

# **Spatializing Imagined Moments of Korean Unification: Arboreal and Topographic Charisma on April 27, 2018**

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## **Abstract**

Territory and landscape are vitally important to both nations currently on the Korean peninsula. Historically both Koreas have contested and imagined the others territory as their own. However, both Koreas have both been forced to consider what the landscape of the other might look like at the moment of or following unification. Occasionally both Koreas have joined together to enact and imagine such moments of unification. This paper in particular considers arboreal elements of geography and topography reproduced at moments of intersection between the two Koreas, and how they are historically framed, imagined and grounded and embodied in real materiality, so they are not just imagined places in the future, but places of imagination in the present. Specifically, this paper focuses on a ceremonial tree planting ceremony on the April 27, 2018 between Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae-in at the April 2019 Inter-Korean Summit held at Panmunjom in the Joint Security Area. Using the work of Denis Cosgrove, Nak-chung Paik, Gilles Deleuze, Heonik Kwon and Byung-ho Chung, the paper places the ceremony and other symbolic elements that day within a wider historical-geographical and transnational frame of the place of trees and topographic features at moments in which both practices of political authority and unification are performed and enacted in Korean history.

Keywords: Arboreal Charisma, Tree Planting in Korean Political History, April 27 Panmunjom Summit, Korean Unification, Re and De-materialization, Imagination

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## 1. Introduction

2018 saw many unexpected and extraordinary moments of intersection and exchange on the Korean peninsula. Moments which, as much as IR and political theorists would like to assert, could not have been predicted. It is unclear whether the particularly florid nature of these moments could even have been conceptualized in the past. Geo-political tone focused on North Korea went from periods in which it was unclear when (not if), the American bombs and missiles would begin to fall, and Kim Jong Un seemed (to use the language of 21st century social media), to troll Washington DC and Seoul with early morning test launches, cigarette in hand, to the fervent joyous energies of the opening ceremony of the P'yŏngch'ang (Pyeongchang) Winter Olympics. It is hard to see whether a conceptual or intellectual frame can even be placed over such a complicated, energetic and frankly bizarre process. Academics and political scientists however will surely make determined and concrete efforts to do so and put these last couple of years into the historical framework of political and institutional efforts focused towards Korean unification and rapprochement.

This paper does not aim to engage in contextualization derived from history or political science, it is instead focused on other conceptual aspects of the events in this period. As a Geographer, the author of this paper has long been fascinated by the spatial aspects of Korean politics and historiography (Winstanley-Chesters, 2014). Both South Korea and North Korea incorporate physical topographies which resonate with powerful cultural, spiritual and ideological themes in extremely unexpected ways. Visitors to Seoul will be immediately caught by the video on the Airport Railroad Express (AREX), from Incheon airport which claims the topography of Dokdo/Takeshima immediately for the purposes of Korean nationalism, as the hyper-modern connective architectures speed by. Those who spend time viewing any of the monumental commemorative architectures of Pyongyang will notice the prevalence of images and reliefs of Paektusan/Baekdusan on the walls of important buildings (Joinau 2014). Seoul's rapid transit system, the Seoul Metro even has small scale models of the mountain in vitrines at various stations across its network, and the COEX mall once sported on

hoardings outside, a huge painted diorama of the mountain and surrounding wilderness. The spatialization of such geographies are vital to the energies of contemporary Korean society and politics; it would be surprising if they were not present at moments of inter-Korean connection and unity.

There were, as readers will know, many such moments in 2018 and this paper considers the processes and practicalities of some of the most important. In particular the paper focuses on the planting of a tree by Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae-in during the April 2018 inter-Korean summit of April 27, 2018. The paper also considers the topographic imagery present throughout the summit, including paintings of Keumgangsan/Geumgangsan, Paekdusan/Baekdusan and other mountains of the Korean peninsula which were the backdrop to events at the summit. Much has been said of the importance of physical topography during this event, including the crossing back and forth of the border lines which separate the Korean peninsula (The Guardian 2018a). This paper encounters these events and the topographies that are important to them through the lens of the work of Denis Cosgrove on symbolic landscapes (1984), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari on re and deterritorialization (1987) and with the more recent writings of Heonik Kwon and Byung-ho Chung in mind (2012). While Kwon and Chung's writing primarily addresses North Korean politics, charismatic or theatric landscapes are not necessarily only Pyongyang's domain. At moments such as the April 2018 Inter-Korean summit the appearance of such important governmental and political figures and the prevalence of political thematics mean that any landscape can become theatric or charismatic, and it is the paper's assertion that Panmunjom itself was transformed into a stage for the performance of practices of unification.

