assistants were native speakers of participants' languages and in the case of migrant workers were all international students of the same nationalities attending universities in Seoul; in the case of international student interviews it also included other research team members. Research assistants were trained in qualitative methodologies and the ethics and techniques involved in undertaking research on people's lives and during the research process I worked with these researchers to reflect on emergent insights and develop their skills in interviewing.

This approach to working with research assistants in the case of interviews with migrant workers was part of an attempt to develop broader comparable insights into the lives of different migrants. It does contrast with both of the other cases where due to language abilities I was able to conduct many of the interviews. It differed in particular from the research undertaken with English teachers where my own experience as an English teacher in Seoul in the early 2000s has provided additional insight into the configuration of teacher lives that was not immediately available in other cases. In order to address these differences, each of the research assistants was asked to provide research journals of their experiences and reflections that emerged in the interviews with migrant workers.

The interviews were subsequently translated at a later date by other assistants who provided guidance in interpretation of cultural and linguistic differences. Interview narratives were also supplemented by visits to spaces where different migrants socialise that included observation and informal discussions with people holding work and study visas. An additional level of insight comes from interviews with government officials and NGOs and discussions with Korean migration scholars in the case of migrant workers; university officials and student association representatives in the case of international students; and for English teachers, representatives of the Seoul Global Center and an English language publication and leaders within the Association of Teachers of English in Korea. Although I do not draw on these observations, key informant interviews and discussions explicitly in this book they form an important component in developing insights into the differences and similarities involved in the migration and urban lives of migrant workers, English teachers and international students.

While several methods could have been employed to undertake this research, such as ethnographic work, photo-voice, participatory mapping or go-alongs (Collins & Huang 2012), interviews were chosen for two reasons. First, interviews are a valuable technique to explore migratory processes because they encourage participants to construct a narrative around their mobilities, to describe key features of their everyday lives and to articulate visions for the future. As geographers exploring migration have demonstrated (Rogaly 2015), the stories that are told about mobility are critical to contextualizing the territories where movement is articulated as well as providing insight into the temporal unfolding of the biographies of individual migrants. Migrant stories generated through interviews 'can reveal the empirical disjuncture between expectations of migration, produced through dominant and pervasive discourses of modernization, and the actual experiences of migrants' (Lawson 2000: 174). The interview schedules employed in this research, and the training provided to research assistants, emphasised an examination of migrant biographies, tracing lives and aspirations from well before participants came to or even thought about Seoul and across the different encounters and experiences that formed part of their mobility and urban life.

In addition to its analytic value, interviews were also the most pragmatic method, particularly in terms of the time demands on participants who were migrant workers as well as the requirement for comparability across international case studies of international students. Many migrant workers who participated in this research had very little time outside of their workplaces and it was considered unreasonable to expect significant commitment to more detailed research techniques or multiple interviews. As the discussion in Chapter 4 highlights, many migrants work six or seven days a week, often from very early in the morning to late in the evening. Time is at a premium and the day off is a time that is precious, for socialising with friends, relaxing or undertaking non-work pursuits. The biographical interviews used in this research are fit for this purpose. They have

served as a valuable technique for generating insight into the lives of migrants and providing scope for their own narrations of mobility and everyday life.

Given the complexity of processes involved in enacting and experiencing migration and its articulation through urban spaces, how can we go about accounting for differences across groups? How might we account for the different but intersecting ways in which migrant workers, English teachers and international students become part of the fabric of urban life in Seoul? In what ways can comparative gestures form a part of critical scholarship without reinforcing ideological difference around migrant status, nationality or skill-level? How can we account for ethnicity and identity without resorting to an ethnic lens that can shroud key issues that cut across migrant lives?

*Global Asian City* is necessarily framed as a comparative project, one that seeks to draw together the lives of different migrants and to explore their articulation in and through the urban fabric of Seoul. In focusing on these three groups, however, I explicitly seek to eschew orthodox approaches to comparison that tend towards identifications of similarities and differences across migrant groups. The purpose of focusing on these three groups is not to establish universal claims about migration, to establish these three cases as plural and incommensurable or to demonstrate that differences emerge because of internal or inherent qualities of each group. Instead, the comparative focus in *Global Asian City* is guided by more relational terms, an emphasis on the connections that cut across the migration of these groups and the ways in which their seeming categorical differences are actively assembled and reinforced in migration and everyday life.

