Cultural Engagement with North Korea

Case Studies of Non-State Actor's Motives for Cultural Collaborations

Mariëlle de Goede | s1103938

Supervisor: Dr. K. de Ceuster

Asian Studies: Politics, Society & Economics

July 1, 2017 | Word count: 16.275

Contents

Introduction 3

Chapter 1: Inter-Korean Cultural Engagement 10
- 1.1 The Sunshine Policy (1998-2008) 10
- 1.2 The Moonshine Policy 11
- 1.3 De-bordering the DMZ 13
- 1.4 Inter-Korean Cultural Engagement 14
- 1.5 Beyond Inter-Korean Affairs 16

Chapter 2: North Korea & The Free World 17
- 2.1 Cold War Antagonisms 18
- 2.2 Irrational Rogue State 19
- 2.3 Brainwashed Nation 20
- 2.4 Criticism of Cultural Engagement 22
- 2.5 Non-State Actor Cultural Engagement 24

Chapter 3: Koryo Group 26
- 3.1 Koryo Group: An Overview 27
  - 3.1.1 Sports 27
  - 3.1.2 Film 28
  - 3.1.3 Art 29
- 3.2 Motives for Cultural Engagement 30

Chapter 4: Traavik.Info 33
- 4.1 Traavik.Info: An Overview 33
- 4.2 Motives for Cultural Engagement 35

Chapter 5: Paektu Cultural Exchange & Michael Spavor 39
- 5.1 Paektu Cultural Exchange & Michael Spavor: An Overview 39
- 5.2 Motives for Cultural Engagement 41

Conclusion 43

Bibliography 46

Appendix 1: Interview Questions 58

Introduction

Engagement with North Korea has long been a much-debated issue in foreign policy circles, academia, and media around the world. While the debate is always ongoing, it occasionally flares up, as happened in June 2017 when various striking events put cultural engagement in the international spotlight. While former American basketball player Dennis Rodman traveled to Pyongyang to "open a door" (Fifield, 2017), Otto Warmbier, a student detained in North Korea for nearly 18 months, was released on "humanitarian grounds" and passed away a week later—resulting in widespread support for a potential U.S. travel ban to North Korea (Young, 2017). Amidst the whirlwind of events, South Korean sports minister Do Jong-hwan suggested North and South Korea could co-host events at the 2018 Winter Olympics, while newly inaugurated South Korean President Moon Jae-in proposed to host the 2030 World Cup together (McCurry, 2017). Although President Moon expressed such initiatives could "help create peace" (McCurry, 2017), others continued to call for an end to engagement with North Korea, arguing engagement initiatives will not change the DPRK (Young, 2017).[1]

However, although engagement with North Korea is such a widely discussed issue, academics, journalists, and policymakers alike often fail to clearly define the term.[2] This failure to explicitly explain what they believe constitutes engagement is both striking and problematic, particularly when the implied meaning of the term so often widely diverges. What is additionally problematic is how terms such as engagement (and containment) are often equated with the history of U.S. foreign policy since World War II, and U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War in particular.[3] For this reason, the ways in which engagement policies and projects are discussed are often reminiscent of Cold War strategies; as tactics meant to affect change in another state's politics, to ultimately prevail over the other side.

---

[1] A note on the spelling of Korean names: for North Korean names of people and places, this thesis uses the most common Romanization in use in North Korea (e.g. "Kim Jong Un"). For South Korean names of people and places, this thesis uses the most common Romanization in use in South Korea (e.g. "Moon Jae-in"). For authors with Korean names, this thesis follows the spelling of the name as printed in their publication(s).

[2] For one striking example that lumps various people together as "engagers" while remaining flexibly vague on what he means by engagement, see Myers (2014).

[3] For a comprehensive overview of the (conceptual) history of engagement and containment, see Son (2004).

This is conspicuously so in the case of cultural engagement, which is sometimes likened to the cultural diplomacy (or perhaps more accurately, cultural propaganda) of the *Cultural Cold War*—a term that refers to efforts by the CIA to use the arts to expand American political and cultural influence in the Soviet Union (Saunders, 1999). During this time, each bloc hoped to subvert the other side from within through "the 'export of 'official culture' – both overtly and covertly – through exchange programs, international festivals, intellectual symposia, trade exhibitions, orchestra and ballet tours, and world expo displays" (Romijn, Scott-Smith & Segal, 2012, p. 3). In doing so, the arts were seen as inalienable expressions of each state's (superior) system and ideology; used as weapons in the Cold War's battle for cultural supremacy. However, this conflict did not remain confined to the exchange of cultural warfare between the United States and the Soviet Union, and some scholars have demonstrated how this battle for the hearts and minds also extended to Asia—including Korea (see, for example, Armstrong, 2003; Zheng, Hong, & Szonyi, 2010).

In the context of North Korea, this thesis defines cultural engagement as collaborations in cultural projects in the arts, film, music, photography, and sports, between non-state actors (in this thesis, from the Western world) and North Korean partners.[4] However, to understand cultural engagement with North Korea, it is imperative to be aware of engagement's Cold War associations and its varying conceptualizations. As this thesis demonstrates, cultural engagement initiatives are often criticized for failing to bring political change to North Korea. These critiques seem to suggest that scholars perceive cultural engagement as a form of cultural diplomacy, motivated by a (covert) desire to bring about regime change and reforms. Additionally, cultural engagement initiatives are sometimes likened to the Sino-American Ping-Pong Diplomacy that contributed to the improvement of relations between the two countries in 1971, or the 1998 Wrestling Diplomacy between the US and Iran (see, for example, Merkel, 2008). Given such perceptions and comparisons, this study asks what motives drive cultural engagement with North Korea. As cultural

[4] In this definition, cultural engagement (as a non-state actor initiative) is separated from cultural diplomacy (as a governmental initiative, guided by explicitly defined policies). Cultural diplomacy is often defined as a soft power strategy; using cultural resources to either increase a state's attraction to other states, or to influence other states without resorting to the use of coercion or force (Cathcart & Denney, 2013). However, in the case of North Korea, cultural engagement efforts cannot fully bypass the North Korean state and therefore operate in somewhat of a grey area—this dynamic will be addressed in later chapters of this thesis. For now, it is important to note that in this definition, "non-state" only strictly refers to the non-North Korean actors.

engagement is surrounded by intense debate and incredibly polarized opinions, with some of its fiercest critics arguing it is an immoral pursuit, I intend to examine why non-state actors involved in cultural engagement believe this work is important and ethically correct. To answer this question, this thesis explores the literature on cultural engagement with North Korea and provides three case studies of non-state actors' motivations for engaging with North Korea through cultural exchange.

Before further explaining the rationale and basic structure of this research, a note on this study's theoretical standpoint is in place—particularly given the widely diverging perspectives on engagement and the highly ideological nature of most scholarly work on North Korea. Western and South Korean scholarly work have published an abundance of research on engagement with North Korea, often from a realist perspective. Realists depart from the assumption that a state's behavior is guided by power and security concerns, which causes states to either balance the power of others, or compete for dominance in international affairs (Katzenstein, 1996). Given realists' focus on the competitive self-interests of states, some scholars have argued that social constructivism is more useful for making sense of complex matters such as engagement with North Korea (see, for example, Andersson & Bae, 2015; Chubb, 2014; Son, 2004). In contrast to realists, social constructivists argue that relations among states are shaped by more than a struggle for power, and that, in order to understand international politics and conflicts, it is imperative to study how socially constructed ideas, norms and identities influence state behavior (Wendt, 1992; Katzenstein, 1996).