This paper holds that such practices are necessarily products and processes of what Nak-chung Paik termed the division system (2011). This system refers to the political and structural practices which maintain the separation of states on the peninsula; be they the necessary performance of power and sovereignty vested in the Kim family and the Korean Workers Party in North Korea, or the security structures, relationships, and economic networks which vest the power of the United States and conservative, anti-Communist tendencies into South Korean politics and culture (Shorrock 1986). Just as at Panmunjom and elsewhere along

the two Korea's borders this division system has been performed through the technologies of security, infiltration and dominance, and practices of hostility and contestation, so this paper holds, such practices are necessarily reversed at times of inter-Korean connection, when the division system must be for a moment frozen. Within this system, Panmunjom and the topographies of the area represent as Pierre Nora would term it, sites of memory within the division system (1989). At Panmunjom (P'anmunjŏm/ Panmunjeom), the architecture and geography of division solidify a site of memory from the Korean War and moments of altercation and contest since 1953 (Specia and Wallace 2018). The area is rich with symbolic and commemorative meaning, used to remember moments of pain, disputes with the opposing side, and in the case of Inter-Korean summits historically brief moments of connection. The piece of terrain which this paper is most concerned with is surely destined to become another of those sites of memory, and in fact the paper will assert is deliberately constructed to become one.

Finally, the paper holds in mind the work of Gilles Deleuze on re and deterritorialization (1984). Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's writing in *Anti-Oedipus Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), may not seem the most obvious route to approaching the Korean peninsula and the division system. It is not the author's intention to assert that in the Korean case one may find a functional example of 'rhizomatic' politics, that Korea needs a reasonable dose of 'schizo-analysis' or that either of the nations of the peninsula or both are somehow 'organs without bodies.' While the Division System is schizophrenic in some aspects, neither Korea is committed to what Deleuze and Guattari term 'libidinal investments.' Instead the paper utilizes the powers of interconnection and the collapse in binaries presented by Deleuze and Guattari's theorization of re and deterritorialization as they are more fully unpacked in the second volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia, A Thousand Plateaus* (1987). Readers might regard the entire peninsula as having de-territorialized by the experience of Japanese colonialism between 1910 and 1945, before being further de-territorialized during both the early occupations of the peninsula and the Korean War of 1950-1953. In spite of the acute displacements and destructions of those periods, neither Korea was pushed into what Deleuze and Guattari term 'absolute deterritorialization,' but

retained the power to recover and reterritorialize themselves. Korean historical narratives and cultural organization has though undergone considerable recombination over the years, which could be regarded as potentially weakening has actually allowed for a certain flexibility and strength through the various combinations. The author of this paper has suggested in past work, that in the case of North Korea in particular, processes of de and reterritorialization are used within the framework of the nation's new invented traditions to harness some of the energy, charisma and power of places and spaces important to the nation's politics and traditions (Winstanley-Chesters 2015). By de-territorializing important topographic features and sites of cultural vitality, North Korean politics and historical narrative re-territorializes and re-materializes them in a later temporal frame in order to extract value and energy from them. In April 2018 both Korean leaders at Panmunjom engaged in related practices of deterritorialization, similarly, to harness the energies unleashed by their later reterritorialization.

## 2. 2018, A Tumultuous Year

2018 was for Koreans, watchers and analysts of Korea and Korean politics a tumultuous year. This paper will not go into extensive detail on the political and geo-political developments which generated the impetus for the processes and events leading up to the events described in this paper. In short, an extremely heated and conflictual period of political interaction between North Korea, South Korea, the United States which involved missile launches, the Yŏnp'yŏng (Yeongpyeong) Island incident and increasingly bellicose threats from both Washington DC and Pyongyang, dissipated with unexpected speed (Lee 2018). Following the election of Moon Jae-in as President and low-key efforts against the narrative grain from Washington DC encouraging South Korea to connect with North Korea, Pyongyang signaled in 2018's New Year Address delivered by Kim Jong Un that it would be interested in participating in the 2018 Winter Olympics in P'yŏngch'ang, South Korea (*Rodong Sinmun* 2018). This overt signal from North Korea was very quickly taken up by South Korean government figures and within

ten days talks opened between the two sides focused on actualizing the idea (McCurry 2018a).

