

ROUTLEDGE ADVANCES IN KOREAN STUDIES

De-bordering Korea

Tangible and intangible legacies of the
Sunshine Policy

Edited by
Valérie Gelézeau, Koen De Ceuster and
Alain Delissen



De-Bordering Korea

As tensions remain on the Korean Peninsula, this book looks back on the decade of improved inter-Korean relations and engagement between 1998 and 2008, now known as the “Sunshine Policy” era. Moving beyond traditional economic and political perspectives, it explores how this decade of intensified cooperation both affected and reshaped existing physical, social and mental boundaries between the two Koreas, and how this “de-bordering” and “re-bordering” has changed the respective attitudes towards the other.

Based around three key themes, “Places,” “People” and “Representations,” this book looks at the tangible and intangible areas of contact created by North–South engagement during the years of the Sunshine Policy. “Places” focuses on the border regions and discusses how the border reflects the dynamics of multiple types of exchanges and connections between the two Koreas, as well as the new territorial structures these have created. “People” addresses issues in human interactions and social organizations, looking at North Korean defectors in the South, shifting patterns of North–South competition in the “Korean” diaspora of post-Soviet Central Asia, and the actual and physical presence of the Other in various social settings. Finally, “Representations” analyses the image of the other Korea as it is produced, circulated, altered/falsified and received (or not) on either side of the Korean border.

The contributors to this volume draw on a broad spectrum of disciplines ranging from geography, anthropology and archaeology, to media studies, history and sociology, in order to show how the division between North and South Korea functions as an essential matrix for geographical, social and psychological structures on both sides of the border. As such, this book will appeal to students and scholars from numerous fields of study, including Korean studies, Korean culture and society, and international relations more broadly.

Valérie Gelézeau is Associate Professor at the École des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS, Paris), and Director of EHESS’ Center for Korean Studies, France.

Koen De Ceuster is Associate Professor at the Centre for Korean Studies, Leiden University, the Netherlands.

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De-Bordering Korea

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List of abbreviations

AKK	Association of the Koreans of Kazakhstan
ASOK	Association for the Reunification of Korea
BZSL	Border Zone Support Law
CCL	Civilian Control Line
CCZ	Civilian Control Zone
CIQ	Customs, Immigration and Quarantine
CPEEC	Committee for the Promotion of External Economic Cooperation
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea
ECNKD	Exile Committee for North Korean Democracy
GDRI	Gyeonggi Development Research Institute
GNP	Grand National Party
GTI	Greater Tumen Initiative
HRW	Human Rights Watch
ICNKHR	Information Center for North Korean Human Rights
ICOMOS	International Council on Museums and Sites
JSA	Joint Security Area
KCNA	Korean Central News Agency
KIC	Kaesong Industrial Complex
KINU	Korean Institute for National Unification
KRIHS	Korean Research Institute for Human Settlements
KSEZ	Kaesong Special Economic Zone
KWP	Korean Workers' Party
MDL	Military Demarcation Line
MIPD	Military Installation Protection Districts
MOU	Ministry of Unification
NBCPC	National Bureau for Cultural Property Conservation
NLL	Northern Limit Line
NNSC	Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission
OKF	Overseas Koreans Foundation
PSPD	People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy
ROK	Republic of Korea
TRADP	Tumen River Area Development Program
TREDA	Tumen River Economic Development Area
UNCMAC	United Nations Command Military Armistice Commission
UNDP	United Nations Development Program

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[A note on transliteration](#)

Any editor of a book in English on Korea has to struggle with the issue of Romanization, that eternal party spoiler. This volume is no exception: nothing seems stable or firmly established, norms have changed over the years and, to top it all, transliteration systems are also influenced by politics and ideology.

Indeed, the two Koreas continue to use distinct systems of Romanization, though the current official South Korean system, promulgated in 2000, is both more widely used and more actively promoted.

