

From Immobility to Mobility: The Korean DMZ as a Heterotopia¹

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Abstract

While the current developments in the peace processes allow us to imagine the Korean Demilitarized Zone will acquire more thriving mobilities in the future, this article seeks to characterize this unique space as an absolutely different place; a “heterotopia” as suggested by Michel Foucault. In the course of the discussion, which focuses on (non)human (im)mobilities within the framework of the “new mobilities paradigm,” some main characteristics of the DMZ as a heterotopia are identified. Firstly, as its descriptively most prominent characteristic, the DMZ is considered a borderland between two fiercely antagonistic power politics, a borderland that comes to be realized as fluid and irremovable. Secondly, considering criticisms of this notion of heterotopia to be negligent of real power-knowledge relations, the article suggests that the DMZ as an inaccessible and immobile space controls the mobilities of all other spaces. Lastly, the article proposes that the DMZ be developed into a heterotopic space that mirrors and critically reflects the other prevailing spaces. These characteristics of the heterotopic DMZ, i.e., a fluid and irremovable borderland, an inaccessible and immobile space in power-knowledge relations, and a critically reflecting space, are put under scrutiny with the metaphors of the river, the airport, and the mirror, respectively.

Keywords: Demilitarized Zone, Mobilities, Heterotopia, the New Mobilities Paradigm, Michel Foucault

Introduction

The Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) cutting the Korean Peninsula's waist is a space that symbolizes Korea's division in the aftermath of the Cold War in the post-World War II era, representing one of the most fortified areas in the world with severely hindered mobilities.³ Meanwhile, recent political and diplomatic developments around the Korean Peninsula under the influence of the Inter-Korean summits and North Korea–United States summits in 2018 and 2019 have made it possible to vividly re-imagine the DMZ as a representation of peace and reunification of two Koreas.

“In the division system, in which one side's legitimacy is predicated on the negation of the other”⁴ in contemporary Korean history, the DMZ has been mostly represented as a fortification against each side's anticipated military provocations. It is reminiscent of the fact that the tragic Korean War has not officially ended but merely been interrupted. Meanwhile, such dystopian representations in grey tones are partly changing to utopian ones onto which all kinds of dreams are projected.⁵ What is dreamt of rests upon who is dreaming: developmentalists are dreaming of a profitable space, whereas pacifists or environmentalists a peace park or a bio-sanctuary.⁶ They visualize their future utopia based on mobilities regained under the general notion of “the peaceful use” of the DMZ area.⁷ Reflecting on these utopian imaginations, I would like to delve into the overall potential of re-imagining the DMZ as a heterotopia in the Foucauldian sense.

Now, some theoretical and methodological issues are to be mentioned. First of all, by considering the DMZ as a heterotopic space within the theoretical framework of the “new mobilities paradigm,”⁸ I will observe this unique space through the so-called “mobilities lens.” In this framework, the concept of mobilities is not confined to the mere physical movement but consists of movement, representation, and practice.⁹ As John Urry claims that mobilities require immobile and infrastructural moorings,¹⁰ this concept of mobilities encompasses “the constitution of a system in which some movements are made possible, some movements made political, and immobilities are rendered unproblematic—even in the absence of actual movement.”¹¹ Further, following many mobilities scholars who claim that “mobilities are contingently relational,” and also that “faster mobilities in the dynamic sense are only faster in relation to slower forms of mobility,”¹² the focus is laid on the “politics of mobility” or “relational politics of (im)mobilities,” as Tim Cresswell or Peter Adey put it respectively,¹³ evidenced by, for instance, airports which consist of the “continual ambivalence between mobilities and relative immobilities.”¹⁴

The DMZ is an excellent example of such an understanding of the concept of mobilities. This *terra nullius* is what “the politics of obduracy, fixity, and friction”¹⁵

have been paradoxically enough transforming into a heterotopic space with fluid and fluctuated (im)mobilities of sundry human and non-human agencies “across a swarm of various and variegated vibrant materialities.”¹⁶ In this space, “what is ruptured and catalyzed by frictions enacted through power geometry, austerity and disruption”¹⁷ as a part of the relational politics of (im)mobilities from the Cold War era is, nevertheless, not completely sterile and stagnant but “alive with the potential of being other than this.”¹⁸ In this regard, I follow the argument that “spaces like the Korean DMZ should be considered normative rather than exceptional to the contemporary planetary predicament.”¹⁹

Dealing with the DMZ within the framework of the new mobilities paradigm, I adopt the notion of heterotopia since it seems to have broad implications for mobilities. First of all, even though the notion of mobilities refers not only to a spatial displacement but to a range of changes and fluidity in a broader sense, the notion of the place or space has essential significance in mobility studies, insofar as the mobilities in their primary meaning are dynamic configurations in a spatial coordinate. In this sense, “the new mobilities paradigm grew out of and extended emerging theorizations of space” and the so-called “mobilities turn” is often claimed to be furthering “the spatial turn.”²⁰ In this respect, Marc Augé’s concept of “non-place” has been “a common point of reference for academics discussing spaces of travel, consumption and exchange in the contemporary world,”²¹ because it could disclose descriptively the marked complications of the “placeness” and the “placelessness” in highly mobile societies. However, as Peter Merriman pointed out, this concept is related to “a rather partial account of these sites” insofar as Augé “overstates the novelty of contemporary experiences of these spaces” and “fails to acknowledge the heterogeneity and materiality of the social networks bound up with the production of non-places/places.”²² More crucially, this concept is meant to address the descriptive features than the normative potential of this kind of placeless place to the extent that alternatively, the concept of heterotopia seems to bear, at least in this respect, more implications for mobility studies to reconceptualize the place and space in the highly mobile societies. This normative critical reflection functions as the heterotopia’s “feedback capacity in terms of multiple, ‘mirroring’ codes” that “mirrored and inverted their host societies”²³ and will be examined below.