It was announced on January 17, 2018 that both Koreas would field a joint women's ice hockey team and that the two nations would march under the unification flag at the opening ceremony (McCurry 2018b). By the day of the opening ceremony of the Olympics on the February 9 it had also been agreed that North Korea would contribute elements to the cultural program surrounding the games, including appearances by the Samjiyon Orchestra (Qin 2018). North Korea also sent a squad of some 250 women, termed 'cheerleaders' by the world's media, but familiar to analysts of the country as a political agitation or energy squad, who transfixed global media with their synchronized movements and huge enthusiasm throughout the games (McCurry 2018c). The opening ceremony included unprecedented handshakes between Moon Jae-in and Kim Yo Jong, Kim Jong Un's sister and Kim Yong Nam, North Korea's now retired head of state (Haas 2018a). This represented the first time that a member of the North Korean ruling family had been in South Korea since the Korean War. The closing ceremony of the games included an appearance by General Kim Yong Chol, North Korea's former head of security and intelligence and Vice Chairman of the Workers Party of Korea, Central Committee (Haas 2018b).

While events during the games were extraordinary, the rapprochement continued afterwards with military hot lines re-established between the two, a series of visits by envoys from both sides and other efforts to de-escalate the security protocols and infrastructures between them. These included a commitment to disallow the flying of propaganda balloons into North Korea from the south, the playing of propaganda through large loudhailers at the border and military exercises that either side could consider hostile (including South Korea's participation in the Foal Eagle and Joint Resolve joint exercises with the United States) (McCurry 2018d). There were a series of meetings between bureaucrats from both Koreas to construct and organize the timescale and practicalities for a meeting between the two nations leaders. These efforts came to fruition on April 27, 2018 (Haas 2018c).

### 3. April 2018 at Panmunjom

The April 2018 Inter-Korean summit as it has become known, was held at Panmunjom, in the Joint Security Area's Inter-Korean Peace House. It is worth briefly considering the political geography of this area. Panmunjom of course was the site between 1951 and 1953 at which the North Korean/Chinese and South Korean/UN/United States sides negotiated the various POW and returnee issues which prolonged the conclusion of the Korean War (Boose Jr, 2000). While the Korean War was certainly a conflict about political ideology, national identity and something of a proxy in the early Cold War for altercations between the great powers, it was very much also about geography and territory (Cumings 2010). Space and territory had become important academic subjects following the rise of Karl Haushofer's geo-politics and the occupation and co-option of greater space for development was important to both Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan (Spang 2006). It was vital for China and to a lesser extent for the Soviet Union to have a buffer zone between nations occupied and controlled by the United States and the forces of world capitalism. Equally it was vital, given that the status quo of 1939-1945 had collapsed and nominally friendly relations had in the oft repeated words of Winston Churchill (though they were not his invention), been replaced by an 'iron curtain' across Europe and the wider world, for the United States and its allies to engage in the physical containment of Communist ideologies and powers, and if possible to physically reduce and roll back the space occupied by them across the globe (Cumings, 1995). Korea essentially provided one of the first moments following 1945 in which these two sides could face each other across the battlefield.

Panmunjom thus became a physical place in which the conceptual contests between ideologies and identities met face to face. Many scholars have detailed how the journeys and geographies of the POWs discussed at Panmunjom for many months became hugely important rhetorical and political devices at the time (Vatcher 1958). The spaces in which those POWs were incarcerated and the manner in which the POWs themselves sought to create and reconfigured their own geographies for ideologies sake has also been the subject of recent focus (Kim

2019). At times the deterritorialization of these POW's, their subjectivities and national identities became vital weapons of war as both sides sought their reterritorialization and transformation into the ideological and sovereign shape of the other.

Following the signing of the armistice frozen hostility between the two sides was ossified into the physical topography of Panmunjom. The famous blue huts of the Joint Security Area, housing originally the Neutral Nations Supervisory Committee, the Military Armistice Commission and the United Nations Command create spaces where the distinct and categorical boundary between the two nations can be de-materialized and de-territorialized; one of the huts contains the only space where one can be both in North Korea and in South Korea at the same time. The historical architectures of the negotiation and POW return practices, processes of deterritorialization and reterritorialization remain at Panmunjom, such as the Bridge of No Return, across which POW's and others over the years have crossed, one way into North Korea, the other into South Korea, never to return.

Since the 1950s both Panmungak on the northern side and Freedom House on the southern side have loomed over the small blue huts spanning the Military Demarcation Line (as the border is referred to in the Joint Security Area). Both are replete with the architectures of security and observation so that nowhere in this terrain is a visitor free from the others' panoptical gaze. To the south of Freedom House, the Inter-Korean Peace House, completed in 1989 provides another, larger neutral space, controlled by the United Nations Command in which the two Korea's can explore and communicate on inter-Korean issues. There are a multiplicity of other smaller pieces of geography and architecture around the area which commemorate visits by a various politicians, dignitaries and moments of importance in the history of Panmunjom. So, in a sense while it is often said that the JSA and Panmunjom is an example of something static and ahistorical, its own geography and topography records a long and complicated history.