We follow standard Western academic practice in using the McCune–Reischauer Romanization system. While we have tried to apply McCune–Reischauer rules as rigorously as possible, we have on occasion deviated from them. In the case of geographical names, we use the generally received transliteration for the capital cities: Pyongyang and Seoul. In order to accommodate readers unfamiliar with Korean, we also decided to depart from McCune–Reischauer in not applying assimilation, whether in the case of hyphenated portmanteau words (e.g. *Nam-Puk kwan 'gye*) or in the case of hyphenated administrative designations (e.g. Pondong-ri).

The transliteration of individual names has been a particular nightmare. All Korean names follow Korean usage, with the family name first, followed by the given name. We tried to stay as close as possible to known transliterations (using McCune otherwise). As a result, our readers may notice an apparently whimsical use of capitalization: Kim Young-Bong (Kim Yŏngbong) and Kim Chae-Ha (Kim Chaehan), but Kim Dae-jung (Kim Taejung) and Kim Jong Il (Kim Chŏngil). We tried to stay as close as possible to received practice, which we assumed reflects personal preferences. In the case of inconsistency, we unfortunately had to decide on a standardized use of capitalization that was close to dominant practice in the North (Kim Jong Il) and South (Kim Dae-jung), respectively.

Needless to say, many of our choices are arbitrary and imperfect by nature. The result, however, can be seen as reflecting one of this book's conclusions: that the plurality of the Korean world is still a continuously evolving reality.

Introduction

Valérie Gelézeau, Koen De Ceuster and Alain Delissen

Images of frail elderly people falling into each other's arms, sometimes wailing uncontrollably, sometimes simply holding hands, tears running down their ruddy faces, have become a recurring visual image of the continuing division of Korea. They are timely reminders of the enduring human cost of separation for Korean families trapped on either side of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) since the armistice agreement ended hostilities in the Korean War (1950–53). But there is also something ambiguous or paradoxical about these images. Of course, the very fact that such family reunions take place at all is a consequence of the lasting division. Yet, however brief and incomplete these reunions may be, they effectively overcome the fact of division for their duration.

Inter-Korean family reunions were the first direct result of the June 2000 summit meeting between South Korean President Kim Dae-jung and North Korean Leader Kim Jong Il. At the time, it was hoped that an institutional framework could be created in order to enable family reunions to take place more frequently.¹ Altogether, a total of fifteen family reunions were held during the first decade of the Sunshine Policy (1998–2008). Starting from the fourth inter-Korean family reunion in April 2000 onwards, these meetings took place at North Korea's Mount Kŭmgang tourist resort, which, since 1998, had been run by the South Korean conglomerate, Hyundai Asan. These family reunions are highly orchestrated events: over a period of six days, two delegations of 100 individuals from both sides meet in succession up to five relatives from the other side over the course of eight hours during their three-day stay. With the exception of a single, two-hour private family meeting, all meetings are collective events and representatives of the two Koreas are present at all times. In addition to using the Mount Kŭmgang tourist resort for family reunions, videoconferencing was used on four separate occasions in 2005 and 2006 for a total of 557 calls involving 3,748 relatives. Since 2008, the number of family reunions has dramatically dropped, with only a single inter-Korean family reunion taking place in 2009 and 2010 and none in 2011 and 2012.²

In addition to these sporadic family reunions, cultural, touristic and other business ventures pierced the once impenetrable DMZ that divides the Korean Peninsula between two ideologically opposed halves. During the decade of engagement (1998–2008), inter-Korean exchanges had become routine, a fact reflected in the physical organization of the DMZ. In order to facilitate direct road and rail crossings, sections of the DMZ were demined and road and rail connections severed since the Korean War were reconnected (see [Figures 0.1](#) and [0.2](#)).

Border crossing procedures were agreed to and facilities for processing cross-border movements put in place. More than half a century after the establishment of the rival states and despite more than fifty years of antagonistic posturing and ideological mobilization, a process of physical de-bordering created opportunities for Koreans to begin interacting with each other, albeit under close supervision from the authorities and at the risk of being accused of aiding the enemy.

How did this change come about?

