Undoing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ): The Agency of Architectural Intelligence

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This paper expounds on the "Undoing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ): The Agency of Architectural Intelligence" portmanteau installed at the Milwaukee Art Museum as part of the 2018 Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture (ACSA) Fall Conference "Play with the Rules" in Milwaukee, MI. It examines how the portmanteau activates new ways of understanding, interpreting, and projecting the dynamically changing Demilitarized Zone (DMZ). The paper specifically discusses the meaning of "architectural intelligence" in the context of how the architectural discipline currently defines it and the role of architects for these kinds of research and practice. Based on this definition, the paper examines how the portmanteau's three main components: DMZ's past primary materials, current interpretive research on the DMZ, playful interactive future projections of the DMZ combined start to formulate thought-provoking interrogations that question conventional perceptions and habitual thinking on the DMZ and nation-state borders and persisting state imaginaries.

INTRODUCTION: "PLAY WITH THE RULES-MAD LIB"
Hello, my name is <u>Dongsei Kim</u>. I teach at the <u>New York Institute of Technology (NYIT)</u>, and I work on <u>architecture and urbanism's relationship to nation-states and their borders</u>. You can find me on <u>NYIT & axu studio's websites</u>. My favorite game is <u>Tetris</u>. My least favorite word is <u>"must"</u> and if I weren't an architect, I would like to try my hand at being <u>a philosopher</u>.

THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE: WORK IN PROGRESS
This paper expounds on the portmanteau work, "Undoing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ): The Agency of Architectural Intelligence" within the context of the author's ongoing research on the DMZ. This long-term research explores the fundamental nature of borders and how spatial instruments in the form of "architectural intelligence" play a critical role in constructing or deconstructing nation-state imaginaries. The broader research deconstructs nation-state borders to reformulate state imaginaries through particular readings of bordering practices of the past; interpretations of the present conditions; and the projections of the future alternatives.

Simply put, the research aims to bring about an awareness of the border that is similar to the effect of the "Rabbit and Duck" illusion published in a German satire magazine Fliegende Blätter in 1892, made famous by Ludwig Wittgenstein's discussion on different ways of seeing objects in his Philosophical Investigations (1953).[1] Just as this identical image can be read as either a rabbit or a duck, or both

simultaneously, the research argues that this subjective and simultaneous reading of an identical image can be applied to the understanding and the transforming border conditions. In this sense, a physically identical border that is used to exclude people can be equally transformed into an instrument for inclusion, or become both through these kinds of ambivalent interpretations.

ARCHITECTURAL INTELLIGENCE VS ARCHITECTURE
The "architectural intelligence" discussed in this paper is closely related to Eyal Weizman's definition of a particular set of architectural research methods related to his practice along the line of his "forensic architecture" work where he states:

> *"Architecture allows us to intervene in and open up latent questions that linger across different disciplines. Our understanding of architecture or of research in architecture is therefore not connected to a design proposal in the way that conventional research in architecture is undertaken, where in order to facilitate better intervention on a site, architects study it, its context, and then establish the conditions for design to take place."* [2]

Figure 1: The rabbit–duck illusion, anonymous illustration from the Fliegende Blätter (Flying Pages). 23 October 1892. Pg 147. Caption reads: "Welche Thiere gleichen einander am meisten? Kaninchen und Ente" ("Which animals are most like each other? Rabbit and Duck.").

Figure 2: "Undoing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ): The Agency of Architectural Intelligence" portmanteau installation at the ASCA Fall Conference, Milwaukee, MI. October 2018, Photo by author.

Weizman's work here focus on using architecture as a form of "intelligence" to research and to formulate new questions. The definition of "architectural intelligence" in this paper, when expanded, overlaps with the Leon van Schaik's notion of "spatial intelligence" where he argues for the profession of architecture to be less self-referential (focused on exclusionary professionalized practices) and should become more open to wider public who already has a built-in "spatial intelligence" as part of their basic human capability.[3] Both approaches—Weizman and van Schaik—can also be categorized as "anti-architecture" as defined by Molly Wright Steenson in her "Architectural Intelligence: How Designers and Architects Created the Digital Landscape"[4] where she examines "anti-architects" such as Cedric Price and others whose work did not necessarily result in constructed architecture but rather in design processes, tools, and strategies that expanded the notion and the practice of architecture. Architectural intelligence here are activities that have the propensity for "thinking architecturally" as opposed to the conventional practice that focus on producing architecture or constructing buildings.