Engaging in both descriptive and normative reflection on this unique space, I will adopt a specific metaphorical approach, which I assume is not altogether unjustified, since metaphors are regularly employed “to theorize any social or spatial process,” giving rise to defining the boundary of and shaping that theory itself. By “an examination of the metaphors particular theories use,” the preoccupations on which those theories were built can eventually, by reverse engineering, if you will,

be revealed.²⁴ In mobilities studies, “appropriate metaphors” are mobilized as useful tools for developing “a sociology which focuses upon movement, mobility, and contingent ordering, rather than upon stasis, structure and social order”²⁵ to the extent that “metaphors of flow, fluidity, liquidity and the nomad have particularly gained momentum.”²⁶ In the same vein, while with different nuance, I suggest the metaphors of river, airport, and mirror to portray the DMZ as a fluid, singular and irremovable borderland, a space in power-knowledge relations, and a reflective and critical space, respectively.

At first glance, these metaphors seem to be arbitrarily selected and unrelated to each other. On the other hand, they are selected due to their intuitiveness to represent the DMZ’s main features and their productivity to locate these representations in a broader context. Therefore, their mutual relations derive from the relations between these features of the DMZ. First of all, these characteristics of the DMZ share heterotopic features with their distinctive (im)mobilities, as identified and clarified below. Notwithstanding, while both the characterization of the DMZ as a fluid and irremovable borderland and as space in power-knowledge relations are by and large descriptive, its characterization as critically reflecting space is appropriated preferably for normative purposes. Besides, unlike the river or the airport, the mirror per se does not represent a place or space capable of accommodating (non)human mobilities. As a genuine metaphor that moves (*phérō*) from the non-spatial over (*metá*) the spatial dimension, it suits the mirroring function of a heterotopic “place” or “space.” Thus, I attempted, with this metaphor, to give a normative claim that the DMZ ought to be a mirroring and critically reflecting site.

In sum, conceptualizing the DMZ as a heterotopia within the new mobilities paradigm, it is possible to re-imagine it as space critically mirroring the other surrounding and prevalent spaces. This article introduces the diverse (im)mobilities within and around the DMZ as the clue to and the background knowledge for further discussions. Then, after the notion of heterotopia is clarified regarding the six principles as conceived by Michel Foucault, the DMZ is discussed as a heterotopia with ambiguous (im)mobilities, relevant characteristics of the DMZ to our discussion. Then, employing a river metaphor, the DMZ is looked upon as a fluid and irremovable borderland. In the following section, I try to reconceptualize the DMZ as a space in power-knowledge relations through the airport metaphor conceived by Paul Virilio’s artwork on the DMZ and his theory of the city. With the last metaphor of the mirror, I suggest that the DMZ be remodeled as an absolutely different heterotopic space whose crucial function is to be an unoccupied space mirroring and critically reflecting other spaces. In concluding

remarks, I will explain the significance of this discussion for the imagination of the future of the DMZ.

One thing to bear in mind is that this article is not meant to be an empirical study that makes concrete proposals for the “peaceful use” of the DMZ. Nor does it intend to “bridge the gap” between “the space of the philosophers and the space of people who deal with material things,” as Henri Lefebvre puts it.²⁷ A more modest aim of this article, drawing on Foucault’s somewhat speculative reflections on heterotopia and projecting onto this notion the new mobilities paradigm’s problematics, is to serve as a starting point for further discussions about the future of the DMZ.

The Korean DMZ with Diverse (Im)mobilities

In the wake of the Korean War Armistice Agreement on 27 July 1953, the DMZ was set up along a border stretching 248 km (155 miles) in length and cutting 2 km (1.24 mile) into both North and South territories along the Military Demarcation Line (MDL). It aimed at preventing an accidental armed conflict between the two Koreas. First of all, the DMZ is a hostile “border region” and, consequently, both a “marginal area” where mobilities of humans are markedly restricted and a “conservation area” where an “involuntary park” arises²⁸ fostering the mobilities of non-human wildlife.²⁹

It has been for nearly 70 years a token of military confrontation and divisiveness on the Korean peninsula. Considering the intense “border militarization,”³⁰ the DMZ has become a misnomer since it has never been a demilitarized zone but a de facto heavily militarized zone with about a million soldiers and more than two million landmines within and around it. Though armed forces should not officially occupy the DMZ, both South Korea and North Korea have built many fortifications within the DMZ in Guard Posts (GPs) for armed personnel. In this respect, the DMZ seems a liminal space³¹ between two radically hostile territories or a literal in-between non-place “which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity”³² with severely impeded and controlled mobilities of people, goods, and imaginations.

Yet, the DMZ has never been a region of totally homogeneous and invariable immobility; there are various kinds and degrees of mobilities within and surrounding the DMZ, pertaining, most distinctly, but not exclusively to human mobilities. For instance, human mobilities vary in different areas: the Demilitarized Zone in the proper sense, the Civilian Control Zone, and the Contact Zone, which are altogether commonly called “the DMZ area” or “the DMZ region,” “a South Korean bureaucratic invention.”³³

First, the DMZ in the proper sense in South-Korean territory is the region from the MDL extending up to 2 km on the southern side along the MDL. Contrary to common representations, the MDL itself is not marked by an iron fence but by 1,292 concrete piles planted every 200 meters. The iron fence often represented in the media is, as a matter of fact, installed alongside the southern boundary of the DMZ. Within the DMZ, the mobilities are strictly prohibited, except for the patrol of the DMZ Military Police on the military bases of the Observation Posts (OP), the everyday movement of residents in Taesöngdong maül, the only village within the southern part of the DMZ, and probably a few cases of “extremely dangerous and rare”³⁴ mobility of defection across the DMZ from both sides of the border, proving the unlooked-for porosity of this harsh borderland.

Secondly, the Civilian Control Zone (CCZ) is the southern area adjacent to the DMZ, established as an additional buffer zone to the DMZ within a distance of 5 to 20 km (3.1 to 12.4 mile), from the Southern Limit Line (SLL) of the DMZ. The purpose of limiting and controlling civilians’ entrance into this area is to protect and maintain the security of military facilities and operations near the DMZ. Unlike the DMZ, specific mobilities such as licensed civilian farming activities and security tourism are allowed in this region. In comparison with the only village within the DMZ in the proper sense, several towns within the CCZ have less tense regulations and restrictions, therefore more or less brisk mobilities. More importantly, as conditions on mobilities within and around this region are gradually easing, the Civilian Control Line defining the boundary of CCZ moves northward. Consequently, the CCZ is steadily diminishing in size.