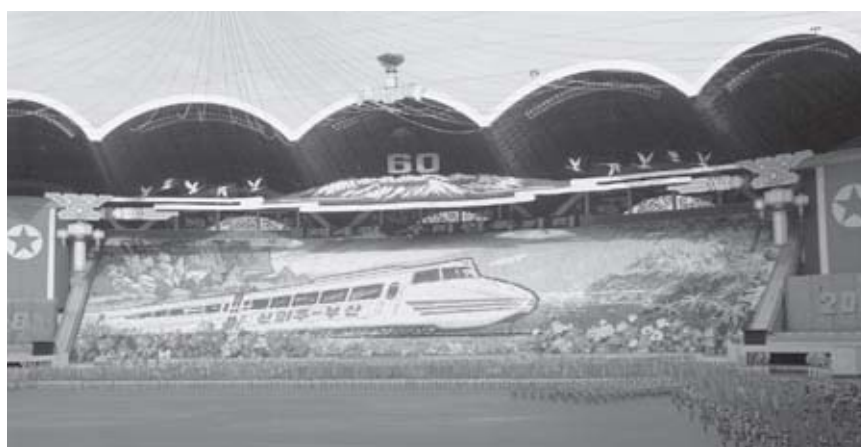
The “Sunshine decade”?

Though all periodizations are, like any other attempt to parcel out time or space, artificial, arbitrary and open to debate, in hindsight, the Sunshine decade does indeed appear a distinct period.

The transformation described earlier was the concrete outcome of a political agenda of rapprochement launched in 1998, a time of leadership change in both Koreas. In North Korea, Kim Jong Il assumed actual power in 1998 after a four-year transition period following Kim Il Sung's death in July 1994. His assumption of power was coupled with a constitutional amendment and the affirmation of a new ideological line. The North's "Army First Policy" (*Sŏn'gun chŏngch'i*) reinforced the power of the army at a time of economic reform and the development of Special Economic Zones, which were accompanied by a restricted series of border openings (See [Figure 0.3](#)).

The southern part of the peninsula represented an opportunity, if not a tool, in the context of the process and strategy. In South Korea, Kim Dae-jung's victory in the presidential elections was a watershed moment. A lifelong opponent of the authoritarian state who was sentenced to death in 1981 for alleged pro-North Korean activities, Kim Dae-jung opted for engagement with the North through the promotion of practical cooperation as a first step in a process of gradual rapprochement aimed at transforming conditions there.

If a change of government and the advent of a pragmatic approach to engagement heralded the start of the "Sunshine era", political change similarly brought an end to it. In South Korea, the inauguration in February 2008 of conservative President Lee Myung-bak, who had distanced himself from the Sunshine Policy in his election campaign, marked a radical departure from a policy of engagement with the North and eventually led to one of confrontation. In North Korea, change was brought on by Kim Jong Il's deteriorating health following a stroke in August 2008. The regime retreated into survival mode, focusing on a smooth and stable leadership succession process, weary of the destabilizing effects of further opening and reform. From 2008 onwards, both Koreas retreated into a process of re-bordering in the aftermath of an ineluctable chain of hostile incriminations, actions and events that eventually culminated in the November 23, 2010 shelling by the North Korean Army of Yŏnp'yŏng Island.



[Figure 0.1 Arirang Festival, North Korea](#)

Note: During the 2008 Arirang Festival in Pyongyang, one of the mosaic pictures formed by schoolchildren flipping colored cards showed a high-speed train re-connecting Sinŭiju and Pusan.