In this context, "Undoing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)" portmanteau and its related research on borders are less about making "architecture" in the conventional sense. It is but more about engaging the knowledge, methods, and tools used in the architectural discipline to provoke a range of concrete spatial questions about the DMZ. The knowledge, methods, and tools of the architectural discipline include but are not limited to conceptual thinking, analytical tools, representational tools, presentation tools, and so on. This research is also an attempt to provide answers to the frequent question asked of the author's research on the DMZ: "the work is very interesting, but where is the architecture?" There is no doubt that this question arises from people with a particular definition of architecture where they seek a direct manifestation of architectural form or spatial resultant. However, the answer to this question may depend on the subjective and shifting definitions of what "architecture" may mean to different people and is part of another debate about the changing architectural profession. In this regard, the "Undoing the Demilitarized Zone: The Agency of Architectural Intelligence" portmanteau starts to unfold this answer.

UNDOING THE DEMILITARIZED ZONE (DMZ)
This playful work-in-progress portmanteau contains raw ingredients and instruments that stimulate and engage

Figure 3: Understanding the past though primary sources. Replica of "Armistice Agreement Volume I-Text and Volume II-Maps." October 2018, Photo by author.

stakeholders of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) to creatively reimagine its alternative futures. This further equips architects to explore the productive potentials latent in the heavily militarized 155-mile-long, 2.5-mile-wide border zone that has bisected the Korean Peninsula since 1954. The portmanteau consists of three main parts. These three parts elucidate how the two opposing Koreas together constructed the DMZ, how we can interpret its conditions, and how we can envision its future transformations. These distinct individual parts imply the past; the present; and the future of the DMZ. Furthermore, when these three components are combined, they reveal dynamic change inherent within border zones. More importantly, it highlights architects' agency in understanding, interpreting, and shaping the DMZ's productive future that starts to question established concepts of nation-states and their borders.

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST: THE AGREEMENT TEXT AND THE MAPS
The first part of the portmanteau includes the reduced replica of the 1953 Armistice Agreement Volume I-Text and Volume II-Maps. In order to "undo" or reconstruct the DMZ in a meaningful way, it has to be deconstructed so that the essential components, rules, and parameters of the DMZ would be revealed and understood.

The Armistice Agreement that describes the formation of the DMZ in detail was written and signed in three languages, Korean, English, and Chinese. This accommodates the signatories of the agreement; the

Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea); the United Nations represented by the United States; and the People's Republic of China.[5] And there is no doubt there are minor discrepancies in these documents, in what they signify, how they are interpreted, and what it ultimately means, as they are written in three different languages. Therefore, the visual and spatial information represented in the "attached maps" Volume II-Maps[6] become more significant as a cross-referential material to the text component of the armistice. The use of the Korean language in the Agreement is for the North Koreans—who were direct parties of the Armistice—rather for both North and South Korean involved in the Korean conflict. Curiously the Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea) was not one of the direct signatories to the agreement and it was only represented through the United Nations (United States) because of the regional history and the global geopolitical dynamics then.[7] The Armistice Agreement immediately starts to spatialize the DMZ by describing its physical form and spatial actions associated with it. The first article of the of the agreement, "Military Demarcation Line and Demilitarized Zone" states:

"1. A Military Demarcation Line Shall be fixed and both sides shall withdraw two (2) kilometers from this line so as to establish a Demilitarized Zone between the opposing forces. A Demilitarized Zone shall be established as a buffer zone to prevent the occurrence of incidents which might lead to a resumption of hostilities." [8]

The following Article I-2, states "The Military Demarcation Line is located as indicated on the attached map (Map 1)."[9] Until recently the "attached" "Armistice Agreement Volume II-Maps"[10] was hard to find and access as opposed to the easily

Figure 4: Interpreting the present through research. Research materials produced by the author. October 2018, Photo by author.