#### 4. Histories of Panmunjom and 1976

The Joint Security Area was named Panmunjom after a real inhabited settlement, a village whose buildings still exist, but which is of course no longer inhabited in any conventional way. The original geography and topography of Panmunjom has been subsumed by the terrain of division, connection and security architectures. Such a place is more than simply the product of its human geographies, and the natural or environmental topographies of Panmunjom have also become dominated by the new spaces of the security area. As Cosgrove and Nak Chung-paik might conceive it, the political structures of post 1945 Korean governments and the 'Division System' have written themselves into the landscape and topography of the area. Panmunjom in this way has become a constructed landscape, embedding the imperatives of division into not only human-scale topographies, but non-human materials and spaces. Such non-human or environmental elements have not been absent from the wider histories of unification and disconnection of course. Today the Demilitarized Zone which separates the two Koreas is not only renowned for being one of the most militarized spaces on the planet, but also for being an important ecologically pristine space, rare in northeast Asia, home to a number of rare animals and birds and particularly verdant due to a lack of human interaction or incursion since 1945 (Brady 2008). There is an entire strand of political advocacy which has sought historically to use this topographically and environmentally semi-pristine landscape to campaign for peace, unification and greater inter-Korean interaction (Hayes and Cavazos 2013). Trees and plant life play a central role in contemporary conceptions of nature and ecology. Awareness of ecological and environmental concerns is even regularly called 'being green' and environmental political parties are even called 'Green' parties, primarily due to the color of the life forms that use chlorophyll to engage in respiration and produce the energy which sustains them (Henn and Hoffman 2013). For the most part trees and most plant life are seen as entirely positive in public consciousness, providers of great public amenity, producers of oxygen for the atmosphere and even connected to human mythologies of creation (Hull 1992).

Particularly interesting to the author of this paper was a large poplar tree near

to the Bridge of No Return in the Joint Security Area. In 1976 this tree had apparently, having grown to quite some size and nearly one hundred feet tall, begun to block the view of the United Nations Command Check Point (CP no.3) at the Bridge of No Return from the United Nations Command nearest Observation Post (OP no.5) up on slightly higher ground (DeLateur 1987). Aside from that observation post, CP no.3 could only be observed from one other check point, CP no.2, and then only the roof of the post. Relations between North Korea, South Korea, the United Nations Command and the United States in the 1970s were at an extremely low ebb (Kim, 2002). There had been a series of extremely provocative actions by North Korea, including a raid on the residence of the South Korean President, the shooting down of US reconnaissance planes and attacks on the South Korean coast guard (Yoon 2003). Tensions at the Joint Security Area and the Demilitarized Zone were high, and in 1976 United States troops had on occasion been held hostage at gun point within its bounds (DeLateur 1987). Visibility across the entire terrain and to all installations was absolutely vital in the minds of security and military planners and personnel. The large tree therefore became a problem and on August 18, 1976, 18 military personnel under the command of a Captain Arthur Bonifas set out to trim its branches and crown to secure better visibility of CP no.3.

History records that as Bonifas and his fellow soldiers set about their work on the tree, North Korean soldiers approached and observed them quietly for a little while before becoming confrontational summoning another group of North Koreans and then briefly attacking the Americans and South Koreans with the axes and beating Captain Bonifas to death (DeLateur 1987). This extraordinary confrontation over the tree was resolved in the southern side's favor, several days later on August 21 when the United Nations Command instigated 'Operation Paul Bunyan' (in reference to another famous felling of a tree in American history). At 7am on August 21 hundreds of American and South Korean United Nations Command troops set out with heavy weaponry and armored vehicles to fell the tree. Troops on the ground were backed up in the air by helicopters, US fighter jets and B52 Stratofortress Bombers. Several hundred armed troops North Korean troops responded to the efforts of the United Nations Command, but in the end they did

not intervene and the tree was trimmed down to a stump of around twenty feet tall (DeLateur 1987). This stump remained for many years at the site, but never appeared a threat to visibility or security in the area again (DeLateur 1987).