Thirdly, the Contact Zone (CZ) is a region within about 25 km from the CCZ, including parts of 15 cities and some counties. This region is lagging economically and culturally due to the political and military tension that has amounted to more or less limited human mobility. To address this, the South-Korean government has enacted the Special Act on the Supporting of CZ in 2011, seeking ways to help develop these contact areas, improve residents’ quality of life and systematically preserve the natural environment.³⁵

Apart from the non-human mobilities such as “the flight of cranes,” which “are enrolled as main characters in the state’s symbolic resignification of the DMZ as the PLZ [Peace and Life Zone],” precisely “because they literally transcend geopolitical borders,”³⁶ there are differences between the three regions regarding the concentration of human mobilities. The nearer you are to the MDL, the sparser human mobilities are. Last but not least, the boundaries between these regions have been continuously fluctuating and changing over time. For example, the actual area of the DMZ in the proper sense has shrunk because the soldiers of the two Koreas push the northern and southern boundaries of the DMZ toward

the MDL to secure favorable military spots alongside the border. According to an announcement of the Green Korea United, a Korean environmental NGO, in July 2013, the DMZ's total area decreased by 43% from 992 km² in 1953 to 570 km² in 2013.³⁷ These severe violations of the Armistice Agreement can lead to a tremendous military crisis, but both sides implicitly tolerate and let this ominous tendency continue. There are very few sections with a full 4 km breadth, and some areas have dwindled to a range of only 700–900 m.

Therefore, the DMZ area's mobilities are not only diverse but also changing. The tension in and surrounding the DMZ has come somewhat loose due to the recent political and diplomatic developments. By virtue of the Inter-Korean summits in April 2018 and North Korea—United States summits in June 2019 dramatically held for the first time at Panmunjom, the Joint Security Area within the DMZ area, the Korean people's perception of the DMZ has drastically changed. At the Panmunjom Declaration on 27 April 2018, the two Koreas' leaders committed to transforming the DMZ into a peace zone in a genuine sense. In this process, the two Koreas' governments agreed to cooperate on minesweeping projects, excavating remains, and reducing military mobilities within the DMZ. The decision of the two governments in 2018 to dismantle 20 GPs out of the entire 220 GPs within the DMZ as a symbolic act of Inter-Korean reconciliation is the first step to turn the DMZ into a genuinely peaceful and demilitarized space true to the name. Furthermore, in 2019 the South Korean government permitted, albeit to a moderate extent, civil mobilities within the DMZ by officially opening some areas to the civilians as a part of the project known as the DMZ Peace Trail, a hiking trail planned to cover a total length of 550 km along and within the DMZ by 2021.³⁸

The DMZ's mobilities are, by and large, more multi-layered, ambiguous, and fluid than generally conceived of and a far cry from any other spaces around the DMZ in the Korean peninsula. This exceptionality in terms of mobilities makes allowances for the theoretical endeavor to do justice to this stark difference or otherness by introducing the concept of the heterotopia, the other place, within the framework of mobility studies.

Foucault's Notion of Heterotopia

The geographer André Ourednik describes heterotopia as “modern territory's little secret, as foul as Guantanamo, as dark as Fritzel's cellar, as tense as the Korean DMZ, as old as Mount Athos, as well-guarded as the bank vaults of tax havens.”³⁹ Among these diverse, neither consistent nor necessarily positive reasons, why the

Korean DMZ is considered as a heterotopia is because it is “tense,” to the extent that the mobilities of people are overly restricted and controlled.

Heterotopia literally meaning an “other place” (from the Ancient Greek words ἕτερος “other, another, different” and τόπος “place”), is in its primary sense “a medical term referring to a particular tissue that develops at another place than is usual”; it “is not diseased or particularly dangerous but merely placed elsewhere, a dislocation.”⁴⁰ This medical term is borrowed by Michel Foucault, initially on the linguistic and discursive dimension in *The Order of Things* (1966), where the Chinese encyclopedia in the fiction of Jorge Luis Borges is referred to as a heterotopia.

Heterotopias are disturbing, probably because they secretly undermine language, because they make it impossible to name this and that, because they shatter or tangle common names, because they destroy ‘syntax’ in advance, and not only the syntax with which we construct sentences but also that less apparent syntax which causes words and things (next to and also opposite one another) to ‘hold together.’ ... [H]eterotopias (such as those to be found so often in Borges) desiccate speech, stop words in their tracks, contest the very possibility of grammar at its source; they dissolve our myths and sterilize the lyricism of our sentences.⁴¹

Then, in two radio broadcasts, “Heterotopia” (1966) and “The Utopian Body” (1966), and in a lecture “Of Other Spaces” (1967),⁴² the implication of this term was extended beyond the context of mere language and discourse toward a real space. It was described in contrast to utopias created to confront, forget, or even erase one’s body.

My body: it is the place without recourse to which I am condemned. And actually, I think that it is against this body (as if to erase it) that all these utopias have come into being.⁴³

Here, one’s body is interpreted as a colligated concept of one’s real existence or innate destined conditions in stark contrast to the utopia. In this respect, heterotopia could be construed as a place that exists in a close relationship with one’s body. While utopias are “fundamentally unreal spaces,” heterotopias refer to “a sort of effectively realized utopias.”⁴⁴ That is to say, Foucault’s heterotopia is a real space where the desires projected onto utopian dreams are embodied, and these embodied desires are embedded in real, existing social and physical environments.⁴⁵ However, the way a heterotopia exists is inherently “outside of all places,” representing, contesting, and inverting these places.