Source: Benjamin Joinau, 2008



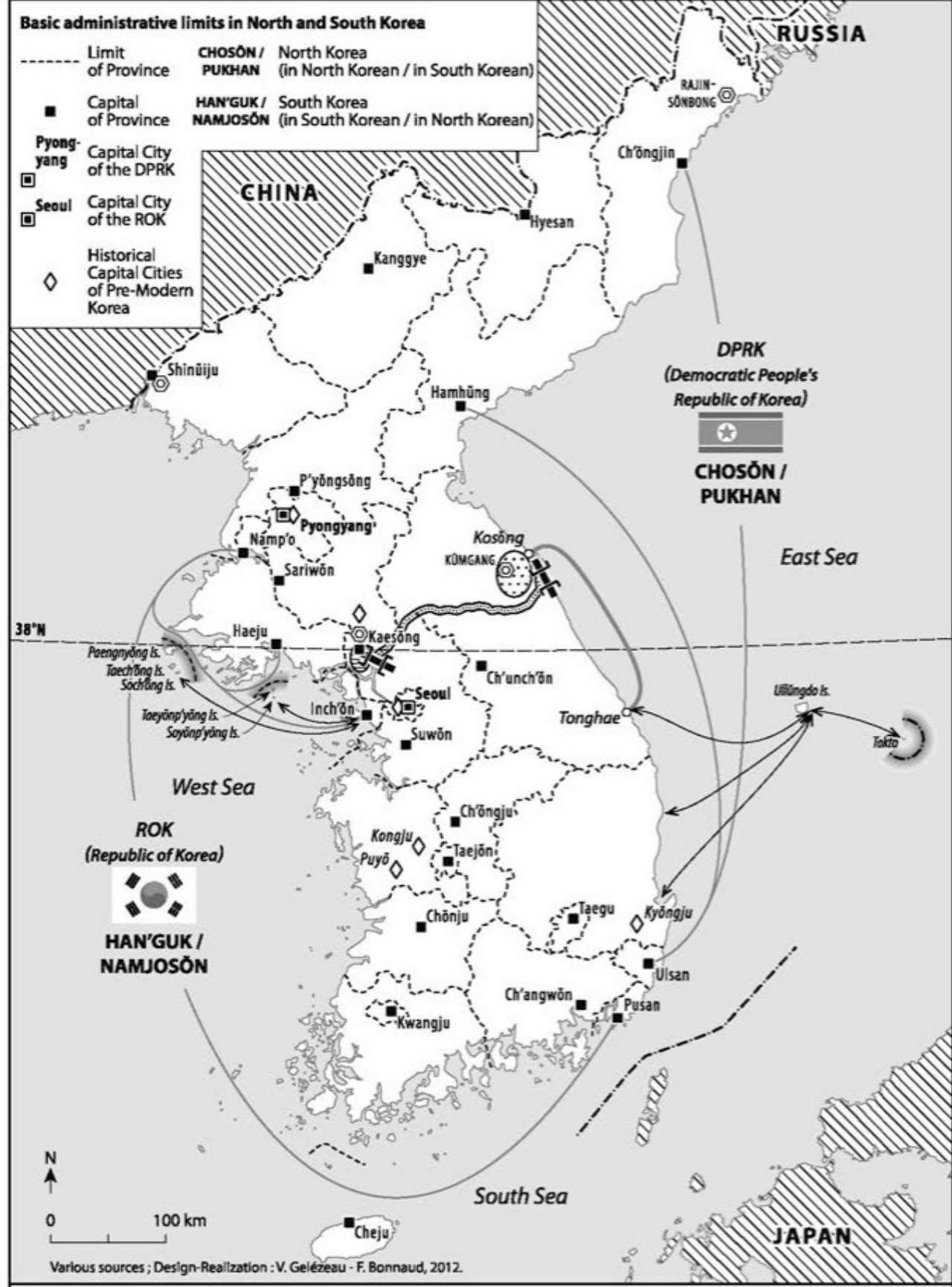
[Figure 0.2 Torasan station, South Korea](#)

Note: Torasan station is the northernmost station on the South Korean stretch of what used to be the Seoul–Sinŭiju line. Following the division of Korea, this station became known as the last station of South Korea. This billboard at Torasan station redefines it as the first station on the way to North Korea.

Source: Perrine Fruchart-Ramond, 2006

Basic administrative limits in North and South Korea

- Limit of Province
 - Capital of Province
 - **Pyong-yang** Capital City of the DPRK
 - **Seoul** Capital City of the ROK
 - ◇ Historical Capital Cities of Pre-Modern Korea
- CHOSŌN / PUKHAN** North Korea (in North Korean / in South Korean)
- HAN'GUK / NAMJOSŌN** South Korea (in South Korean / in North Korean)



Various sources ; Design-Realization : V. Gelézeau - F. Bonnaud, 2012.