available full text of the agreement, mainly due to its large size, and security related reasons. However, the "Armistice Agreement Volume II-Maps" is freely available online from the US National Archives and Records Administration now.[11] The Armistice Agreement Volume II-Maps contains nine maps at 1:50,000 scale. They clearly illustrate and demarcate the DMZ through its "Military Demarcation Line" at the center of the DMZ; the "Northern Boundary" of the DMZ, and the "Southern Boundary" lines of the DMZ. The agreement's text and the maps combined become raw ingredients, an authoritative primary source that precisely describe and illustrate the DMZ's historical formation. They also narrate how the vast, highly militarized, fortified DMZ—a specific spatial condition—emerged from a mere thin black line inscribed over on an often-reductive map that abstract complex human inhabitation and ecological processes

INTERPRETING THE PRESENT: RESEARCH
The second part of the portmanteau contains studies produced by the author using the mentioned primary sources as one of many ingredients. This includes a pocket-sized travel journal "The Demilitarized Zone: Redrawing the Border between North and South Korea beyond Tourism" (2011).[12] It documents the author's visits to the DMZ and critique of its tourism-dominated spaces. The second piece to this part is the author's research thesis, "Borders as Urbanism: Redrawing the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea" completed at the Harvard GSD in 2012.[13] It investigates how exclusionary bordering practices could be deconstructed to reveal existing flows and transgressions that occur despite the DMZ performing as a watertight barrier. The third source

is a snapshot summary mapping of the mentioned thesis and a precursor to a research animation "A Construct the Koreas (Never) Made Together Deconstructing the DMZ For the Imaginary" (2014).[14] As part of the Golden-Lion award-winning Korean Pavilion exhibition the "The Crow's Eye View: The Korean Peninsula" work at the 2014 Venice Architecture Biennale deconstructs flows, transgressions, aggressions, and counter-aggressions contained within, and related to the DMZ over time in this visually rich mapping project.[15] These materials combined provide multiple entry points and multiple points of view that position the author's work within the present DMZ discourse that start to formulate provocative questions that become a robust platform for projecting alternative futures for the DMZ.

PROJECTING THE FUTURE: VICERAL PLAY & NEGOTIATION
The portmanteau's last part includes traditional architect's instruments. They suggest architects' role in facilitating future transformations of the DMZ. Color pencils placed next to a triangular architect scale rule, and a yellow tracing paper roll signifies architect's specific capacity to understand the past, interpret the present and more importantly the ability to facilitate and project the future through visual and experiential means. Against these professional instruments, colorful house shaped components—similar to Monopoly's hotel pieces—with labels denoting landmarks such as the Panmunjom's Joint Security Area, and natural elements such as the Imjin River located within the DMZ become playful interactive parts that enable architects in facilitating creative conversations with stakeholders that provoke unlikely, yet possible futures of the DMZ.

Moreover, these tangible elements engender 1:1 tactile experience that connects and reconcile the 1:50,000

Figure 5: Projecting the future through design, play, and negotiations. Portmanteau elements produced and curated by the author. October 2018, Photo by author.

abstract maps that engage and evoke visceral experiences activated by state-border territories. Contained in the portmanteau are the selectively collected raw ingredients, the plural interpretation of the ingredients, and the alternative projections based on particular interpretations of the past, raise relevant questions. This enables expanded engagements with multiple stakeholders at different stages in reimagining the DMZ. These pertinent questions ultimately start to question the legitimacy of established understanding of political agency of states and nation-state borders that enable its existence.

These three parts combined become—the portmanteau—a tangible spatial platform, which can articulate the rapidly deconstructing DMZ. In this sense, "Undoing the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ)" portmanteau demonstrates how—architectural intelligence—the knowledge, methods, and tools used in the architectural discipline can be utilized to provoke a range of spatial questions that probe multiple possibilities through anticipatory research. Just as Cedric Price noted, "if someone comes to you expecting a new house to transform their life, you should ask them if they've considered getting a divorce instead,"16 the "Undoing the Demilitarized Zone" portmanteau generates new thought-provoking fundamental questions rather than merely aiming to solve predetermined questions through built architecture.

What does it mean to construct more exclusionary nation-state borders? What happens if we open nation-state borders? What is the significance of nation-state imaginaries and to what degree do we take them for granted? What are their spatial implications to its inhabitants and conceptual implications to enduring state imaginaries?