The focus on examining transnational migrations that are not ordinarily conceived in relation to each other – migrant workers, English teachers and international students – foregrounds the relationship between border crossings and urban lives. Ordinarily, these different mobile subjects would be presented as broadly representing groups perceived as low-skilled, middling and (future) elite, and because of their ostensible differences are often held apart analytically, as components of different types of mobility practices, viewed differently by the state, and at times seen as incommensurable. While the distinction between migrant types has been a powerful tool for migration scholars this analytical strategy also occludes a number of issues that are critical to understanding contemporary transformations in migration. First, accepting the separation of migrants serves to reify the state and its practices of distinction as the most important determinant of migration, where research is increasingly suggesting a more complicated landscape of actors involved in migration regimes (Lindquist, Xiang & Yeoh 2012; Glick Schiller & Salazar 2013; Kalir, Sur & van Schendel 2012). Second, the analytical separation of migrants ignores the obviously relational characteristics of mobility itself, where certain kinds of migration are enabled at the expense of others (Cresswell 2010; Collins 2009). Finally, focusing on distinct types also undermines our capacity to appreciate the power and influence of ideology in shaping differences and similarities between groups (Grossberg 1993).

In linking these three different transnational migrations I posit the urban as the spatial formation through which ‘discrepant experiences’ of mobility are articulated. This approach builds on Edward Said’s classic discussion of discrepant experiences in *Culture and Imperialism* (see also Kim Watson 2011; Rubin 2012). Said’s claim is that once we recognise the ‘knotted’ histories of ostensibly different categories and experiences, there can be no intellectual reason for giving them an idealised and essentially separated status in analysis. Indeed, drawing categories apart analytically is part of the generation of ideologically entrenched difference, as is very much the case in migration where categories are also largely determined by the state for its own ends. Intellectually, we must be able to consider and think through experiences that are ‘discrepant’, that do not neatly map on to each other and that have their own internal formations, coherence and system of external connections. Juxtaposition is a powerful tool in this respect, that creates possibilities to conceive of the generation of difference:

to make concurrent those views and experiences that are ideologically and culturally closed to each other, and that attempt to distance or suppress other views and experiences. Far from seeking to reduce the significance of ideology, the exposure and dramatization of discrepancy highlights its cultural importance; this enables us to appreciate its power and understand its continuing influence. (Said 1993: 37)

Said describes this as a ‘contrapuntal’ rather than comparative perspective. In music, the term contrapuntal is derived from the Latin expression *punctus contra punctum*, which literally refers to ‘point against point’ or, ‘note against note’. The term is commonly used to refer to a combination of simultaneous parts, usually melodies, where each has its own independent significance but together results in a coherent texture (Kennedy et al. 2013). Analytically, then, a contrapuntal perspective encourages us to recognize the role of seemingly independent, or discrepant, phenomena within broader sociospatial arrangements. This is critically different from orthodox approaches to comparison, particularly within migration and urban studies, where the focus has too often been on comparing groups or entities that are conceived as having equivalence. In migration studies this manifests in the prevalence of the ‘ethnic lens’ in studying migration in national contexts (Glick Schiller & Çağlar 2009), and in urban studies in the tendency to compare cities within particular national contexts, or similar levels of economic development (Robinson 2011). The contrapuntal approach taken here is more akin to ideas of ‘relational comparison’ that stress a focus on interconnected trajectories rather than ‘searching for similarities and differences between two mutually exclusive contexts’ (Ward 2010: 480). This approach allows for a focus on the interconnected histories and geographies that are involved in the ongoing (re)production of difference in migration and urban life.

The contrapuntal approach undertaken in *Global Asian City* manifests through discussions that cut across various spatio-temporal dimensions of desire,

assemblage and encounter. The next chapter, *Desire, Assemblage, Encounter: Beyond Regimes of Migration Management*, elaborates the theoretical focus on desire, assemblage and encounter in relation to policy orthodoxies of migration management and critical accounts of migration regimes. The aim of the chapter is to establish a conceptual vocabulary for analytically integrating the lives of migrant workers, English teachers and international students and their present and future place in Seoul. The chapter problematises the political rationalities of migration management and their theoretical underpinnings within mainstream migration studies, which at once reduce migrants to utility-maximising individuals while also elevating the state to a pre-eminent role in dictating and directing migratory flows. In contrast, I build on insights developed in the study of migration regimes to reveal some of the wider sets of actors and flows involved in constituting contemporary migration as well as the importance of recentring migration studies on migrant lives. In order to address more specifically the spatial depth of migration across urban, national and transnational territories as well as the questions of agentive will in migrant lives the chapter then moves to introduce in detail the conceptual potential of a focus on desire, assemblage and encounter. As a vocabulary for approaching discrepant migrant lives these ideas provide the tools to reassess the generation of migration beyond economic rationality, the ways in which this is shaped by shifting urban forms and migration regimes and the consequent impacts on the everyday lives and encounters of migrants in the city.

The specific function of migration regimes in relation to the role of desire in migration is taken up in Chapter 3 that focuses on the South Korean nation state and its technologies of bordering and migration management that have come to shape migration and lives of migrants. The focus is on the governmentalities involved in the different technologies for regulating migrant mobilities, the EPS for migrant workers, the English Teacher Program, and the International Student visa system. Critically, I am interested here in how these migration regimes reach across borders and into the spaces and lives of migrants – generating desires for migration but also shaping, channelling and circumscribing those desires through the migration process. In this respect, the chapter demonstrates that across these groups migration regimes include not only sending and receiving nation states, but also a wider range of actors and processes – from families, communities, intermediaries, employers, popular culture and education – that contribute in different ways to the prospects and problems of migration.