Scholars who study North Korea are therefore increasingly aware of the importance of adopting a more social constructivist framework in studying Korean affairs, particularly given the dominance of the realist scholars and the 'securitization paradigm' they have given rise to. This securitization paradigm has become a relatively dominant analytic framework in North Korea scholarship and policy analysis, and affects how the country is perceived and analyzed. As its central tenet, the paradigm assumes that the main cause of the security conflicts and crises on the Korean peninsula are to be found in the domestic and foreign politics of North Korea; as a consequence, the paradigm only analyses North Korea from a security perspective while disregarding other (social, cultural, economic) aspects of its society (Smith, 2000). Several scholars have problematized the framework for different reasons, pointing out, for example, how it reinforces the perspective that the DPRK is

an irrational “rogue” state that will not change unless a regime change takes place (Smith, 2000). Subsequently, options to policy makers are either "*paralysis* [emphasis on original] (nothing should be done with the DPRK) or *confrontation* [emphasis on original] (nothing can be done with the DPRK)." (Smith, 2000, p. 613). For this reason, scholars have argued that the securitization paradigm impedes cooperation with the country, or even an end to the conflict on the Korean peninsula (Bleiker, 2005; Smith, 2000). Other scholars have also criticized the paradigm for distracting from graver concerns to the everyday lives of the average North Korean (see, for example, Park, 2013).

What these criticisms have perhaps most importantly laid bare is how the perception of security concerns on the Korean peninsula is influenced by a perception of North Korea that paints the country as an inherently evil ‘other’ that is incompatible with, and threatening to an otherwise predominantly globalized and capitalist world (Bleiker, 2005). In other words, North Korea is perceived as a security concern—not only due to its developing weapons program, but also due to an ideological conflict that has given rise to incompatible (national) identities.[5] Later chapters in this thesis draw more insights from Bleiker’s notable work, however, for now it suffices to note that it is important to examine how socially constructed ideas and identities influence the dynamics of (international) politics, as well as other activities that are influenced by these dynamics. Fortunately, in recent years, there has been a surge in studies that take a more social view of the political realm in the context of the Koreas (see, for example, Bleiker, 2005; Chubb, 2014; Kim, M., 2009; Kim, N., 2016, Kim, S., 2014). This study aims to make a contribution to such studies by researching cultural engagement with North Korea from a more social constructivist perspective.

Following this analytical framework, I conducted extensive semi-structured interviews with several Western non-state actors who engage with North Korea through cultural projects. Conducting interviews allowed me to explore cultural

---

[5] This thesis builds on Katzenstein (1996) and Wendt's (1992) conceptualizations of identity, which connect identities—in a largely socially constructed world—to ideology and collectively shared ideas. At the state level, Katzenstein has defined identity as an explicitly political "shorthand label for varying constructions of nation- and statehood." (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 3). Identities are therefore linked to national ideologies that stress collectively shared characteristics and that are "enacted domestically and projected internationally" (Katzenstein, 1996, p. 3). Pointing out how these collectively shared ideas act at the level of the individual, Wendt (1992) stresses that people act towards others on the basis of collective meanings that certain objects (including other actors and institutions) hold for them, which therefore influence how they perceive themselves and the world around them.

engagement from their point of view, capture multiple perspectives, and inquire how conflicting ideas and identities impact their work. The interviews therefore included questions about their motives for engagement, but also questions about the debate that surrounds engagement.[6] My decision to interview Western, non-state actors is two-fold. Firstly, by researching cultural engagement as initiated by Western, non-state actors, I aim to expand the literature on cultural engagement with North Korea, as academics have previously not explored cultural engagement from their angle.[7] Additionally, as non-state actors are generally not bound by political agendas the way that governments are, they are able undertake projects that most governments cannot, which makes an inquiry into their work and their incentives highly interesting and beneficial to conduct.[8] Secondly, few studies have examined the motives of those involved in cultural engagement work specifically.[9] This research hopes to fill these voids, as they are necessary to create a better understanding of cultural engagement work with North Korea.[10]

---

[6] See Appendix 1: Interview Questions.

[7] The decision to focus on Western actors is also driven by practical considerations (all non-state actors who actively engage with North Korea through cultural projects are from Western countries, including Canada, Norway and the UK), and theoretical considerations (this thesis discusses how socially constructed ideas and identity patterns play a role in motives for cultural engagement, and in that regard—as chapter two demonstrates—the relation between North Korea and the Western world is particularly significant).

[8] However, one must note that the separation between the domain of state and non-state actors is not always clear-cut. On the one hand, non-state actors are only able to carry out their projects because the state has deliberately made space for them, while on the other, state and non-state actors have occasionally collaborated on cultural projects. Koryo Group (one of the cases presented in this study) has for example aided in the organization of the New York Philharmonic Orchestra visit to Pyongyang in 2008 (a case of cultural diplomacy between the US and the DPRK), for which Koryo Group briefed the orchestra before their departure to Pyongyang ("New York Philharmonic Orchestra," n.d.). In 2010, Koryo Group also assisted the British Embassy in Pyongyang with the screening of the film *Bend It Like Beckham* on national television in North Korea (Nicholas Bonner, personal correspondence, May 5, 2017).

[9] Two notable exceptions being Andersson and Bae (2015), who studied what motivates Swedish individuals who are involved in government engagement programs in the DPRK, while Shin and Lee (2011) researched motives for US-DPRK educational exchanges.

[10] In doing so, I will specifically focus on initiatives that correspond to the above definition of cultural engagement. Arguably, some forms of educational exchanges and tourism could be part of this definition too. Educational exchanges might include elements of cultural exchange, but are ultimately characterized by a skewed relationship in which one side teaches the other. Educational exchanges therefore seem to be of a somewhat different nature and, in that sense, deserving of a study in their own right (in fact, great studies on educational exchanges in the DPRK have been carried out elsewhere; see, for example, Shin & Lee, 2011; Spezza, 2014). Tourism is sometimes defined as cultural engagement (see, for example, Shin, Straub & Lee, 2014) for its ability to facilitate people-to-people interactions. Additionally, some companies that are dedicated to cultural engagement also facilitate tourism to the DPRK. Through tourism they are able to generate revenue for their cultural engagement projects and able to bring in participants for engagement projects, such as sports exchanges. Tourism has also been part of larger government engagement policies, such as the inter-Korean Mount Kumgang tourism project during the years of the South Korean Sunshine Policy (which will be discussed in chapter one). Therefore, tourism can be seen as a form of cultural engagement, depending

The three cases in this thesis study the organizations Koryo Group, Traavik.Info, and Paektu Cultural Exchange, as well as their respective representatives. These cases were selected on the basis of the above criteria (the cases being Western, non-state actors, who carry out cultural, collaborative projects in the DPRK), and the criterion that they also define their work as cultural engagement. I conducted semi-structured interviews, with some questions tailored to each person's work and experiences. I also collected various materials to write up the case studies, including online articles and interviews, blog posts, and company videos.