There are also, and this probably in all culture, in all civilization, real places, effective places, places that are written into the institution of society itself, and that are a sort of counter-emplacements, a sort of effectively realized utopias

in which the real emplacements, all the other real emplacements that can be found within culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted; a kind of places that are outside all places, even though they are actually localizable. Since these places are absolutely other than all the emplacements that they reflect, and of which they speak, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias.⁴⁶

To be sure, the notion of heterotopia proposed by Foucault refers to relatively small-scale spaces. It is “narrowly focused on peculiar micro-geographies, nearsighted and near-sited, deviant and deviously apolitical.”⁴⁷ However, Foucault’s reference to the history of spaces “from the great strategies of geopolitics to the little tactics of the habitat”⁴⁸ and Edward Soja’s proposal to expand the concept of heterotopia⁴⁹ may offer a possibility of considering the DMZ as a relatively large-scale space as a heterotopia either. Regarding mobility issues, I pursue this possibility to move beyond “a dominating interest in, if not even fascination with, the micro-sociology and phenomenology of mobile practices” in mobility studies towards addressing the “macro issues” or “how these [mobile] practices are involved in making societies.”⁵⁰ Simultaneously, cautions are required against disregarding “the dynamic co-constitution of mobile subjects and the deep structure of mobility.”⁵¹

As Soja indicates, Foucault’s heterotopology is, beyond question, “frustratingly incomplete, inconsistent, incoherent.”⁵² Notwithstanding, “this intentional ambiguity” keeps the heterotopia of Foucault “open and inclusive rather than confined and securely bounded by authoritative protocols.”⁵³ In the same vein, “despite, or perhaps because of, the fragmentary and elusive quality of the ideas, the concept of heterotopia continues to generate a host of conflicting interpretations and research across a range of disciplines”⁵⁴ to which this article belongs.

To consider the DMZ a heterotopia, we can rely on the six principles of Foucauldian heterotopia: diversity, plasticity, hybridity, heterochronism, inaccessibility, and relatedness.

1) Diversity

There is probably not a single culture in the world that does not constitute heterotopias. That is a constant in every human group. But heterotopias obviously take on forms that are very varied, and perhaps one would not find one single form of heterotopia that is absolutely universal.⁵⁵

While this passage brings our attention to both the universality of existence and the diversity of forms heterotopias assume, the latter seems to be more relevant to the discussion on the Korean DMZ in this article.

2) Plasticity

In the course of its history, a society can make a heterotopia that exists, and has not ceased to exist, function in a very different way; for each heterotopia has a precise and determined function within a society and the same heterotopia can, according to the synchrony of the culture in which it occurs, have one function or another.⁵⁶

Here, Foucault points to the diachronic plasticity of each heterotopia, even in a single society. He illustrates this aspect in terms of the cemetery, which has hugely been different from ordinary cultural spaces and whose function has undergone substantial changes over time until the development of modern secularized civilisations in Western culture.

3) Hybridity

The heterotopia has the power to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible.⁵⁷

While the second principle identifies heterotopia's diachronic plasticity, the third principle describes synchronic hybridity as heterotopia's inner constitution. In a heterotopia, varied places occupied by all kinds of heterogeneous things overlap. Therefore, a heterotopia that is in itself a borderland holds within its periphery various borderlines and borderlands between several heterogeneous spaces.

4) Heterochronism

Heterotopias are most often linked to slices of time—which is to say that they open onto what might be called, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronisms. The heterotopia begins to function fully when people find themselves in a sort of absolute break with their traditional time.⁵⁸

Albeit heterotopia is a concept that primarily has spatial denotation, it also connotes temporal significance. It is not only “other space” but also “other time” apropos the rest of the place and time. In this respect, some heterotopias are linked either to “indefinitely accumulating time” (museums and libraries), or to “time in its most fleeting, transitory, precarious aspect, to time in the mode of the festival” (fairgrounds and vacation villages). In case the above-mentioned hybridity principle is applied to this context, the heterotopia of permanence and festivity do not exclude each other; they can be juxtaposed even in a single space.

5) Inaccessibility

Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, one does not access a

heterotopian emplacement as if it were a pub. ... One can only enter with a certain permission and after having performed a certain number of gestures. Moreover, there are even heterotopias that are entirely consecrated to these activities of purification. ... There are others, on the contrary, that look like pure and simple openings, but that, generally, conceal curious exclusions. Everybody can enter into those heterotopian emplacements, but in fact it is only an illusion: one believes to have entered and, by the very fact of entering, one is excluded.⁵⁹

Foucault describes heterotopias as closed and isolated sites in so far as they are not freely accessible like public places: though seemingly “pure and simple openings,” they “conceal curious exclusions.”

6) Relatedness

They [Heterotopias] have, in relation to the rest of space, a function.⁶⁰

At first sight, this last principle of the heterotopia is belated. Logically, this principle referring to the heterotopia's general functionality should be placed prior to the second principle of diachronic plasticity and the third principle of synchronic hybridity, both referring to the heterotopia's specific functions. However, the emphasis is on the relatedness of heterotopia to the rest of the space. A heterotopia exists not as a self-contained entity but in relation to the outside; to be precise, this relatedness is what makes a space function as a heterotopia.

Still, is it not to be taken for granted that every space in a society has a specific function in relation to the outside? That granted, what is the peculiarity of a heterotopia's function? Heterotopias are “singular spaces to be found in some given social spaces whose functions are different or even the opposite of others.”⁶¹ A heterotopia's functions, specially mentioned, are associated with creating either a space of illusion (brothels) or a space of compensation (colonies). The former “exposes all real space, all the emplacements in the interior of which human life is enclosed and partitioned, as even more illusory.” Meanwhile, the latter creates “another space, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous, as well arranged as ours is disorderly, ill construed and sketchy,” as the Jesuit Colony in South America, particularly in Paraguay.⁶² This illusion has ironic connotations. In Paraguay, the Jesuit Colony was, in reality, an illusionary space presumed to be a perfect place but where violence and injustice were committed. Thus, the heterotopia of illusion and compensation conceptually distinguishable but practically compatible. A heterotopia is a curious place capable of offering an illusion and compensation concerning other ordinary places.