The next three chapters shift focus from the generation and management of migration to the articulation of migratory processes in the everyday lives of workers, teachers and students. Each chapter focuses on the ways in which these different migrants are drawn apart in their migration, into different spaces and times in the city, with different opportunities for encounter and incorporation and as a result quite different politics of mobility. Following the contrapuntal approach taken in this book, each chapter prioritises the narratives of one of these

ideologically constituted migrant categories while also showing intersections with others. The result is a clear sense of the internal formations, coherence and patterns of migration and urban life for workers, teachers and students, and also sets of external connections and overlaps that reveal the workings of migration regimes and the influence of desire and urban form in constituting discrepancy.

Chapter 4 begins by exploring the relationship between *Migration, the Urban Periphery and the Politics of Migrant Lives*. It draws on Simone's (2010) conceptualisation of the urban periphery as a space of marginalisation but also opportunity and draws attention to the role of this urban space in the lives of migrant workers. The periphery here serves as a material manifestation of marginalisation for many, their distance from the urban core and invisibility as urban residents. Yet, by focusing on forms of irregular migration, the social networks that constitute the 'mobile commons' (Papadopoulos & Tsianos 2013), and the politics of recognition, this chapter demonstrates that the periphery also supports other prospects for migrants that have the potential to transform their place in the city. Chapter 5 focuses on international students and the ways in which their narratives point to a channelling of desiring migration and segmentation of migrant lives in the city. As the chapter demonstrates, students move between highly mediated spaces on campus to wider encounters with Korean publics in the dynamic spaces of the urban core. Their mobility through these spaces and encounters with different publics are notably influenced by configurations of race, gender, Korean language ability and cultural norms. While these configurations empower some students to envision and craft a successful future, others experience dissonance with life in Seoul that disrupts both their own conception of the value of international student mobility and the ostensible valorisation of international students as agents of a globalising society and economy. Last, Chapter 6 focuses on English teachers, whose presence in more ordinary neighbourhoods across Seoul might frame them as a more privileged migrant subject, not least because of the way in which whiteness has come to be idealised in English education and globalised urban life in Seoul. English teachers, however, are often in precarious positions, their lives and social networks shaped by transience and for those who remain long-term in the city their privileged labour market niche can circumscribe their conceptions of what is possible in the present and the future.

These earlier chapters set the stage for raising questions about the materialisation of urban multiculturalism and the prospects for migration in Seoul, South Korea and indeed across East Asia. Chapter 7 expands the temporal and spatial horizons of earlier chapters to examine the ways in which migrant lives take shape in the city through specific sets of social practices and relationships that cut across differences established in the migration regime and take shape in both consolidation and disruption of extant identities. Focusing on *Multicultural Presence and Fractured Futures* this chapter also addresses the ways in which migrant lives are coupled and decoupled from the making of the *Global Asian City*. The discussion

is situated within emerging multicultural discourses in South Korea and their articulation into the politics of everyday life and the role of migration in Seoul's urban future. Workers, teachers and students are unevenly incorporated into these visions for the future. They are all viewed as part of a multicultural presence in the now, but their involvement in the future of Seoul is necessarily shaped by a complex intersection of labour market and migrant status, nationality, ethnicity, gender and language that constitutes their desirability as mobile subjects but also as urban residents. In concluding, I return to the critical concerns of this text around migration, desire and the politics of encounter and consider their implications for conceiving and engaging with migration and urban life in an East Asian region where this nexus is increasingly central. As *Global Asian City* demonstrates, we are forced to recognise an urban future actively being assembled as regionally and globally connected and yet clearly reliant on the uneven inclusion of the mobile subjects who are all critical to enabling this globality.

## Acknowledgements

Portions of this chapter have been drawn from Collins, F.L. (2016). Migration, the urban periphery, and the politics of migrant lives. *Antipode*, 48(5), 1167–1186. doi: 10.1111/anti.12255 and Collins, F.L. (2016). Labour and life in the global Asian city: the discrepant mobilities of migrant workers and English teachers in Seoul. *Journal of Ethnic & Migration Studies*, 42(14), 2309–2327.

## Endnotes

- 1 *Samgakji* station is located at the west end of the Yongsan Garrison, a key military instalment for US forces in South Korea and before that the headquarters of the Imperial Japanese Army. The area around Samgakji is then unsurprisingly characterised by a significant number of foreign residents and activities.
- 2 While such an approach might seem unusual in a mega-city like Seoul, it is relatively common for non-Koreans to approach each other in the street and start conversations. This has certainly been my experience but it is also something noted by many of the participants in this research. It would seem to highlight the relative rarity of encounters with non-Koreans but also perhaps the desire for contact in familiar languages and cultural norms that can sometimes be difficult to establish in migration to a place like Seoul.