Additionally, while writing this thesis, I interned at Koryo Group. Consequently, Koryo Group provided me with the opportunity to travel to Pyongyang and experience cultural engagement first hand. While writing this thesis, I greatly benefitted from the experience and expertise of those around me, and was able to truly immerse myself into the subject matter. As I believe research does not benefit from making it appear value free (particularly in the case of North Korea, which is impossible to research from an ideologically neutral perspective), I therefore state my biases at the outset and acknowledge that I came to this topic with a positive evaluation of cultural engagement. Nevertheless, I carried out this research with an explicit awareness of my own position and aimed to give full consideration to the views of cultural engagement's fiercest critics. I hope my efforts to engage alternatives voices and question my own perspective are reflected in this work.

Chapter one starts by discussing inter-Korean cultural engagement, particularly during South Korea's Sunshine policy (1998-2008), as this has been one of the boldest and most significant engagement policies to date. Exploring inter-Korean (cultural) engagement and its surrounding debate not only helps to uncover motives for cultural engagement, but also exposes some of its pitfalls and in doing so, lays the groundwork for discussing the larger cultural engagement debate. As chapter one also shows how identity matters affect motives for cultural engagement, chapter two builds on these insights and extends this discussion of identities beyond inter-Korean affairs. In doing so, chapter two discusses how antagonistic identities developed between North Korea and the West and demonstrates how this identity conflict can impact cultural engagement initiatives. This chapter will also discuss the main criticisms directed at cultural engagement projects as—to fully comprehend

---

on the nature of the interactions it facilitates. This study will not specifically examine tourism (others have done so elsewhere, see, for example, Ouellette, 2016) but it will be discussed where relevant.

non-state actor's motives for engaging with North Korea—it is important to understand the debates and obstacles they navigate through when carrying out their work. Having mapped out these various perspectives, chapter three, four and five will present the case studies of Koryo Group, Traavik.Info and Paektu Cultural Exchange, respectively. Each chapter will introduce some of their most significant engagement projects, followed by an analysis of their motives for carrying out engagement work. This thesis ends with a discussion of these insights and the engagement debate.

Chapter 1: Inter-Korean Cultural Engagement

This chapter discusses inter-Korean rapprochement during the years of South Korea's Sunshine Policy, the debate on engagement it ignited, and the relevant scholarly work it brought forth. By considering examples and critiques of inter-Korean cultural engagement, this chapter illustrates some of the motives for cultural engagement during this time, and highlights how conflicting identity constructs and the lack of acknowledgement thereof affected their stated aims. In addition, this chapter shows how different theoretical perspectives heavily influence academics' perspectives on engagement, and, as subsequent chapters will demonstrate, academics on either side of the contemporary cultural engagement debate continue to draw upon insights from the Sunshine era to support their claims. A discussion of the Sunshine Policy and its surrounding debate is therefore relevant in understanding motives for engagement, and will help lay the groundwork for a discussion of these motives in later chapters.

1.1 The Sunshine Policy (1998-2008)

Following the Korean War (1951-1953), there was little contact between the people of North and South Korea until Kim Dae-jung was elected president of South Korea and introduced the Sunshine Policy in 1998.[11] Although there was some inter-Korean dialogue and exchange prior to its introduction, the Sunshine policy departed significantly from previous efforts to engage with the North. Motivated to improve inter-Korean relations and bring peace to the Korean peninsula, President Kim Dae-jung was South Korea's first president to explicitly state that he did not seek to absorb the North, and in stead opted for a non-confrontational approach to achieve co-operation and reconciliation (Ministry of Unification, 2002).

The introduction of this new, radical policy soon triggered a sharp increase in contacts between the North and South, particularly after the historical summit during which Kim Dae-jung met Kim Jong Il in Pyongyang in June 2000. Following this summit, exchanges between the two Koreas became increasingly regular as family reunions were organized, road and rail crossings to connect the countries were built,

[11] As an exhaustive overview of the Sunshine Policy is beyond the scope of this research—for more extensive studies of the policy see, for example, Lee (2003) or Son (2004).

and sections of the DMZ demined—resulting in "a process of physical de-bordering" between North and South Korea (Gelézeau, De Ceuster, & Delissen, 2013, p. 2). In addition to these developments, cross-border tourism to the Mount Kumgang Tourist Region in North Korea became a possibility for South Korean tourists in 2002, and—after President Roh Moo-hyun took over in 2003—the Kaesong Industrial Complex was opened in 2004, as a site where North Koreans could work in South Korean manufacturing facilities (Gelézeau, 2013). Overall, between 1998 and 2008, cross-border travel between North and South Korea rose dramatically; whereas, between 1989 and 2003, only 55,257 South Koreans and 3,609 North Koreans crossed the DMZ, by 2008 these numbers had risen to 613,949 and 7,489, respectively (Ministry of Unification, n.d.).

The Sunshine Policy came to an end in 2008 with the inauguration of the conservative President Lee Myung-bak, who vowed to terminate what he saw as a policy of unilateral appeasement and dangerous unconditionality, and demanded the North to comply with the denuclearization agreement to continue South Korea's engagement and investment initiatives (Armstrong, 2013). Following Kim Jong Il's stroke a few months later, North Korea also pulled back, cautious to open up more as it found itself a in precarious situation (Armstrong, 2013). Subsequently, after a North Korean soldier shot and killed a wandering South Korean tourist, the South Korean government suspended tours to the Mount Kumgang Tourist Region, and most cross-border activities eventually ceased (Gelézeau, 2013). Cross-border interactions were brought to a complete halt after the South Korean government closed the Kaesong Industrial Complex in February 2016, to stop the North from using their investment to fund its weapons program (Kim Hong-Ji, 2016).

1.2 The Moonshine Policy

To this day opinions remain divided over the question if the engagement of the Sunshine era was the right way to deal with the North. Critics of the policy point out how the Sunshine policy allowed large sums of cash to flow towards the North,[12]

---

[12] The large sums of cash that they refer to usually include the US$450-million cash transfer that Hyundai made to the North right before the historical June summit (some even argue Kim Dae-Jung "bought" the June summit to obtain the Nobel Peace price that he was awarded for his efforts to reconcile North and South Korea, see Kim & Kirk, 2013), and money obtained through the Mount Kumgang tours for South Korean tourists (see, for example, Stanton, 2010). They also point out that a

allowing them to fuel their weapons program and guarantee the survival of the regime (see, for example Cha, 2012; Stanton, 2017). Given these large transfers of cash and what critics see as a lack of people-to-people contacts, they argue that "self-contained projects offered the regime hard currency without requiring a significant opening up of the system to outside influence", adding that the North's hidden "Moonshine Policy"—based on a calculation of the North's own needs—was ultimately more successful than its Southern counterpart (Cha, 2012, p. 565). Particularly the Mount Kumgang tourist resort has been criticized for being highly contained, preventing any real, meaningful contact between South Korean tourists and North Korean locals (see, for example, Stanton, 2010). Due to the highly contained nature of these projects, as well as North's lack of reciprocity, some critics have called the Sunshine Policy an "appeasement policy" (Paik, 2002, as cited in Son, 2004) and point to the lack of reciprocity as the main reason why the policy failed (Hogart, 2012). Former U.S. foreign policy advisor Victor Cha (2012) has perhaps best summed up these views by writing:

"Who benefited more from this period? At the end of the Moonshine period, the North had more nuclear weapons than before, avoided a near-collapse of the regime, and received $3 billion in cash from the South. At the end of the Sunshine period, the South had given political legitimacy to a progressive view on North Korea (in the past such views were considered not only illegitimate but treasonous by law), had created two economic cooperation projects with the North, and had earned one South Korean president a Nobel Peace Prize. *You can do the math* [emphasis added]." (p. 566).