Re-Imagining the DMZ as a Heterotopia

So far, I have introduced the notion and principles of heterotopia to explore the possibilities to apply these to the DMZ. Before rushing into the discussion, however, I will make a short detour through the morphological classification and enumeration of the heterotopia by Foucault, which serves as a prerequisite for the DMZ's characterization.

Though insisting on the diversity and singularity of the forms of heterotopia in each society, Foucault pointed out two types of heterotopia, viz. heterotopia of crisis in which individuals live "in a state of crisis: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc." and heterotopia of deviation in which individuals "whose behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm are placed."⁶³ Nevertheless, based on Foucault's actual descriptions, at least six kinds of heterotopia are identified: heterotopia of crisis (the boarding school, military service, honeymoon trip), deviance (rest home, psychiatric hospital, prison), permanence (cemetery, museum, library), festivity (fairground, vacation village), illusion (brothel), and compensation (colony). Foucault's classification and enumeration are on no account exhaustive nor clearly understandable. The DMZ eludes this classification, granted it is barely plausible to neatly classify the DMZ as one of these six kinds of heterotopia. Henceforth, I proceed to scrutinize the possible application of heterotopia's principles to the DMZ with these in mind.

First, regarding the first principle of the heterotopia's diversity, how to verify the empirical truth of Foucault's abrupt and thrifty statements relies, to some extent, upon how to define this term "heterotopia." Again, the absence of an exact definition in Foucault's seminal conceptualization of heterotopia is one of the most awkward problems. For the time being, let me accept that, for reasons to be described subsequently in this article, it is neither absurd nor impossible for the Korean DMZ with its extremely controlled mobilities to count as one of the diverse forms of heterotopia.

Second, from the perspective of the diachronic plasticity, the DMZ's function also undergoes considerable changes over time. In its historical transition, the Korean DMZ has fulfilled different functions. In the past, the DMZ designed to fulfill the function of preventing military conflicts had been held opaque and almost suppressed in South Korean people's (un)consciousness, except for political or propagandist use against North Korea, such as visiting underground tunnels dug by North Korea. However, since the 1990s, the discussion on the DMZ has boomed in South Korea due to the fall of the Iron Curtain. Since then, the DMZ in these discourses has been functioning not only as a topic of national security or anticommunism but also in developmental, ecological, or pacifist discussions.

Though essentially the same physical entity, the DMZ as a social construction altered in tandem with the changing social circumstances. From this history of the general perception of the DMZ in South Korean society, it follows invariably that the DMZ will have another unprecedented function in the future. Thus, refraining methodologically from the varied preconceived notions of pacifism, ecologism, or developmentalism among others participating in brisk discussions about the future “peaceful use” of DMZ with their “multiple political imaginaries of ‘peace’ including state-centric discourses,” “progressive environmentalist discourses,” and “a more complex notion of ‘biological peace’”⁶⁴ and from making concrete suggestions for future “use” of the DMZ at all, I will attempt to reflect on how the DMZ will and should function in the future.

Third, the DMZ is regarded as a heterotopia in terms of the principle of hybridity as well. It is not defined as an articulate space with a single function but as an ambiguous one with multiple functions at a time. The DMZ has always been a hybrid space with various characteristics and functions, some of which are even incompatible. For instance, it is “at once a site of military skirmishes as part of the ongoing war and a postwar emblem of peace and life.”⁶⁵

Fourth, in the sense of heterochronism, the DMZ has been imagined as being apt to performing either the function of eternally preserving the collective memories of history or the function of experiencing fleeting time. For example, on the one hand, there are proposals to build an ecological museum, a museum for war and military, and a historical museum within the DMZ.⁶⁶ On the other, according to other suggestions, the DMZ can function as a place where all possible festivities and events can occur, demonstrating the temporality, volatility, and vulnerability of the *status quo*. As Polynesian villages Foucault regards as an example of coming together of these two types of heterotopias, the DMZ is being re-imagined as a site where both dissolution and rediscovery of temporal flow take place.

Fifth, as for inaccessibility, the DMZ has been a place of draconian exclusion of almost all kinds of human mobilities and is expected to remain a place of limited accessibility and mobility which, though seemingly “pure and simple openings,” “conceal curious exclusions.” Even if the DMZ in the future could be perceived as a place where everyone is by default entitled to enter, it may be that “in fact it is only an illusion.” This prospect is especially plausible, given, according to the report of ICBL (International Campaign to Ban Landmines), more than 2 million landmines are laid within the DMZ, which make the Korean DMZ one of the most heavily mined areas in the world as a consequence of the stern militarization of the space.⁶⁷ Even recently, in 2015, North Korean soldiers allegedly planted wooden-box mines near one of the South’s GPs within the DMZ to maim two

South Korean soldiers. The “rogue infrastructure,” “the volatile materiality of mines,”⁶⁸ has been (mis)used by the state “to limit human mobility and agency” in “the ambiguous heterotopia of the South Korean DMZ.”⁶⁹ These landmines will, apparently, “result in an unintentional remaking of nature in a post-conflict phase.”⁷⁰ Considering the tremendous difficulties in removing landmines to soothe the anxiety and instability of potential dwellers and travelers, the DMZ will remain an area where mobilities, while generally allowed, are cautiously controlled.

Sixth, regarding the heterotopia’s relatedness objecting to the ordinary spaces by its absolute otherness, the DMZ can be imagined both as a space of compensation and illusion. The DMZ, however, would function as a heterotopia of compensation, precisely in the opposite sense to the Jesuit Colony. It is a “disorderly, ill construed and sketchy” place, offering compensation to the ordinary real places that are supposed to be perfect, meticulous, and well-arranged. Further, the DMZ as a heterotopia of illusion reveals the other places, arrogating the visage of perfect, meticulous, and well-arranged places, as “even more illusory.”⁷¹

A single, concrete, and clear definition that describes the heterotopia’s “essence” is not found. Though, drawing on Foucault’s descriptions, some “family resemblances” are shared by various forms of heterotopia. Applying these features to the DMZ, it can be characterized as one of the many possible forms of heterotopia (diversity) with unique functions in relation to the outside (relatedness) that are diachronically changeable (plasticity) and synchronically heterogeneous (hybridity), with different temporalities from other spaces (heterochronism) and a system of opening and closing (accessibility).