## 5. Arboreal Politics and the Kingdom of Pine

This rather bizarre geopolitical moment is just one famous intersection of the world of trees and humans at the Joint Security Area, and an extremely negative one, fatal for both Captain Bonifas and the tree at CP no.3. The moment must represent a real moment of Korean division, and it is memorialized and commemorated throughout the site and in American and South Korean historical memory. The pole and diametric opposite to the events of August 18, 1976 as readers of this paper might have been expected, came with another arboreal intersection on April 27, 2018. Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae-in's first meeting after several months of negotiating was highly anticipated, in fact it was broadcast live on South Korean television and global news networks (Kim Tong-hyung 2018). There was a great deal of speculation as to what the inter-personal relationship between the two leaders, one a former human rights lawyer, the other the young head of a dynastic autocracy, possessed of seemingly absolute power, would be like. Unexpectedly the two men appeared very easy in each other's company and even under the intense pressure of the occasion capable of spontaneity, as Kim Jong Un invited the President of South Korea to step over the concrete slab which demarcates the boundary between the two nations, into North Korea (Haas 2018c). The two men spent most of the day ensconced in the Peace House in formal talks, but also spent time talking privately in various locations around the Joint Security Area, allowing for some intriguingly bucolic moments amidst the scenery (Haas 2018c). Perhaps it is the case that the key moments of ceremony planned for the day by both parties were the banquet at the end of the day – which itself featured an interesting topographical aside with the appearance of Dokdo desserts, a mango mousse with images of the Korean peninsula which included the contested islands and upset the Japanese Foreign Ministry – or the signing of the Panmunjom

declaration on denuclearization and future steps in the engagement between the two sides (*The Guardian* 2018b). For this paper of course these were certainly not the key moment of the event, though the physical and artistic backgrounds to them will be discussed in a further section of the paper.

Having met at the Demarcation line, talked in the Peace House on April 27, 2018 and both sides having returned to their respective sides of the Joint Security Area for lunch, Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae-in appeared once again (Kim accompanied by his now famous group of jogging body guards), to engage in an activity highly familiar to any historian or cultural geographer of the Korean Peninsula (Fiddler 2018). In short, they engaged in a ceremonial act of tree planting. The planting of trees on the Korean peninsula by political figures and other figures of authority has an extremely long history (Winstanley-Chesters 2014). Many authors and scholars have written on the power, influence and cultural legacy of geomancy and geomantic notion on Korean culture, particularly as they relate to mountains and mountain cultures. Work on the concept of Paektutaegan/Baekdudaegan for instance and the vital importance of upland topographies to Korean national and cultural mythology and mythographies has placed the mountain, and particular mountains like Paektusan/Baekdusan and Keumgangsan/Geumgangsan at the heart of national consciousness (Cho 2010). Forests and trees are perhaps a little less important in the ecosystem of Korean cultural memory, Japanese authorities during the colonial period asserting on frequent occasions that in fact Korea historically had never been really interested in them or committed to their development (Government General of Chosen 1911). As further research is done into the archival and documentary records of Korean forestry, by John Lee and others it has become clear that far from disinterested, the Chosŏn dynasty was acutely concerned with arboreal management and can even be described as a ‘Kingdom of Pine’ (Lee 2018).

Denis Cosgrove has written on the processes through which states, such as perhaps Korea or the United States might write the imperatives of developmental approach and the modern governmentality into the landscape and topography of their formation. In the United States as the power and authority of Washington DC and thousands of settlers moved west, a colonizing nation essentially wrote

itself onto the topographies and geographies of newly encountered landscapes (Cosgrove 1984). As newly occupied and co-opted territories formally became the states of the United States of America that we know today new towns and cities grew in order to provide commercial, administrative and legal hubs for the agricultural and developmental spaces which the settlers had occupied; a fairly alien and quite barren landscape in comparison to what they had left behind. Colonists and newly developing authorities and bureaucracies therefore sought to spatialize the logics and practices of the new society, economic organization and state they were aligned to (Fleming 1994). As Cosgrove describes this meant organizing a wild, unclaimed landscape with no demarcations or boundaries into regular patterns of ownership and control such as are familiar to anyone flying over a state such as Ohio or Indiana, a patchwork quilt of squares and oblongs implanted onto the natural topographies of these middle states of the country (Cosgrove 1984). It could also mean reconfiguring rivers, waterways and forests and other complicated topographies as was necessary to serve the purposes of the developing or new state.

Japan following the Meiji Restoration was a state with a commitment to modernization of a sort, but also an extensive history when it came to forestry matters of controlling and developing landscapes (Totman 1989). The example of the United States reconfiguration of nature and topography was particularly inspirational however in this new era for Japan, particularly the example of Julia Morton of Nebraska and Birdsey Northrop, arborists and politicians who developed and spread the notion of Arbor Day (Kuga 1972). This American version of Arbor Day became extremely popular in Japanese bureaucracy and in Japan it became fixed on the date of Emperor's birthday, so trees and the successor to Amaterasu, the Sun Goddess became conjoined in national political and developmental culture. When the Japanese Empire annexed Korea in 1910, practically solidifying the bonds between the two nations was vital for the functioning of this uncomfortable relationship, at least in Tokyo's institutional mind. Creating a cultural and bureaucratic event, a national holiday was vital to do just that and providing a positive moment in the calendar on which Japan's developmental prowess and capabilities as well as the processes of national

construction involved on the Korean peninsula, now renamed Chosen could be celebrated was important. Arbor Day seemed a perfect opportunity and the Government General of Chosen Annual Reports on Progress and Reforms in Chosen are careful each year to record Arbor Day (which was always on the Emperor's Birthday, the 29 of April under Akihito for example). The Governor General of Chosen, for example General Count Terauchi Masutake (1910-1916 and later 9th Prime Minister of Japan), or General Ugaki Kazushige (1927 and 1931-1936, Minister of War for Japan between 1924 and 1927), was always photographed at the events with wellington boots on planting a sapling (Government General of Chosen 1912, 1914 and 1926). The links between figures of political authority and arboreal development were firmly reiterated throughout all of these events.