As becomes visible from these arguments, those who criticize the Sunshine Policy's outcomes often evaluate the policy from a more traditional IR perspective, assessing the policy's impact mostly by an economic cost-benefit analysis and what they see as its failure to fundamentally change North Korea or obtain tangible security benefits. Proponents of engagement,[13] instead, also point to the more intangible consequences of the Sunshine era, and take a more social view to assess its impact.

---

large percentage of wages for North Korean workers at Kaesong were used to fund the North's weapons program (see Kim Hong-Ji, 2016).

[13] It must be noted that, although this section discusses the views of "opponents" and "proponents" of engagement, not all scholars are strictly anti-engagement or pro-engagement. For the sake of clarity and conciseness, I have separated the arguments for and against engagement in this chapter. However,

1.3 De-bordering the DMZ

Those who evaluate the Sunshine Policy more positively maintain that one of the policy's most significant aspects were the opportunities it created for Koreans to interact with each other for the first time. Such interactions were often highly restrained but nevertheless groundbreaking, as they provided the opportunity to question the antagonistic identity constructs that had taken shape over the many years of separation. During these years, both states came to define their economic, cultural, and political identity in direct opposition to the other, and while South Korea developed a strong anti-communist discourse, North Korea developed an aggressive anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist discourse that continues to penetrate every aspect of its society. Such highly ideological discourses were reinforced as the governments on both sides of the DMZ wished to promulgate its legitimacy as the rightful government of the Korean peninsula and painted the other as an inherently evil, enemy state (Bleiker, 2005). In advancing such perceptions of the self and the hostile 'other', both societies relied heavily on educational (history) textbooks, literature, media, museums, and film (see, for example, Delissen, 2013; Fruchard-Ramond, 2013; Joinau, 2013). Further exacerbating this process was the lack of meaningful contact between the two sides, as Koreans had (and currently have) few opportunities to have their perspective of the other disconfirmed. In the absence of knowledge untainted by ideology, their conflicting identities could only be reinforced.

The Sunshine Policy therefore, for the first time, created opportunities for Koreans to interact and question both their own and the other's identity. To assess its impact in doing so, several studies have examined the Sunshine Policy's ability to affect change in South Koreans' national identity and their perceptions and representations of North Korea. Analyzing interviews with policy makers and opinion polls, Son (2004), for example, shows that the policy enabled South Koreans to develop a more positive identification with the North. Others have similarly demonstrated how the (televised) family reunions of 2000 helped reshape national memory as South Koreans realized what effect decades of anti-communist propaganda had had on them (Kim, N., 2015). Simultaneously, the Sunshine policy also brought about more positive representations of North Koreans in films and

---

it is important to keep in mind that generally both sides acknowledge (to some extent) both the advantages and disadvantages of the Sunshine Policy.

school textbooks (Delissen, 2013; Joinau, 2013). In the case of the latter, Delissen (2013) shows how the discourse about the other Korea grew more complex in textbooks in both countries, although, the overall tone of the texts remained negative. In these different ways, the policy had an (sometimes only minor, but arguably incremental) impact on the antagonistic identity patterns that had developed over the years. Some scholars even argue that the "re-bordering" that took place at the end of the Sunshine era can be seen as evidence that the Sunshine Policy was effective in facilitating contact as "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…" (Gelézeau, De Ceuster, & Delissen, 2013, p. 9).

1.4 Inter-Korean Cultural Engagement

During the period of the Sunshine policy, there were several cultural exchanges between North and South Korea, including performances by South Korean pop groups in Pyongyang (North Korean Economy Watch, 2006), as well as various sports diplomacy initiatives (athletes from the North and South, for example, participated in several unification matches, and walked hand in hand in identical uniforms at various important international sports events—including the 2000 Sydney, 2004 Athens and 2006 Turin Olympics—waving the unification flag; see Merkel, 2008). Beyond these highly symbolic diplomatic initiatives, cultural exchange took place in South Korean art galleries, as they hosted art exhibitions of North Korean art, often organized in collaboration with North Korean cultural authorities or private collectors (de Ceuster, 2015). Although the first such exhibitions had already taken place in the early 1990s, North Korean art exhibitions became more prevalent during the Sunshine years, and by the end of 2006, more than 50 exhibitions had been staged (de Ceuster, 2013). Those who organized the exhibitions often claimed that their aim was to increase mutual understanding, rediscover the shared cultural heritage, and promote a pan-Korean identity through art. In spite of these stated aims, the exhibitions were in reality often driven more by commercial motivations. Consequently, they often failed to select works on the basis of quality and, instead, promoted the "exoticness" of the exhibited works as the main draw of their event. The way these exhibitions presented North Korea was therefore often problematic, and art exhibitions failed to promote a real understanding of the country.

This was particularly evident in the way that these events concealed the country's ideological and political context, which, in North Korea, heavily influences art production. Citing the example of the first inter-Korean Korean Unification Art Exhibition hosted in Japan, de Ceuster writes how representatives from both North and South Korea stressed the homogeneity found in the artworks' "common emotional repository" and "enduring national sentiment and sensibility", while ignoring the blatant differences between the two bodies of work (de Ceuster, 2013, p. 160). However, as de Ceuster (2013, p. 160) also points out, "art in the DPRK is not an independent realm unto itself; it is subordinate to the interests of society, the Revolution and thus the Leader." To disconnect North Korean art from its ideological context is, therefore, highly problematic when the stated aim of an exhibition is to contribute to knowledge about the North. Similarly, Grinker (1998), writing about an exhibition of North Korean artifacts in the South, notes how the exhibition consciously obscured the country's leadership and political background. According to Grinker, this obliteration of the country's leaders results from the people-state opposition that is an important element of South Korea's "national myth of homogenous belonging" (Grinker, 1998, p. 48); a myth that paints division as a temporary interruption of national unity, which will be regained when the North Korean leadership is removed. Such exhibitions thus aimed to increase sympathy with North Koreans by stressing their shared Koreanness, while obscuring the more heterogeneous aspects of their existence. However, as both scholars point out, when differences are erased to promote the idea of (a mythical) national unity, one may question to what extent such art exhibitions actually contributed to mutual understanding.

To truly create more mutual understanding, Bleiker (2005) has therefore argued that the Koreas need an *ethics of difference*: a genuine acknowledgement of the multiple realities and cultural differences among the people of the North and South, and an acceptance among them that the identity and worldview of the 'other' may be inherently incompatible with their own. He points out that—even if the current political system in the North were to disintegrate—cultural differences will persist in the future, making it imperative for the Koreas to embrace the differences among them. To ultimately do so, he has argued that the Koreas also need an *ethics of dialogue*: to interact and create dialogue beyond the confines of politics. Such interactions can increase knowledge about the other on both sides, and, as Bleiker

writes, “help contextualize and perhaps reduce some of the negative images that have prevailed on both sides of the DMZ for decades. In either case, an increasing number of collaborative projects, even if they are only of a small-scale nature, have the potential to contribute to the eventual establishment of trust among people who for decades have been divided by fear and political indoctrination." (Bleiker, 2005, p. 72). For this reason, Bleiker stresses the importance of face-to-face encounters and cultural exchange so as to break down negative stereotypes and build trust. Allowing such encounters to take place was, arguably, one of the most radical aspects of the Sunshine Policy.