These principles bespeak “an ambition to encompass a vast variety of space types, which lends to the concept of heterotopia an almost Borgesian character of paradoxical juxtaposition.”⁷² They seem admittedly too abstruse for practical application to the actual social problems beyond mere philosophical speculations. Drawing on these principles, however, I attempt to reflect on the future of the DMZ, keeping in mind that “heterotopias always remain connected to the dominant order; thus as heterotopias clash with dominant orders, they simultaneously produce new ways of knowing.”⁷³ To give prominence to that contrast to the dominant orders, we could use certain metaphors, the first of which is one with the river contesting the dominant representations of the border as a static and eventually removable borderline.

The DMZ as a River: Fluid and Irremovable Borderland

Contrary to common belief, the DMZ has never been a static area with absolute immobility; its mobilities have been heterogeneous, diverse, and changing. As a borderland, the DMZ is “a complex spatial condition that emerges from a series of continuous spatial negotiations,” in other words, it is more a “process” than an “object.”⁷⁴ As a fluid yet irremovable borderland, it has been “a complex crossing space of territoriality and mobility”: a borderland conceived as “a social product that has been created and re-produced through complicated interactions among, and dynamic practices of, various forces and actors who have been living and operating along the borderline on the Korean peninsula.”⁷⁵

To make sense of this fluid borderland, it can be helpful to draw an analogy, in some respects, with a river, which is, though being a possible physical basis for longitudinal mobilities, for example, by a tourist boat or a cruise ship, a physical barrier to transverse mobilities. First, both the DMZ and the river are, rather than borderlines, borderlands with a certain width in consequence of which they come to be unique places, possibly offering experiences of singular quality. A border counted, traditionally, as a line or, more sophisticatedly, as a mathematical line, which has its origin in the Greek way of thinking. According to Aristotle’s theory of the border developed in *Physics*, a limit (πέρας) such as a geometric line does not possess a size. Subsequently, it is not a part of either of the two areas divided by this limit.⁷⁶ A limit or a border is not a part of, hence cannot be integrated to either of two regions. This notion is relevant concerning our discussion of the DMZ. However, neither a river nor the DMZ is a limit strictly in this mathematical sense since they have a specific width and cover a particular area. Such understandings of a border will not remain without consequences to our discussion since it implies that those who are crossing over or staying within a river or the DMZ, “moving through a temporary scape, in and of itself generative of perceptions and affects,”⁷⁷ are subject to singular phenomenology of movement and mooring with particular temporality, perception, and affect.

Second, just as a river functioning as a borderland is subject to constant natural changes, the DMZ is not a static and rigid area with zero mobility but a dynamic and fluid area that has continuously been appropriated by various mobilities. But, how do the mobilities appropriate the river? To put it differently, what do we do to cross a river? Even if there are diverse ways of negotiating a river, we mainly build a bridge for transverse mobilities as one of “those immobile infrastructures that organize the intermittent flow of people, information, and image.”⁷⁸ Rather than filling the gap, viz. removing the river in any way, we construct a bridge and occupy a space above the river to enable mobilities. We do not fill the gap but bridge the gap.

So, what is the moral of these analogies for the DMZ? Kyung Park, a renowned architect and the curator of the exhibition “Project DMZ” held in New York in 1988, challenged artists to “imagine how the DMZ might be adopted for non-military and anti-political uses,” more importantly, “with the preliminary notion that the area must be occupied rather than simply eliminated.”⁷⁹ Then, the question is how to bridge the gap without filling the gap or how to occupy the DMZ without eliminating it, that is to say, without turning it into a utopian space that meets dreams of developmentalism and ecologism. To give a more full-fledged answer to this question, we better turn towards how a heterotopic space such as the DMZ is, in reality, functioning in power-knowledge relations. This consideration leads us to the metaphor of airport, relying on Virilio’s artwork and theory of the city.

The DMZ as an Airport: Space in Power-Knowledge Relations

By the characterization through heterotopia’s principles and the metaphor of the river, the DMZ is seen as one of the assorted forms of heterotopia and as a hybrid and plastic borderland concerning its function. However, it is not merely a borderland between two extremely antagonistic nations and between a capitalist and a communist regime: it is, beyond all of these kinds of antagonism, a borderland excluding all rigid social regimes and spaces.

Yet, there has been some severe criticism against this Foucauldian notion of heterotopia, which would be relevant to the DMZ as conceived by us. For example, David Harvey questions “the existence of protected spaces (dubbed ‘heterotopic’ by Foucault) within which daily life and affective relations can function without being dominated by capital accumulation, market relations and state powers,” asserting that it is “erroneous and self-defeating to presume the existence of some heterotopic or segregated ‘lifeworld’ space insulated from (even if in the long run in danger of being penetrated and swamped by) capitalist social relations and conceptions.”⁸⁰ Nevertheless, taking into consideration the “trialectic of power, knowledge, and space”⁸¹ that Foucault is always and thoroughly aware of, a heterotopia should not be regarded as “a substanceless void to be filled by cognitive intuition nor a repository of physical forms to be phenomenologically described in all its resplendent variability,” but as “another space, what Lefebvre would describe as *l’espace vécu*, actually lived and socially created spatiality, concrete and abstract at the same time, the habitus of social practices,”⁸² as suggested by Edward Soja.

Considering both Harvey’s criticism and Soja’s vindication of Foucault’s heterotopia, we come to the awareness of the necessity for considering the DMZ as a

space embedded in the relations of power and knowledge. After all, the DMZ with an area of circa 1,000 km² can hardly be isolated and encapsulated outside of the relations of power and knowledge.⁸³ How could such a vast land ever be a vacuum of power and knowledge relations in the middle of the Korean peninsula?