Border and Enclaves

- The 38th parallel in 1945
- ===== The Border in 1953 : cease-fire line and DMZ
- ▨ Kaesŏng Industrial Complex (KIC)
- ▤ Mount Kŭmgang tourist zone

Cross-Border Lines

- ▬ Torasan-Kaesŏng (2003) ; Mount Kŭmgang (2003-2008) cross-border line
- ▬ Mount Kŭmgang cruise (1998-2003)
- ▬ Main inter-korean commercial sealines between 1999-2005

Frontier Islands

- ▬ 5 Islands of Ongjin county, Tokto
- ↔ Sealines to the frontier islands
- ⊙ North Korea Special Economic Zones (SEZ)

Although a clearly distinguishable moment in political terms, the decade of Sunshine from 1998 to 2008 also fits into the complex trajectory of inter-Korean relations. Two specific moments of inter-Korean dialogue stand out in this connection. On July 4, 1972, the two Koreas signed a “North–South Joint Statement” (*Nam-Puk kongdong sŏngmyŏng*)³ declaring that “reunification must be achieved autonomously, peacefully, and transcending ideological differences.” Although this statement had no immediate practical consequences as relations once again deteriorated shortly thereafter, it did settle the cardinal principles for future inter-Korean relations. Following two grim decades of confrontation, South Korean President Roh Tae-woo, said to be inspired by Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*, in 1988 launched his *Nordpolitik*, which aimed to increase North Korea’s international isolation by normalizing economic and diplomatic relations with China and the Soviet Union. This *Nordpolitik* eventually resulted in the conclusion on December 13, 1991 of a second inter-Korean “Agreement of Reconciliation, Non-Aggression, Exchanges and Cooperation” (*Nam-Puk hwahae-wa pulgach’im m kyoryu hyŏmnyŏg-e kwanhan habŭisŏ*, commonly known as the Basic Agreement, *kibon habŭisŏ*) which reiterated the principles agreed upon in the 1972 Joint Statement. At the same time, it provided a framework for a timid process of evolving inter-Korean economic relations, legally sanctioned by the South through the “Act on South/North Exchange and Cooperation” (*Nam-Puk kyoryu hyŏmnyŏg kwanhan pŏmnyul*, August 1990) – to this day, the basic legal framework governing all inter-Korean exchange.

For lack of a better term, we use the South Korean term “Sunshine Policy” (*Haetpyŏt chŏngch’aek*) to refer to this decade of intensified inter-Korean relations. Kim Dae-jung referred to Aesop’s fable “The North Wind and the Sun”, to argue for a non-confrontational approach of gentle persuasion towards North Korea. The denotational bias is evident here, as the term presents North Korea as being on the receiving end of South Korean policy, as if South Korean action was capable of inevitably generating a response from an otherwise passive North Korean state. While modeled on Germany’s *Ostpolitik*, the Southern rationale is also steeped in a functionalist approach to international relations which advocates economic cooperation before tackling the more thorny issue of political relations (Son Key-Young 2006, Koo Young-nok 2002).

The received view of the Sunshine period in South Korea internationally focuses on the role played by Kim Dae-jung – awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in 2000 – in masterminding the June 2000 Pyongyang Summit (Kirk 2009). In North Korea, by contrast, Kim Jong Il is revered as the “Father of Reunification” (*T’ongil-ŭi ŏbŏi*), and the June 15 (2000) Joint Declaration is the major reference point. No “Sunshine” for the “Sun of the Twenty-first Century”, as Kim Jong Il is referred to in North Korea.