1.5 Beyond Inter-Korean Affairs

The Sunshine Policy was driven by the objective to promote peace on the Korean peninsula through cooperation and reconciliation. However, as some have pointed out, this stated objective might have been formulated to avoid a direct confrontation, as the Sunshine Policy and some of its ensuing initiatives never fully reflected a willingness to accept North Korea on its own terms—South Korean discourses continue to assume that North Korea will eventually want to adopt capitalism, and thus their identity (Bleiker, 2005; Grinker, 1998). As Grinker’s (1998) study of South Korean perceptions of North Korea shows, South Koreans generally seem to strongly believe that North Korea, after a regime change, would quickly covert to capitalism. The problem with (and colonial quality to) this view is reflected in Grinker’s statement that, "the notion that north [*sic*] Koreans are a premodern people who would quickly be converted to capitalism suggests a view of north Koreans as having been fixed in time by the north Korean state; south [*sic*] Korea will someday release the people of the north, and in their freedom they will realize how blind they were in following Kim Il-Sung and communism." (Grinker, 1998, p. 65). As the next chapter shows, U.S. foreign policy often echoes the belief that the South shall (and should) prevail over the North, as the antagonistic identity constructs that have shaped interactions (and the lack of them) between the two Koreas extend beyond the peninsula. The next chapter will therefore discuss the role of identity constructs, representations, and the cultural engagement debate beyond inter-Korean affairs.

Chapter 2: North Korea & The Free World

In December 2009, a group of artists from the Mansudae Art studio was to travel to Australia for the first time, when the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (hereafter DFAT) announced it would not issue their visas. The artists, who were to attend the opening ceremony of the Asia-Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art in Queensland that included a large selection of their artwork, were initially denied visas on the grounds that they were "persons whose presence in Australia was contrary to Australia's foreign policy interests" (Sorensen, 2009). The DFAT also stated that its decision was in response to North Korea's developing missile and nuclear weapons program. Upon receiving inquiries about their decision, the DFAT added that they denied the visas due to the artists' connection to the Mansudae Art Studio, which produces North Korean propaganda (Sorensen, 2009). Commenting on the decision, Nicholas Bonner,[14] the co-organizer of the exhibition, expressed that, "every artist in North Korea produces in some way propaganda, it's not like there's an artist who doesn't. What is amazing is that these artists also produce phenomenal works, of phenomenal skill and I wanted to prove that these guys can produce art that's on the same playing field as art you'll see in a gallery." (Nicholas Bonner, as cited in Cooke, 2016). Remarkably, after the DFAT's decision, the artists' artworks still went on display. Only the artists, seen as intricately tied to the North Korean government, who were no longer welcome.

This particular example of cultural engagement in Australia shows not only how artist can become the subject of censorship and move into the realm of international politics, but also how ideological conflicts can affect art exhibitions beyond the Korean peninsula. This chapter therefore examines the West's relation to North Korea, discusses the antagonistic identity constructs that shape mutual perceptions between the West and North Korea, and provides an overview of the most prominent critiques of cultural engagement. As subsequent chapters show, understanding these different perspectives is relevant for understanding motives for cultural engagement, as non-state actors who work in North Korea often traverse these fields.

[14] Nicholas Bonner is also the founder of Koryo Group, a non-state organization that is actively involved in cultural engagement with North Korea, which will be discussed in chapter three.

2.1 Cold War Antagonisms

As the introduction to this thesis has shown, the mutual antagonism between the United States and the non-capitalist world extends back to the anticommunism of the post-World War II U.S. history and (specifically) to the Cold War period, which was not only a geopolitical confrontation but also a collision of different identities, with different social, political, and economic manifestations. The Korean peninsula became part of this conflict after the Allied victory of WW II, as their victory brought an end to the Japanese occupation of Korea—dividing the peninsula into two political entities, with the United States occupying the Southern half, and the Soviet Union occupying the Northern half. However, as the US wished to contain communism, both in terms of geopolitics and ideology, its presence in post-war South Korea did not only have a strategic objective, but also an ideological one (Bleiker, 2005). American efforts to accelerate South Korea's economic development were therefore not only meant to build up South Korea's economy after the devastating Korean War, but also meant to demonstrate the cultural superiority of the Western world. This latter objective is demonstrated in a statement by then US President Dwight Eisenhower, who—requesting legislation to support South Korea economically to Congress in July 1953—exclaimed that,

"The need for this action can quickly and accurately be measured in two ways. One is the critical need of Korea at the end of three years of tragic and devastating warfare. The second is the opportunity which this occasion present *the free world* [emphasis added] to prove its will and capacity to do constructive good in the cause of freedom and peace." (Eisenhower, 1953, quoted in Bleiker, 2005, p. 40).

Quite notable here is the use of the term "the free world", which has become an important metaphor in the U.S. discourse on its national identity since then. As Fousek (2000, p. 130) notes,

"Most Americans have lived inside this metaphor for so long it may be difficult to recognize its metaphorical function. But the idea of "two worlds" is clearly a metaphor for a bipolar system of international politics, and the idea that the U.S.-dominated bloc constituted the realm of freedom is similarly a discursive

construction. The Free World, in this view, was a metaphor, depending on one's viewpoint, for the capitalist world-system or the anticommunist bloc."

As this quote points out, the term “the free world” is highly ideological in nature and became intricately connected to the identities of the countries that were included in its use. Although the Cold War has since ended, this (perceived) bipolar system of international politics, of a “free” and “unfree” world, is still largely intact. The conditions for in- and exclusion have changed somewhat over the years, but North Korea, as a “rogue state”, remains firmly within the realm of the unfree world.

2.2 Irrational Rogue State

The (perceived) peril from the communist world thus greatly impacted the formation of American identity as anti-communism became deeply ingrained in American society. In fact, scholars have argued that during this time the presence of a threatening enemy state became such a fundamental aspect of the American identity that the US, after the end of the Cold War, needed a new challenger to the free world to continue its identity-building process (Campbell, 1992, as cited in Son, 2004). Consequently, after the demise of the Soviet Union, “rogue states” became the new main threat to US (Bleiker, 2005; Campbell, 1992, as cited in Son, 2004; Saunders, 2006). As Bleiker (2005, p. 37) points out,

"The rhetoric of rogue states is indicative of how U.S. foreign policy continues to be dominated by dualistic and militaristic Cold War thinking patterns. The "evil empire" may be gone but not the underlying need to define safety and security with reference to an external threat. Rogues are among the new threat perceptions that serve to demarcate the line between good and evil, identity and difference.”

The U.S. identification of North Korea as a “rogue state” can therefore be seen as a highly ideological and identity-driven pursuit, which is further exacerbated by the current securitization framework that dominates academia, as well as certain representations of North Korea in the media. This is not, of course, to claim that North Korea is a free and untroubled society that has never done anything to provoke such negative appraisals of its domestic and foreign policies. The point here is rather

to demonstrate how largely socially constructed (national) identities are reinforced through highly ideological discourses, and are often seen as natural and factually given when they are not. In fact, media representations of North Korea as a rogue state are often in direct contrast to representations of the United States as a respectable nation and, in that sense, are sometimes more telling about the US than North Korea (Kim Jongtae, 2016).