In order to re-visualize the DMZ as a heterotopia within the power-knowledge equations, it is possibly helpful to use an artistic concept as a clue. In the previously mentioned exhibition “Project DMZ,” the philosopher of dromology, the science of speed, Paul Virilio (alias Paul Valeilla), collaborated with Avant Travaux Studio and submitted an artwork that depicts an imaginary, inaccessible airport in the DMZ.⁸⁴ Awaiting their function, a tower of this airport as an immobile infrastructure enabling mobilities “directs people’s visions, trajectories, approaches, flights.” Simultaneously, the terminal acts as a “permanent detector” that is “able to measure the space between dreams and reality.” This artwork explicitly contextualizes the separation of the two Koreas alongside the analogous separations of (at the time) East and West Berlin, Belfast, and Lebanon, which Virilio thought could create “a new urban entity.”⁸⁵

In this enigmatic and paradoxical artistic representation of the DMZ housing an inaccessible airport, the DMZ remains an ambiguous place, exclusively determined neither by mobility nor by immobility. The artwork imagines the DMZ as an inaccessible and immobile infrastructure, yet serving for mobilities. It is remarkable that it does not easily fall into utopian dreams of mobilities but permanently measures the space between dreams of mobilities and the reality of immobilities.

How is the DMZ occupied by an inaccessible airport able to create “a new urban entity”? Is it possible for this new urban entity to be free from all of the power-knowledge relations? How can we conceive of the DMZ as a new urban entity that is not integrated into the two Korean regimes’ homogeneous space but remains a heterogeneous space subject to the power-knowledge relations?

To answer this question, we can detour through Virilio’s philosophical contemplation on the airport in his theory of the city or the urban entity. The concept of the global city introduced by Saskia Sassen refers to “a sort of urban glamour zone, the new hyperspace of international business” consisting of “airports, top-level business districts, top of the line hotels and restaurants.”⁸⁶ For Virilio, this global city is, in fact, an “anti-city,” which is “a form of desire for inertia, desire for ubiquity, instantaneousness—a will to reduce the world to a single place, a single identity.”⁸⁷ This kind of a space of inertia, ubiquity, and instantaneousness, abolishing “the classical oppositions of city/country or center/periphery,”⁸⁸ and this kind of a non-place of stickiness, “an inherently ambiguous substance, in-between liquidity and solidity,”⁸⁹ is counted as a sort of an immense airport

governed by “airport politics”⁹⁰ that controls the opening/closing or mobilities/immobilities.

Supposing the airport is a crucial metaphor for pondering over the urban entity in Virilio’s theory of the city, could we assume that the inaccessible airport in Virilio’s artwork has a similar implication to the airport in the global cities? In this sense, the depiction of the DMZ as occupied by an airport that is, in turn, a symbol of anti-city or a representative of non-place is not necessarily positive, since the airport politics regulating the immobile infrastructure fostering mobilities will have “the tragic character of the extermination camp.”⁹¹ In this regard, even in the heterotopic DMZ, questions like “who has the power?” and “how does that power circulate?” are crucial.⁹²

The heterotopic DMZ can be re-imagined with the metaphor of the airport, “the trick” of which is “to present immobility as mobility, stagnancy as efficiency, and incarcerations as freedom.”⁹³ In airports, “passengers are often made relatively immobile, encouraged to dwell and stay within specific areas of the airport space.”⁹⁴ Such places can qualify “heterotopia, both in terms of the isolation of the rites of passage of entry into and exit from the territory of the state, and in terms of the containment of deviant, mobile subjects.”⁹⁵

Thus, these immobile mobilities or mobile immobilities in the inaccessible airport occupying the DMZ are considered in the prevailing power-knowledge relations. Airports do not enable smooth mobility in which “a common experience marked by homogeneity, ambiguity, and anonymity, transforms multiple spaces into a sense of singular place.”⁹⁶ Likewise, the DMZ is and will be a place that demonstrates accessibility and inaccessibility corresponding to power-knowledge relations.

Even though the airport is, in the sense of Virilio’s work, symbolic of the universal global urbanization as anti-city, conceiving it as a heterotopia or a counter-space is not entirely ruled out. In this conceivable possibility, the DMZ as an inaccessible airport should be, as it were, an anti-anti-city resistant to the anti-city. We may further pursue this analogy by identifying the normative function of mirroring other spaces the DMZ as a heterotopia should assume.

The DMZ as a Mirror: Reflecting and Critical Space

Harvey makes a case that Foucault’s evaluation of heterotopia leads us to erroneously think that “whatever happens in such spaces of ‘Otherness’ is of interest and even in some sense ‘acceptable,’ or ‘appropriate.’”⁹⁷ Indeed, we cannot overlook that, as Harvey points out, “the cemetery and the concentration camp, the factory, the shopping malls and Disneylands,”⁹⁸ or as Ourednik exemplifies, Guantanamo

and Fritzel's cellar as heterotopias can hardly be "acceptable" or "appropriate" spaces.

Leaving the discussion aside on whether heterotopia, in general, performs positive or negative functions for the society, the mirroring function viz. the tacitly reflective and even critical function is the heterotopia's *raison d'être*. After all, in a heterotopia as "a sort of counter-emplacement," "all the other real emplacements that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested and inverted."⁹⁹ In a heterotopia, "a bit of the social world," organized "in a way different to that which surrounds them," is "to be seen as an example of an alternative way of doing things."¹⁰⁰

Thus, "the sociotemporal aspects of the heterotopia" are nothing but "the mirroring, distorting and unsettling qualities" of this space.¹⁰¹ In this sense, heterotopias' unique role in society lies not in individual heterotopias' specific functions. It lies in their absolute differentness per se, which makes them places where things are done in an alternative way. In this counter-emplacement, "there might be a sort of mixed, in-between experience, which would be the mirror."¹⁰² Even though heterotopias remain "in relation with all the other sites," these relations serve "to suspend, neutralize, or invert the sets of relations designated, mirrored, or reflected by them."¹⁰³ In this sense, heterotopia has a function of mirroring, reflecting, and tacitly criticizing the normal and normative ordering of the social world surrounding it.