After Korea was freed from the colonial power of Japan, the complicated years between 1945 and 1953 did not dissipate the memory of the connection between political authority and tree planting. The first leader of South Korea, Syngman Rhee while in the United States had already made many efforts to be photographed planting trees on Arbor Day there. In 1949 Arbor Day was designated in South Korea as April 5 and named *Sikmogil* (Teplyakov 2015). April 5 was chosen as this was the date historically recognized as that of the unification between the three kingdoms of Korea under the Silla Kingdom in 668 CE. President Park Chung-hee further rehabilitated Arbor Day in South Korea from Japanese influence, connecting tree planting campaigns and the specific day under his *Saemaul Undong* movement to reconfigure the rural areas of the country (Winstanley-Chesters, 2015). President Park is often photographed with his wife and his daughter, the future President Park Geun-hye planting trees themselves or focusing on extensive plans for the planting of saplings (Presidential Archives of Park Chung-hee CET0027339, CET0027342).<sup>1)</sup> Park had apparently been inspired by visit to West Germany in 1964 and by flying over the Japanese Alps on his return to transform Korea into

1) The Presidential Archives of Park Chung-hee has a substantial collection of such photographs which the author of this paper has seen, however he was not given permission to share or reprint them. At the time of viewing them in 2015 there was no coherent numbering strategy for the sets of photographs which featured the President's activities on Arbor Day. As is the case in the Russian State Archives such photos are best accessible by folder numbers with multiple items. The most relevant folder numbers are: CET0027293, 박정희대통령 제23회 식목일 기념식수, CET0027299, 박정희대통령 제24회 식목일 기념식수, CET0027339, 박정희대통령 식목일 기념식수, CET0027342, 박정희대통령 식목일 기념행사 참석 기념식수.

a much more verdant, green landscape (Winstanley-Chesters 2015). Given South Korea's later developmental history focused on high technology, chemical and heavy industry, tree planting and afforestation may not fit into conventional narratives of its 'miracle on the Han.' Park Chung-hee's efforts on the arboreal front and through the Saemaul Undong movement in the wider landscapes of rural life in the country can be seen as embedding a particular vision of political and developmental modernity into that landscape. In this regard Erik Swyngedouw's analysis of the embedding of new hydrological imperatives into the landscape of Spain under the government of General Franco provides a similar example of the re-engineering of national territory at the behest of a particular vision of political modernity (2015).

## 6. North Korea and National Tree Planting Day

North Korea has always claimed to play host to an entirely different vision and concept of political, economic and social modernity, but one in which arboreal materials can also be used to support political agendas, imperatives and rationales. In North Korea, National Tree Planting Day as it is referred to has been placed on a number of separate days, each connected to the historiography of the country and deep connections with the Kim Family (Winstanley-Chesters, 2014). Firstly, National Tree Planting Day commemorated the first climb up Musan Hill in Pyongyang by Kim Il Sung, his wife Kim Chong Suk and a very young Kim Jong Il in 1946 to plant trees (Ibid). National Tree Planting Day was then repurposed to focus on a date on which Kim Jong Il took more of a lead role (Ibid). North Korea continues to find National Tree Planting Day vital to its political and developmental messaging. All three Kims have been photographed on numerous occasions with their feet on the lip of a spade in the process of planting a tree (Ibid). Developmental capability in the guise of success at forestry management has been one of the hallmarks of Korean governmental and political authenticity and legitimacy over the decades. North Korea's acute forest crisis after the famine period of the early 1990s which resulted in many barren, denuded mountain slopes

has been deployed as one of the many weaponized aspects of its de-legitimation by its enemies (McKenna 2013).

Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong Un's appearance on April 27, 2018 in front of the tree in the Joint Security Area was therefore not an aberration, not an unusual piece of political theatre, but an example of a long spatializing political history on the peninsula in which key political figures of authority connect their political power to the physical materialities of trees themselves. Trees have even in North Korean political historiography stood in for humans, to serve as witnesses and commemorating participants when no living people are available to mark on occasion (the Birch Trees of Lake Samjiyon are a prime example, standing in as witnesses to the moment that Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Suk's relationship was first acknowledged) (Winstanley-Chesters et al. 2016). The tree that Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong Un stood in front of served in this sense a double purpose. The records of the event indicate that this particular tree was supposed to have been first planted in 1953, so its age records the moment of true rupture between the two Korean nations, a witness to the separation and also to the length of time that has passed since that year (*Hindustan Times* 2018). However, this tree will in future no doubt also come to commemorate this moment of inter-Korean connection, the handshakes, smiles and positive words of April 27, 2018. Perhaps one day in a century hence this tree will also, as other trees on the Korean peninsula do, serve as a witness to this moment of possibility, this space in which Korean unity was possible and actualized. It will within its bark and timber essentially thus complete a circle of separation and unification, a space when the Korean peninsula is no longer split along the 38th parallel.

## 7. De and Reterritorializing April 27, 2018

Aside from the conceptual aspects and possibilities surrounding the tree and its future use, the event on April 27, 2018 was rich with symbolic connections and spatializations from elsewhere on the Korean peninsula. Both leaders placed small amounts of soil upon the trees roots, Kim Jong Un placing soil from



Paektusan/Baekdusan and Moon Jae-in placing soil from Hallasan (CNN 2018). Doing so, both leaders bought topographies from the opposite ends of the peninsula together. While it might seem strange of course to seek to materialize or re-spatialize mountainous topography in a landscape which is quite some distance from any uplands, as suggested in the introduction to this paper, Paektusan/Baekdusan is in fact everywhere in Korea, in all sorts of unlikely spaces and terrains. The mountain is on the walls of North Korean public buildings, in small cabinets on the concourses and corridors of Seoul Metro stations, even on the hoardings outside malls and shopping areas (Winstanley-Chesters et al. 2019). Paektusan/Baekdusan is a vital piece of topography across the Korean peninsula, to both Koreas and to Korean historiography and mythology. It is a unifying piece of terrain regardless of wherever you are in the two nations (Winstanley-Chesters et al. 2019). Notions of Paektutaegan/Baekdudaegan hold that sacred *ki* (기) energies flow like a sort of life force through Paektusan/Baekdusan down into the wider landscapes and mountain ranges of the peninsula, in historical mythologies eddying at particular places in the mountains where mountain spirits or sanshin might be found (Mason 1999). It is certainly a vital and energetic place to North Korean political, providing powerful charismatic power to the Kim dynasty which it seeks to sustain itself within even in the present.

Aside from this mountain space brought into the event of April 27, 2018 by the soil dispersed onto the soil of the tree by Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae-in, the two leaders also bought a second element to this spatial and symbolic unification, water. Kim Jong Un brought water from the Taedong/Daedong river that flows through Pyongyang and Moon Jae-in had water from the Han river that flows through Seoul, both then applied these waters to the roots of the tree (CNN 2018). It is not take much to suggest that this effort to combine a small element of the rivers that flow through the two capitals of contemporary Korea is another spatializing aspect which seeks to generate a terrain of unification in the middle of the Joint Security Area. Just as the bark of the tree, generated in that moment of division in 1953, the mixing of the water In this way such trees de-territorialize and then re-territorialize not only the energies of particular moments in Korean history, but the entirety of the Korean nations at the same time. The specific tree

of April 27, 2018 for instance allows both leaders to de-territorialize the peninsula of the present, complicated and ruptured by the Division System, the various instances of conflict between the two nations and the varied infrastructures and interest groups which require and support it, for a re-territorialized Korea of the at some point in the future. The planting of the tree serves as a line of flight through and beyond the difficulties of contemporary Korea, its reterritorialization in a liminal space of a potential future allows for any energies unavailable in the present to be unleashed. Panmunjom in this sense is a perfect location for such de and reterritorialization, an in between space in which a future Korea can be conjured through processes and practices of political performance which harness the energies of the past and the topographies of elsewhere.

The events surrounding the tree that day were of course not the only topographic elements present and the author would like to spend a final paragraph of so considering the artwork which was present on the walls of the Peace House during events that followed the ceremony at the tree. Readers of previous work by this author will be familiar with the importance of artistic and photographic backdrops present during moments of political connection and diplomacy with North Korea. A particular large hyper-realistic painting in Pyongyang's Mansudae Assembly Hall of crashing waves and stormy seas was extremely prominently placed during meetings between teams from the United States and North Korea in 2000 and 2009 (CNN 2009). This was perhaps not surprising given North Korea's narrative during the later Kim Jong Il era, that its government was protecting the nation from 'stormy seas.' Prior to the meeting between Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong Un, a South Korean team of negotiators met North Korean bureaucrats in Pyongyang in March, 2018 in front of an extremely large painting of a particular bucolic and positive sunrise, just as political connections began to assume the warmth which brought the two leaders together (Yonhap News 2018).