2.3 Brainwashed Nation

In addition to the perception of North Korea as a rogue state, representations of North Korea that paint the country as a monolithic, brainwashed unity are fairly ubiquitous in the Western world as well. As with the designation of North Korea as a rogue state, these representations posit North Korea's identity as directly opposite that of the free world. Drawing attention to the role of media representations in reinforcing this perception of the country, Shim (2014) has argued that visual imagery plays a major role in the othering and dehumanization of North Korea and its people:

"The notion of a faceless and brainwashed horde of 'ordinary' North Koreans, also the result of the generic use of images of mass mobilizations, encapsulates a refusal to acknowledge the individuality of these people, thereby implying a repudiation of them being granted the status of fellow humans. It should be kept in mind that dehumanization serves particular purposes and allows the formulation and implementation of policy practices that would otherwise raise strong qualms and resistance. Representation, hence, pertains to relationships of power, because it can reinforce or challenge differences – something that makes its discussion of the utmost ethical and political significance. (Shim, 2014, p. 6).

As indicated in the previous chapter, South Korean discourses of North Korea often tacitly equate unification with colonization, and assume North Korea will naturally want to be assimilated into South Korean society. In similar vein, American policy debates unquestioningly presuppose South Korea's annexation of North Korea in the case of regime collapse. This assumption that the North will (and should) eventually be absorbed by the South is especially evident in U.S. policy discussions of whether North Korea needs a "hard landing" (quick regime collapse) or "soft landing" (regime

change through engagement to avoid a military escalation or civil war; see, for example, Cha and Kang, 2003). On the one hand, such policy debates reflect the expectation that South Korea will carry the financial burden in the case of regime collapse, and will therefore also naturally carry more political clout. However, on the other hand, these discussions also reflect the belief that South Korea, having the superior system (and identity), has the right to prevail over the North. What is therefore particularly problematic about these representations of North Korea as an irrational, rogue state inhabited by brainwashed subjects is that it not only ties into the securitization framework (by implying that nothing can be done to change North Korea—a justification for military conflict), but it also strips the North Korean people of agency and the ability to be part of future decision making if a regime collapse or Southern take-over were to take place.

Notwithstanding the oft-problematic nature of Western representations of North Korea, it must be noted that North Korean perceptions and representations of the US are, of course, often just as problematic. North Korean propaganda continues to paint a highly xenophobic and hostile image of the outside world—displaying a strong anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist attitude that is not only projected onto South Korea, but also onto “evil American imperialists” and its allies (Bleiker, 2005). Such hostile perceptions can be traced back to the Korean War (whose legacy continues to shape the political discourse in North Korea), and are solidified in North Korea's national ideology of *Juche*—often translated as "self-reliance"—which is "perhaps the most central element of North Korea's attempt to define its identity with reference to threats from the outside world." (Bleiker, 2005, p. 14). Exacerbating the already hostile views is the fact that, for North Koreans, it is much harder (and most often illegal) to seek out alternative information, or to travel abroad and experience the outside world for oneself (making it particularly unfortunate that the DFAT denied visas to the North Korean artists, who otherwise would have had a unique opportunity to exchange views with other, foreign artists and obtain some outside inspiration).

As subsequent chapters will demonstrate, it is precisely for some of the above reasons—mutual antagonisms that have developed over decades, representations of North Korea that dehumanize its people; the pervasive nature of propaganda and lack of alternative information in North Korea—that non-state actors see cultural engagement as important work. However, simultaneously, there are those who are

unconvinced that cultural engagement can be of added value. Their views are discussed in the remainder of this chapter.

2.4 Criticism of Cultural Engagement

In what follows below is an overview of the four main points of criticism that non-state actors encounter for engaging with North Korea through cultural projects.

"*Cultural engagement funds the North Korean regime"*

One prominent criticism of cultural engagement is that engagement projects help fund the North Korean government and provide the country with hard-needed foreign cash (see, for example, Breuker, 2015; Myers, 2014; Stanton, 2013). This critique is often supported by examples from the Sunshine Policy (such as the Mount Kumgang project) to show that North Korea obtains considerable revenue through cultural engagement. These scholars also point out how North Korea has policies in place to fully exploit engagement initiatives, while making sure projects remain characterized by a lack of real contact: "whether it's humanitarian aid, conflict prevention efforts, professional training or business investments, DPRK counterparts are coordinated according to policies developed to maximize the state's profit from these interactions." (Breuker, 2015). In the case of cultural engagement, one such DPRK counterpart is, for example, the Committee for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (hereafter CCRFC). Historically, the organization was similar to its Soviet predecessor (the All Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries) in its objective to promote DPRK ideology and influence overseas (particularly when the two Koreas were still engaged in their battle for legitimacy as the sole rightful government of the Korean peninsula; North Korean Economy Watch, 2008). However, since North Korea's devastating famine and economic hardship in the mid 1990s, the CCRFC has been more fixated on obtaining foreign currency, generating revenue, and brokering foreign investment—and thus specifically tasked with the aim to make money through foreign contacts.[15]

[15] Although some argue that the organization is "struggling to survive in the changing economic environment" and that "the projects they try to lure foreigners into are devoid of economic sense." (Petrov, as cited in North Korean Economy Watch, 2008).

“Cultural engagement offers propaganda opportunities on a silver plate”

Another oft-expressed criticism is that cultural engagers contribute to North Korean propaganda and are therefore “useful idiots”, a term previously designated for Westerners who sympathized with Stalin and Lenin and were unknowingly used for Soviet propaganda (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017; Vicky Mohieddeen, personal correspondence, May 26, 2017; see also Anderson, 2017). Some argue that a similar practice exists in North Korea today, and that foreigners’ actions are used to demonstrate the superiority of the North Korean system and leadership. When bowing to statues of Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, for example, the North Korean government, “spins these visits as pilgrimages, and the locals are invested enough in the national life-lie to believe it.” (Myers, 2014). This argument is not only directed at non-state actors, but also the (rare) case of government-organized cultural exchange, such as the New York Philharmonic Orchestra visit to Pyongyang in 2008. Though some scholars have argued this visit was a truly groundbreaking case of cultural diplomacy (see, for example, example Cathcart & Denney, 2013; Schneider, 2009), Suki Kim, writing in a memoir about her time as a journalist in the country, argues:

“The thirty-six hours in Pyongyang on that trip were a whirlwind. It turned out that was the whole point. It was a PR event carefully orchestrated by the DPRK regime, with the American orchestra providing the incidental music . . . It was a lesson in control and manipulation." (Kim Suki, 2014, p. 24)

Similarly, cultural engagement initiatives are criticized for propagandizing a too positive image of North Korea in the Western media, resulting in the “subversion of our media” (Myers, 2014).

“The North Korean regime is not interested in change”

Another common argument against cultural engagement is the observation that “North Korea, or rather the tiny minority that rules it, is determined to prevent any real change" (Stanton, 2013). This argument is similar to the “Moonshine policy” argument presented in chapter one, and posits that the DPRK government tricks

foreigners into believing it is interested in engagement and opening up to the outside world, when, in fact, it tightly controls all engagement initiatives and will not allow for any political change. Projects are therefore only authorized to the extent that they can be utilized to strengthen the North Korean regime (Breuker, 2015a, 2015b). Consequently, these scholars argue, cultural engagement has not had (nor will it have) any impact on North Korea (Breuker, 2015b; Myers, 2014; Stanton, 2013).