Positions

As a quick glance at the table of contents makes clear, the scope, topics, approaches and perspectives that characterize the present volume mark a departure from the mainstream scientific literature on the division of Korea. There is an abundance of publications in both Korean and Western languages on inter-Korean relations and the Sunshine Policy.⁴ South Korean public institutions, such as the Ministry of Unification (*T’ongil-bu*) (Kim Kŭnsik *et al.* 2004) and affiliates such as the Korea Institute for National Unification (*T’ongil yŏn’guwŏn* – KINU), produce a continuous stream of policy papers and reports (Kim Kŭnsik *et al.* 2004). Other public institutes and think tanks – e.g. the Korea Research Institute for Human Settlement (*Kukt’o yŏn’guwŏn* – KRIHS) – publish inter-Korea relations

papers and reports in their particular domains of expertise. Monographs approach inter-Korean affairs mainly from the perspective of international relations, political science or economics (Yi Sangm 2000, Yi Wönsöp 2003, Kim Chiyöng 2008, Yi Yöngil 2008). The same is true for publications in Western languages (Moon Chung-in and Steinberg 1999, Kim Samuel 2004, Bleiker 2005, Son Key Young 2006 in English; Koo Young-nok 2002, Helper 2008 in French). Interestingly, most of these publications tend to view reunification as an ultimate, desirable and inevitable outcome. In the 1990s anthropologists examined the manner in which reunification represented a collective fantasy for South Koreans, who imagined a homogeneous nation despite mounting evidence of a very different Korea in the north (Grinker 1998). The binary geometry of the division, with its implicit assumptions of homogeneity and unity, impedes fresh analysis of the Korean question. Another, methodological impediment is the paradigmatic dominance in Western scholarship of the South Korean perspective. Over-exposure to the South Korean viewpoint and heavy dependence on South Korean scholarship and materials – this study is no exception – gives rise to an at once powerfully influential and sharply asymmetric analytical framework that is rarely problematized (Gelézeau *et al.* 2010). Rather than claim to be untouched by the conceptual framework that has marked over 50 years of Korea-related scholarship, we assume both this binary bias and the dominance of the South Korean perspective, hoping that awareness of it brings a new sensitivity to our research. We believe that such sensitivity is further enhanced by the fact that our research is informed by our location in Europe. Finally, we have a common theoretical stake in critical area studies, which precisely aims to produce *situated knowledge*, not only in the sense of knowledge based on fieldwork and locally collected data, but also in the sense of knowledge produced from a specific and explicit position.

One of our main priorities was thus to address the asymmetry in source materials and viewpoints and strive for an even-handed approach. With that perspective in mind, in June 2008, we invited scholars from the North Korean Academy of Sciences and the North Korean Association for Social Scientists (*Chosön sahoe kwahakcha hyöphoe*) to a two-day workshop in Paris. Except for a slight insistence on the respective designation of both countries (see [Figure 0.3](#)) and the discovery that Pyongyang was home to a Research Institute on South Korea (*Namjosön yön'guwön*), disappointingly little came of it.⁵ While half of the contributors to this volume have visited North Korea at least once, almost all of us did at some point rely on the vast collection of North Korean materials at the Information Center on North Korea (*Pukhan charyo sent'ö*) in downtown Seoul. In so doing, little separated us from the tourists who peer into North Korea from DMZ observatories.

The contributions in this collection are the outcome of a long-term research project originally entitled “North/South Interfaces in the Korean Peninsula”. The project was an attempt to document beyond its immediate political impact, the scale and scope of change brought about by the Sunshine Policy. As such, it was very much a European initiative in Korean studies: a multidisciplinary project at the junction of the humanities and social sciences and wary of the prevailing prescriptive agendas of South Korean and North American political scientific research on North Korea. In order to grasp the underlying nature of the processes set in motion during the Sunshine era, we focused on the areas of contact or *interfaces*, created by North–South engagement. To that end, we treated the interface, whether tangible or not, as both an analytical concept and an object of research in its own right (Gelézeau *et al.* 2010). Flexible in time, capable of transposition in space and socially diffuse, the concept of the interface makes it possible to think afresh about the subtle and enduring dynamics of the Korean division while discarding a far too static vision of the Korean border and its attendant epistemological barriers and political classifications.