ENDNOTES

1. The rabbit–duck illustration by anonymous from the *Fliegende Blätter (Flying Pages)*. 23 October 1892. Pg 147. The caption reads: *"Welche Thiere gleichen einander am meisten? Kaninchen und Ente" "Which animals are most like each other? Rabbit and Duck."* (https://digi.ub.uni-heidelberg.de/diglit/fb97/0147)

2. Yesomi Umolu, "Eyal Weizman and Architecture as Political Intervention," *Walker Art Center,* September 21, 2012. https://walkerart.org/magazine/eyal-weizman-architecture-confronts-politics.

3. Leon van Schaik, *Spatial Intelligence: New Futures for Architecture.* (New York, NY: Wiley, 2008).

4. Molly Wright Steenson, *Architectural Intelligence: How Designers and Architects Created the Digital Landscape.* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2017).

5. Armistice Agreement Volume 1 - Text of Agreement [English]. July 27,1953. *The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).* National Archives Identifier: 7062611. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7062611. *"This is the agreement (in English) between the Korean People's Army, the Chinese People's Volunteers, and United Nations Command for a complete cessation of hostilities and armed force in Korea. The agreement was signed in Panmunjom, Korea at 1400 hours."*

    Armistice Agreement Volume 1 - Text of Agreement [Korean]. July 27,1953. *The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).* National Archives Identifier: 7062612. https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7062612. *"This is the agreement (in Korean) between the Korean People's Army, the Chinese People's Volunteers, and United Nations Command for a complete cessation of hostilities and armed force in Korea. The agreement was signed in Panmunjom, Korea at 1400 hours."*

    Armistice Agreement Volume 1 - Text of Agreement [Chinese]. July 27,1953. *The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).* National Archives Identifier: 7062613 https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7062613. *"This is the agreement (in Chinese) between the Korean People's Army, the Chinese People's Volunteers, and United Nations Command for a complete cessation of hostilities and armed force in Korea. The agreement was signed in Panmunjom, Korea at 1400 hours."*

6. Armistice Agreement Volume 2- Maps. July 27,1953. *The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).* National Archives Identifier: 7062614

    https://catalog.archives.gov/id/7062614. "This item contains the maps which make up volume two of the Korean Armistice Agreement. The maps show the boundaries of the Demilitarized Zone, the area of the Han River Estuary

under the supervision of the Military Armistice Commission, main lines of communication, and ports of entry for: Sinuiju, Chongjin, Hungnam, Manpo, Sinanju, Inchon, Taegu, Pusan, Kangnung, and Kunsan."

7.   For further understanding of the Korean War, see following publications by American historian Bruce Cumings.

       - Bruce Cumings, *The Korean War: A History.* (New York: Modern Library, 2010)

       - Bruce Cumings, *The Origins of the Korean War, Volume 1: The roaring of the cataract, 1947-1950.* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990)

       - Bruce Cumings, *Origins of the Korean War, Volume 1: Liberation and the Emergence of Separate Regimes, 1945-1947.* (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1981)

8.   *Armistice Agreement Volume 1 - Text of Agreement* [English], Article I-1.

9.   *Armistice Agreement Volume 1 - Text of Agreement* [English], Article I-2.

10.   *Armistice Agreement Volume 2- Maps.*

11.   For more details see Dongsei Kim, "The First Iteration," *The Site Magazine,* May 24, 2016. http://www.thesitemagazine.com/read/the-first-iteration.

12.   Dongsei Kim, *The Demilitarized Zone: Redrawing the Border between North and South Korea beyond Tourism.* (Cambridge, MA: Blurb, 2011). http://www.blurb.com/b/3140245-the-demilitarized-zone-redrawing-the-border-betwee

13.   Dongsei Kim, *Borders as Urbanism: Redrawing the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea.* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard GSD Master's Thesis, 2012).

14.   Dongsei Kim, "A Construct the Koreas (Never) Made Together: Deconstructing the DMZ for the Imaginary" in *Crow's Eye View: The Korean Peninsula.* Edited by Hyungmin Pai and Minsuk Cho. (Seoul: Archilife, 2014). 192-194. (Research animation link: https://vimeo.com/93697167)

15.   Dongsei Kim, "A Construct the Koreas (Never) Made Together: Deconstructing the DMZ for the imaginary" in *The North Korea Atlas.* Edited by Dongwoo Yim & Rafel Luna. (Seoul: DAMDI Publishers, 2014) 566-571.

16.   Kenneth Powell, "Think the unimaginable." *The Telegraph.* (1997). https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/4708428/Think-the-unimaginable.html