"*Cultural engagement must enshrine the primacy of human rights*"

Lastly, given the scope of North Korea's human rights violations (see, for example, United Nations Human Rights Council, 2014),[16] some scholars argue it is unethical to engage with North Korea when no progress is made towards enhancing the human rights situation in the country: "economic support, cultural exchange and other activities . . . are only permissible in as much as they strategically help in the amelioration of the human rights situation in North Korea." (Breuker, 2014). From this perspective, engagement that respects basic human rights cannot, in any way, engage with the North Korean state—making cultural engagement inside the country an impossible pursuit.[17]

2.5 Non-State Actor Cultural Engagement

Notwithstanding the above counter-arguments, a large number of non-state actors engage with North Korea through various projects. The website EngageDPRK has, for example, mapped out foreign engagement activities inside the DPRK between 1995 and 2012. They found that during this time there were over 1,100 projects

[16] It must be noted that the United Nations' *Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* has expressed to be in favor of cultural engagement: "The commission of inquiry recommends that States and civil society organizations foster opportunities for people-to-people dialogue and contact in such areas as culture, science, sports, good governance and economic development that provide citizens of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea with opportunities to exchange information and be exposed to experiences outside their home country." (UNHRC, 2014, p. 19).

[17] The European Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea (hereafter EUHRNK) has therefore proposed the concept of *separative engagement* to restore the human rights of the North Korean people. According to a briefing paper by the EAHRNK, such engagement is "guided on the principle of North Korean people being given space to separate themselves, both psychologically and physically, from the North Korean state" and should include efforts to increase the flow of inward information as an alternative to state propaganda as well as training for North Korean escapees (European Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea, p. 3).

carried out by more than 480 bilateral, multilateral, non-governmental, non-profit, as well as for-profit organizations ("About", n.d.-a). These projects include humanitarian relief, educational assistance, professional training and business activities, yet still exclude cultural exchange projects. The following three chapters will therefore examine such projects and present three case studies of cultural engagement.

Chapter 3: Koryo Group

Koryo Group has long been at the forefront of Western, non-state cultural engagement with North Korea.[18] Founded in 1993, Koryo Tours was the first Western company to organize tours to North Korea. In the mid 1990s, the company also started taking on humanitarian projects,[19] and after the turn of the century the company increasingly got involved in cultural projects. Nowadays, Koryo Group consists of the organizations Koryo Tours and Koryo Studio, which deal with tours to North Korea and cultural projects, respectively. The company's mission is to "facilitate responsible tourism to the world’s most isolated and least understood countries while encouraging people-to-people engagement through travel, culture, sport and humanitarian projects." (“About Us”, n.d.). Since the company was founded nearly 25 years ago, Koryo Group has organized and facilitated a wide range of cultural engagement projects, from sports exchanges to art exhibitions. Additionally, Nicholas Bonner, the founder of the company, has produced three documentaries and one feature film with the DPRK.

Koryo Group defines cultural engagement as creative projects involving arts, film, and sport, that go beyond interacting with people; projects that leave a mark and allow for an exchange of knowledge, with some benefit or lesson to both parties involved (Nicholas Bonner, personal correspondence, May 5, 2017; Simon Cockerell, personal correspondence, April 5, 2017). It is therefore important for the exchange to be reciprocal and fully collaborative for it to be real engagement (Simon Cockerell, personal correspondence, April 5, 2017; Vicky Mohieddeen, personal correspondence, May 23, 2017). Additionally, they believe collaborative arts projects are an opportunity to create dialogue through art. As art is a way of expressing one’s view of the world, they believe that such a dialogue facilitates the expression of different perspectives and can expand horizons (Vicky Mohieddeen, personal communication, May 23, 2017).

[18] For this case study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with Nicholas Bonner (the founder of Koryo Group; interviews on May 5 and May 8, 2017), Simon Cockerell (the general manager of the company; interview on April 5, 2017) and Vicky Mohieddeen (Koryo Group’s former cultural projects manager; interview on May 23, 2017 and additional email correspondence on May 26, 2017). Each interview lasted between 60 to 90 minutes and took place in Beijing. Additionally, I conducted short, unstructured interviews with photographer Eddo Hartmann (interview on May 24, 2017; 30 minutes) and filmmaker Matt Hulse (interview on June 4, 2017; 30 minutes) to gain more insights into cultural projects Koryo Group has carried out and facilitated in the past. All interviewees consented to the use paraphrased statements from the interviews in this chapter.

[19] Koryo Group delivers, for example, high-nutritional meals to orphanages and has executed various other projects to help orphanages and blind schools over the past 20 years.

3.1 Koryo Group: An Overview

As Koryo Group operates to a large extent as a tour company, the relationship between their tours and cultural projects is twofold. On the one hand, the tours they organize bring in the revenue needed to fund engagement initiatives, making it easier to do certain projects as they are not dependent on external funding bodies (Vicky Mohieddeen, personal correspondence, May 26, 2017). On the other hand, cultural engagement is central to Koryo Tours' marketing strategy, as their active involvement in (and long history of) cultural engagement projects is what distinguishes Koryo Tours from other companies that run tours to North Korea. As a result, tourism to North Korea has always constituted an important element of their cultural engagement and visa versa, and they have organized most of their cultural engagement projects through the Korea International Travel Company (hereafter KITC).[20] Given their 25 years experience in engaging with North Korea, it is impossible (due to space constraints) to list all their achievements in this field. What follows is therefore an overview of projects that Koryo Group discussed as having been particularly significant.

3.1.1 Sports

Over the years, Koryo Group has organized many sports exchanges and has taken various amateur sports teams to Pyongyang to play football, ice hockey, basketball, cricket, and ultimate frisbee ("Sport," n.d.). In addition to such low-key sports exchanges, Koryo Group has executed various sports projects that were larger in scope. In 2002, for example, they took the North Korean national football team of 1966 to various football clubs in Middlesbrough in the UK. The team, who had made it to the quarterfinals of the FIFA World Cup in the UK in 1966, was welcomed by thousands of local fans—an event Koryo Group describes as "the most significant cultural exchange between DPRK and Europe" ("The Heroes Return," n.d.).[21] Then, in 2010, they arranged for the Middlesbrough Ladies football team to play in

[20] Koryo Group predominantly collaborates with KITC. In addition to KITC, they have carried out some projects in collaboration with the Korean Cities Federation, Korfilm, and the National Olympic Committee of the DPRK.

[21] Koryo Group founder Nicholas Bonner and British film director Daniel Gordon made a documentary about this historic match called *The Game of Their Lives* in 2002.

Pyongyang against local opposition, to mark ten years of diplomatic relations between the UK and DPRK ("Middlesborough," n.d.). Approximately 6,000 local football fans attended the games, and the first game was shown on national TV in the evening. These sports exchanges are some of the most important exchanges they have organized, as they resulted in so many positive interactions between North Koreans and foreigners, both in-and outside of the DPRK (Simon Cockerell, personal correspondence, April 5, 2017). The benefit to sports projects are that they are relatively uncomplicated and therefore a great way to engage: sports have clear rules, are usually of apolitical nature, and, due to its universal nature, easy for participants to bond over. As a result, even low-key exchanges can have a large impact (Simon Cockerell, personal correspondence, April 5, 2017).