The mirror functions as a heterotopia in the respect that it renders this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the looking glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since, in order to be perceived, it has to pass through this virtual point, which is over there.¹⁰⁴

The mirror is a heterotopia par excellence; or vice versa, the heterotopia is a mirror through which other places are perceived. But how can this mirroring function of heterotopia be realized in a social space that seems, overwhelmed by the apparently omnipresent and omnipotent power and knowledge relations, not to grant any fissure, let alone a spare space, in these relations? Faced with such a perplexing question, we come to engage in contemplation of the mirror's nature. Namely, to fill itself with a reflected image, i.e., to mirror something other than itself, a mirror is not to be preoccupied with its own images. Not being preoccupied with the normal and normative ordering of the social world surrounding it, a heterotopia can be the mirror that functions as a *tabula rasa* or a void where all kinds of games can be played, and all sorts of work can be accomplished. As Foucault's fascinating passage depicts, a heterotopia is just like a parent's bed for children.

This is the attic or rather the Indian tent in the attic. And that is—on Thursday afternoon—the parents’ bed. On this bed they discover the ocean because they can swim between the blankets. But the bed is also the sky because they can jump on the springs. It is the forest because they hide in it. It is the night because they become ghosts under the sheets. And finally it is delight, because when the parents come back they will be punished.¹⁰⁵ (own translation)

The DMZ is and ought to be a heterotopic “big bed” in the same vein where we could play all imaginable games and accomplish all possible works. When the parents come home, the place where children play all possible games transforms back into a bed with prescribed functions; the bed is supposed to be a merely temporary heterotopia for children. Likewise, each specific “use” of the DMZ is supposed to be provisional and temporary, while the DMZ as a whole remains as a place of “unworking (*désœuvrement*),” a term Jean-Luc Nancy coined to describe “that which, before or beyond the work, withdraws from the work, and which, no longer having to do either with production or with completion, encounters interruption, fragmentation, suspension.”¹⁰⁶

Concluding Remarks

Even though the Korean Peninsula’s ongoing peace processes have been undergoing some complications and delays, the expectation that the general tendency toward peace and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula will continue has by no means crumbled. Suppose peace and reunification would be achieved after many probable twists and turns in the future, the DMZ would allow more residential, industrial, or tourist mobilities for people on the two sides. If that is the case, this peculiar space will take on a new shape due to the transition from immobility to mobility. However, what this shape will be like is difficult to imagine.

With this mid to long-term expectation in mind, this article attempted to reflect on the heterotopic features of the DMZ, particularly within the framework of the new mobilities paradigm. After attempting to re-conceptualize the DMZ penetrated by diverse (non)human (im)mobilities as a heterotopia, an absolutely different, ambiguous, and paradoxical space, this article attempted to give a normative claim that the DMZ be a critically reflecting place, which in itself represents a place of “unworking” enabling all the workings at the outset.

“The fragmentary and elusive quality”¹⁰⁷ of the concept of heterotopia makes, to be sure, this article’s discourse on the heterotopic DMZ fragmentary and elusive as well. Representing the DMZ as a place of unworking by the metaphor of mirror is marked by “interruption, fragmentation, suspension.” However, the idea of the heterotopic DMZ as a place of pure unworking is something of a “regulative idea” in

the Kantian sense. It is unlikely to be materialized but still functions as a postulate guiding our actual “working,” since in civilisations without heterotopias, “dreams dry up, espionage replaces adventure, and the police the pirates.”¹⁰⁸ Guided by the regulative idea of the heterotopic DMZ, some activity will still be feasible and even desirable to realize the utopian dreams: dense human habitations, profitable industrial areas, traffic routes and hubs, peace parks, bio-sanctuaries, museums, theme parks, and so on. The principle of the heterotopia’s hybridity tolerates the coexistence of even incompatible spaces within it. However, they are to be of a partial and transitory nature. Projecting one’s desires and dreams indiscreetly onto this “terrain vague,” this ambiguous, “empty, abandoned space in which a series of occurrences have taken place,”¹⁰⁹ would be nothing but “introducing violent transformations, changing estrangements into citizenship, and striving at all costs to dissolve the uncontaminated magic of the obsolete in the efficacy.”¹¹⁰ The Korean DMZ is supposed to remain an unworking and unoccupied space to mirror the other spaces, allowing us to reflect upon and, if necessary, upturn the power and knowledge relations producing spaces of inertia, ubiquity, and instantaneusness.

Now, I will conclude this article by reviewing the notion of governmobility, seemingly a promising conceptual tool for the further discussion about the DMZ and, more generally, about the heterotopic places within the framework of mobility studies. The concept of governmobility, combining the insights from both mobilities studies and Foucauldian study of governmentality, challenges us “to rethink what borders include.” Focusing on “the technologies of circulation and connection, materially constructing societies, governed through mobility,” governmobility is particularly manifest around “the borders or ‘gates’ that limit, channel, and regulate movement or anticipated movement.”¹¹¹ Applied to the DMZ, which has been and, more importantly, should remain a borderland in a proper sense, this conceptual tool can present how “the passages and circulation of people, things and information around borders” or the DMZ shall and should be ruled “through the material designs of technologies and environments.”¹¹²

Furthermore, governmobility, meaning “ruling through connections—mobilising mobilities,” is functioning “through bodily, technological and institutional forms of self-government, which are enacted relationally and embedded in systems.”¹¹³ This internalized regulation of mobilities in people’s mobile practices are critical for the (im)mobilities in and around the heterotopic DMZ. It is through subjects’ embodied experiences that the pervasive governmobility can determine and control “the production and complex entwined performativities, materialities, mobilities and affects of *both* human embodied subjects *and* the spaces/places/landscapes/environments which are inhabited, traversed and perceived.”¹¹⁴ Thus,

a study on the governmobility not only as a regime both restricting and enabling the human and non-human mobilities but also as internalized and embodied practices might be an essential desideratum of this article's discourse concerning the heterotopic DMZ.

Notes

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