On April 27, 2018, Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong Un were repeatedly photographed in front of a series of paintings of other important, famous Korean mountains, in particular Keumgangsan/Geumgangsan, the Diamond Mountain (familiar to readers of the work of Isabella Bird-Bishop (1905) or Tessa Morris-Suzuki (2010)). Keumgangsan/Geumgangsan is not only vital to the history of Korean

topography and mythography and something of cultural icon second only to Paektusan/Baekdusan, but also a key place of inter-Korean connection following the development of the Keumgangsan Tourist Area jointly developed by Hyundai Asan of South Korea and North Korean authorities in 1998 (Paik 2011). While following the death of a South Korean tourist in 2008 visits stopped for many years, over a million South Koreans visited the site in the decade before that, including family reunions between North and South Koreans and a huge amount of financial capital generated for both sides (Paik 2011). Keumgangsan/Geumgangsan therefore is a vital further topography, or space of unification brought into the events of that day.

## 8. Conclusion

In conclusion, while at the time writing in April of 2019 the possibilities generated by the halcyon months of 2018 may appear to be waning as North Korea's relationship with the United States and its administration comes under the strains of diplomatic and geo-political reality, the events of April 2018 still remain a fascinating moment of unity and connection between the two Koreas. April 27, 2018 was particularly fascinating given the obvious chemistry and ease between Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong Un. In a sense this was a day for the two men, their retinues and for the entire Korean people. However, these moments of unification were not only for those present or for humans on the Korean peninsula. This paper has explored the spatialization of the day's moments of unification, in particular through the interaction of the two leaders with a ceremony focused on a tree just after lunch. It has also briefly considered further unifying spatializations through artworks and images present during the day. To reiterate and contextualize the power of these spatializations of unification the paper has explored the history of such moments on the Korean peninsula, such as Arbor Day. Following Denis Cosgrove's analysis of symbolic landscapes and the construction of new developmental territories as the United States was built across land that was considered uncivilized and *terra nullis*, the paper has considered how Japanese

political authorities deployed both principles of landscape symbolism and developmental modernism to imprint Japanese bureaucratic imperatives on the Korean Peninsula. These imperatives have been internalized in Korean political and developmental culture and twinned with more ancient and indigenous geomantic notions to empower trees and mountains to be themselves as Jane Bennett and others hold, actors with agency.

Beyond these practices of spatialization and developmental imperatives, this paper also considered these events from the Deleuzian perspective of de and reterritorialization (Deleuze and Guattari 1984). While the spaces created and harnessed through the arboreal events this paper has considered are certainly real, physical and concretely in and of time, both sides in those events have also utilized these more esoteric practices. In a sense the physical space and active, lively materials of the tree and the representations of other topographic features allow at the same time for their deterritorialization in space and time. The energies of these very real places and spaces and their connections with important elements in Korean politics, history and culture are unleashed by a reterritorialization into an in between space, and an in between time. Essentially these topographic and ecological features are repurposed in a Korean space disconnected from the problematic, complicated present, an almost future place, in which the systems of division and separation are overcome and the contest between the two sovereignties and their political structures settled. The instance of the tree planting and other surprising moments of connection thus become lines of flight, vectors through the present for these energies to travel, product and symbol of the processes of de and reterritorialization.

While this Deleuzian reading of the events is perhaps not obvious given the politics of either Korea, and the fact the fixed, concrete spatial aspects of the events are also vitally important for their symbolic functionality, such a perspective allows for further insight to be gained into the nature of the powers unleashed by the practices seen on April 27, 2018. On this day the two Koreas engaged in practices which were both fixed in space and time, materially connected to and ingrained in the soil and topography of the peninsula, rooted in spatiality and territory. However, at the same time, through these practices the two Koreas sought and

created a time and space beyond both the contemporary moment and the physical reality of the peninsula itself. This was partly done through performances rooted in Korean geomantic cultural legacies, but also through processes of de and reterritorialization. A great deal of charismatic power, energy and agency were unleashed, in ways which are perhaps more familiar to followers of North Korean politics. On this occasion however both Koreas have harnessed this power and agency of the past, the future and the in between to add further authority and energy to their contemporary, concrete and current governmental and institutional agendas. In particular this paper has asserted how such practices and the use of de and reterritorialization can lead to a concrete spatialization and coming into being of unificatory landscapes and how on April 27, 2018, next to the boughs of the sixty-five year old pine tree, Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong Un engaged the power of such terrains to generate a unique moment of Korean unification.

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