Interfaces

Part one of the book (“Places”) deals with the paradigmatic interface: the border regions. It discusses how the border reflects the dynamics of multiple types of exchanges and connections between the two Koreas, as well as the new territorial structures (enclaves and spatial interstices) these created. It confirms the essentially mobile – even instable – character of the interface. Thus, the often invoked media image of the DMZ as some kind of impenetrable and immobile fortress turns out to be anything but fixed and immovable (Gelézeau in [Chapter 1](#)). At the other end of the peninsula, a remarkable geographical dynamic of complex shifts and swings along the China–Korea border is discernible (Colin in [Chapter 4](#)). Two of the emblematic southern enclaves in the North, the Kaesŏng Industrial Complex and the Mount Kŭmgang tourist resort, prove to be as much a site of encounter as an arena for competing discourses over legitimacy and identity (Park in [Chapter 2](#) and Chabanol in [Chapter 3](#)).

Part two (“People”) addresses issues in human interactions and social organizations, from recent challenges associated with North Korean defectors in the South to shifting patterns of North–South competition in the Korean diaspora of post-Soviet Central Asia. This part of the volume focuses on the actual and physical presence of the Other in various social settings accessible to research, showing how the fact of division and the de-bordering process have created a complex geometry of social enclaves within South Korean society. If those North Koreans who have resettled in the South can properly be described as forming an underprivileged social enclave (Bidet in [Chapter 6](#)), within this group another enclave exists of North Korean human rights activists who struggle to make their political voice heard in the host society (Chubb in [Chapter 5](#)). Beyond the Korean Peninsula, Kazakhstani Koreans have been the target of an intense charm offensive on the part of the two Koreas but are more and more unwilling to choose between them (Yim in [Chapter 7](#)).

Part three (“Representations”) analyses the image of the other Korea as it is produced, circulated, altered/falsified and received (or not) on either side of the Korean border, from press agency dispatches (Fruchart-Ramond in [Chapter 8](#)) and history textbooks (Delissen in [Chapter 11](#)) to popular movies (Joinau in [Chapter 10](#)) and art exchanges (De Ceuster in [Chapter 9](#)). This part focuses on the operational quality of parallel narratives and on the cultural agents who filter and control knowledge and awareness of the mythical Other while contributing to the construction of a bipolar (as opposed to dual) Korean identity. Although these representations are affected by changes in the political reality, they simultaneously tap into a deep-seated imagery of inter-Korean relations. Cultural forms and educational discourses have lasting but unpredictable effects on the imaginary and in this way bear heavily on future policies.

The Sunshine Policy sought to create a possibility for direct encounters between Korean citizens but did it lead to a real dialogue and a meeting of the minds? By working from within the interface between North and South Korea, we acknowledge the division to be an ordering principle on a multitude of levels. We also offer multiple insights into its deciphering, all imbued with general and theoretical implications: what is the social, cultural, even psychological meaning of a border? What resources are required for a mental border to be crossed or overcome? Do the tangible, spatial enclaves observed in the North and the social enclaves of the South maintain connections with the intangible, mental debris of the Korean division? How did the Sunshine decade and its unsettling mirror effects alter enduring, at times autistic, patterns in the making of Korean identity formation and how did this affect the perception of Self and other? How did the Sunshine era impact the multiple, shifting worlds of contemporary *Koreanness*? These are some of the issues that are touched upon in the chapters that follow. We conclude this introduction with some other, more general and tentative reflections.

Legacies and other ultimate questions

Intertwined history or parallel histories?

As a process, historical change in South Korea cannot be understood without taking into account the looming presence of North Korea and vice versa. The fact of division has shaped and continues to influence developments in both states and societies. Because of this close interdependence, the Korean Peninsula offers the intellectually challenging and borderline case of an intertwined history that is once national, international and transnational. At the same time, however, the master narratives used to bolster the division in the Cold War years have proven impervious to recent historical issues of common interest – the Korean War was, after all, a *civil war* – and are incapable of acknowledging or incorporating the otherness of the *enemy*. While various types of fictional representation arguably do for the past what historical narratives cannot, the present moment nevertheless finds itself burdened with parallel histories. There is no interaction or dialogue between these; each supplies the emergence of a nation-state for which it speaks with separate – but thoroughly entangled – historical trajectories and aspirations. In that sense, the notion of *reunification* is ultimately misleading, if not definitely *passé*.

Re-bordering after de-bordering?

Commenting on the sudden, brutal and intense wave of post-2008 Korean re-bordering in his afterword to the present volume, Charles Armstrong aptly describes the chain of events that shook the peninsula in 2010 in the disquieting terms of a dress rehearsal for war. Yet, in attempting to understand this indisputable round of re-bordering, we are prepared to adopt a position that differs markedly from mainstream analyses, which tend to portray this dramatic reversal of events as evidence of the superficial and ineffective character of the Sunshine Policy. We beg to differ (Gelézeau *et al.* 2010). Recent events can also be read as a sign of the effectiveness of the Sunshine Policy in altering the situation on the peninsula to such an extent that the (new) governments in both capitals, fearful of what might happen should the process of de-bordering be allowed to continue, recoiled and stepped back ... The re-bordering was as sudden, brutal, and intense as the de-bordering had been deep, effective and far-ranging: fatigue was the inevitable result.

A whiff of orientalism?

There has always been competition between the two states. With the end of the Cold War, however, the balance finally tipped in favor of the South. Detractors of the Sunshine Policy decry the amount of South Korean funds that have been poured into North Korea, with allegedly little to show for it in the end. What these critics fail to see is that investing in infrastructure in the North prepares the groundwork for economic integration. With their intimate interaction between South Korean managers and North Korean workers, economic enclaves act like rhizomes in a creeping process of colonization. A pervasive orientalist mindset in the South drives this process of undeclared colonization. This is strikingly apparent in the ease with which provincial development institutes draw up plans for inter-Korean projects without even bothering to consider the North's perspective. It is also apparent in the received images of the North which range from one of uncivilized barbarity to bucolic purity to an exotic and curiously empty new frontier. A similar attitude informs the representation of North Korean political behaviour as erratic and irrational.

Every so often, Korea is said to be at the crossroads. At the time of this writing, neither North nor South Korean authorities are interested in reaching out to their counterparts – each, no doubt, for sound political reasons of their own. The Sunshine era seems a bygone age but, in occupying a comfortable posture of mutual denial, both Koreas reconfirm their intertwined fate. While Nor

Korea is grappling with the post-Kim Jong Il era, South Korea is facing presidential elections. Time will tell whether Seoul and Pyongyang profit from or squander the momentous opportunity before them to reinvent their relationship. And we too have a choice: either we remain prisoners of a stable Cold War analytical framework that merely sees cyclical reversals of fortune or we try to think differently, pushing the visionary zeal of the Sunshine era to its limits by rethinking the contours of what it means to engage with the other. The present project tried to think rapprochement to the limit by moving into the in-between, the interface, and in this way, not just encounter the other, but also bracket the Self, in order to gain new insights into what defines other and Self alike.

Notes

- ¹ In September 1985, a first hometown visit of separated families was organized, but never repeated.
- ² Information collated from the Integrated Information System for Separated Families (*isan kajok chŏngbo t'onghap sisŭt'e* <<https://reunion.unikorea.go.kr>> (last accessed June 2012)), a service offered by the Ministry of Unification, South Korea.
- ³ Inter-Korean agreements are either “North–South” (*Puk–Nam*) or “South–North” (*Nam–Puk*) agreements, depending on whether one goes by respectively the official North or South Korean name.
- ⁴ As of June 2012, quests on Research Information Service System (RISS) International listed more than 140 books and over 200 articles on inter-Korean relations.
- ⁵ What we had hoped for was some kind of exchange of ideas regarding the concept of interface that we had begun to mull over. What we learned was that social science does not mean the same for our North Korean counterparts.

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