3.1.2 Film

As with sports, there is also a universal aspect to arts and film exchanges, as "we are all unified in the human desire to create art" (Vicky Mohieddeen, personal communication, May 26, 2017). Koryo Group has therefore been involved in various film and arts projects, including the production of documentaries and films. In 2012, for example, Nicholas Bonner co-directed the film *Comrade Kim Goes Flying*, the first ever collaboration between a Western and Korean film crew ("Comrade Kim Goes Flying," n.d.). The films tells the story of a miner who follows her dream of becoming a trapeze artist in Pyongyang and was, for its theme of self-determination and its entertaining nature, rather innovative in the North Korean film industry.[22] In addition to their role in film production, the company is the co-organizer of the bi-annual Pyongyang International Film Festival (hereafter PIFF), which promotes "exchange and cooperation between world film makers with the ideal of Independence, Peace and Friendship" ("Independence, Peace and Friendship", n.d.). Although the film festival was previously reserved for films from the "non-aligned movement and other developing countries", Koryo Group has helped expand the range of films shown (and thus seen by large crowds in Pyongyang; "Pyongyang International Film Festival," n.d.). PIFF's significance lies in the fact that the festival screens foreign films in a country where foreign media is highly censored and access

[22] It also became the first North Korean film to be publicly screened in South Korea since 2003 (Associated Press, 2012).

to such films is otherwise limited. As PIFF is often the only (legal) opportunity for locals to see international films, the film screenings are often overcrowded—attesting to the festival's popularity (see, for example, Macdonald, 2014; Sayej, 2016).[23]

3.1.3 Art

Koryo Group has facilitated and organized various worldwide exhibitions of North Korean art (including the exhibition in Australia discussed in chapter two), as well as art projects inside the country. In 2015, for example, Koryo Group co-organized an exhibition of works by foreign photographers Matjaž Tančič and Eddo Hartman in Pyongyang—the first time Western art photography was exhibited in North Korea (Vicky Mohieddeen, personal correspondence, May 23, 2017).[24] The exhibition included photos both artists had taken in North Korea, as well as works taken in other places. The latter works not only included unfamiliar scenes but also unfamiliar ways of seeing, as one of the artist included abstracts works to display a photographic style most likely unknown to the local audience (Eddo Hartmann, personal correspondence, May 24, 2017). In addition to the exhibition in Pyongyang, the photographer's works were also exhibited at various galleries in Seoul, Beijing, Hong Kong, Houston, and Amsterdam ("3DPRK," n.d.; Eddo Hartmann, personal correspondence, May 24, 2017). In these contexts, the works functioned as an invitation to self-reflect on how we perceive North Korea and represent the country in photography. Particularly Tančič's photographic narrative clearly reflects his objective to display each individual's humanity; by using a 3D photography technique he hoped to enable the audience to "enter their personal space", so as to make it harder to dehumanize them

[23] Writing about PIFF and the significance of foreign film screenings in North Korea, several scholars have also pointed out the importance of laughter in response to films. Bleiker, for example, touches upon the potential of laughter to challenge a single narrative of a nation as it "creates distance from dogmatism and pedantry, from fear and intimidation. It shatters the belief that life has a singe meaning." (Bleiker, 2005, p. 108). Suk-Young Kim (2010), discussing a case of censorship failure at PIFF when the German film 'Heavyweights' was shown, correspondingly points out how laughter enabled people to briefly bond with the unknown 'other' in the film: "If humor in 'Heavyweights' could so easily attract NK viewers who perhaps saw Bavarians for the first time, then just imagine: what else could films, more seductive in technology and narrative structure, potentially achieve?" (Kim Suk-Young, 2010, p. 310).

[24] Hartmann's work *Setting the Stage* aims to reflect how the political system is translated into the country's architecture and how individuals interact with their socialist surroundings (Eddo Hartmann, personal correspondence, May 24, 2017). Tančič's series *3DPRK*, on the other hand, are portraits of North Koreans taken using a 3D stereoscopic technique ("3DPRK," n.d.).

(Goldby, 2017; see also “3DPRK,” 2016). Tančič further expressed that he aimed to show their common humanity, noting that, "in North Korea, you have what you have everywhere else. You have people who fall in love, who want their kids to go to school and not be cold or get sick . . . I hope this project can show that.” (Tančič, as quoted in Goldby, 2017).

Although such statements do not directly reflect the company’s perspective, Koryo Group—as the main facilitator of these photographic projects—did assist in shaping the narratives of these photographic works (Eddo Hartmann, personal correspondence, May 24, 2017). Recognizing the importance of representations, Koryo Group also discussed the raising of questions about how the world perceived North Korea as a motive for engagement work.

3.2 Motives for Cultural Engagement

Given the company’s long history of engaging with North Korea, it was evident during the interviews that Koryo Group is incredibly invested in North Korea—first and foremost as a business, but also from a more personal point of view. As a business, the company is subject to market forces, and, to keep doing what they do, needs to take the viability of projects into account (Simon Cockerell, personal correspondence, April 5, 2017). However, beyond the profit motive, all interviewees at Koryo Group showed an explicit awareness of conditions in the country (about which they visibly have come to care), and expressed the belief that engagement can contribute to bettering people’s lives; that by engaging, exchanging information, and working together, they can have a positive impact on the country, even if that impact is not immediately visible or only small. As the company started operating in North Korea at a time when the country entered one of its darkest days in history (the great famine of the mid-nineties), the company initially focused on providing humanitarian help, and only after the turn of the century initiated their first cultural project. Seeing their various projects have impact over the years has reinforced their belief that engagement is worthwhile and meaningful.

They believe one of the best ways to make a positive change is by facilitating friendly interactions and exchanging new information (Nicholas Bonner, personal correspondence, May 5, 2017; Simon Cockerell, personal correspondence, April 5, 2017). All interviewees expressed the wish to increase mutual understanding and

change perceptions, both in North Korea and the outside world—hoping their work could contribute to having both sides dehumanize each other less and understand each other more. They discussed seeing their projects bring about small, incremental changes in people's perceptions over time as an important motivator, as well as seeing people benefit from cultural engagement as it provides opportunities that, without engagement, most likely would not be there. Vicky Mohieddeen, for example, expressed how motivating it was to see how driven her North Korean partners were in setting up a photography exhibition—a project that they would have been unable to do without the external impulse (personal correspondence, May 26, 2017).

Koryo Group acknowledges that progress from engagement is often slow and that they will not (nor intend to) change the North Korea's political situation. Given their long experience in doing this work, they are realistically aware of obstacles in carrying out projects and working within the parameters of what is possible—which are generally determined by both market forces (outside of North Korea, i.e. foreign demand for tours) and political forces (usually within North Korea, e.g. obstacles to engagement). They therefore often balance various interests, including their own (to build their business, but also to carry out projects that they think are interesting and important) and their North Korean partners' (who are often highly risk-averse, work within restrictive rules and regulations, and sometimes seek excessive monetary incentives for doing projects; Simon Cockerell, personal correspondence, April 5, 2017). Asked about the ethical aspects of their work, they therefore discussed the need to balance these different interests, as well as intended and unintended consequences, such as when a project is used as propaganda:

"One unintended but almost unavoidable consequence is that the events may be used as propaganda—delegates of the film festival filmed on national TV bowing at the statues, for example. You have to weigh up the fact that this will be used as propaganda and decide how much it harms your stated aims . . . You need to do your research and constantly balance what you need to give up versus what you're gaining. The more you know about the country and the more you understand it, the easier it will be." (Vicky Mohieddeen, personal correspondence, May 26 2017).

This need to balance interests and compromise was also well reflected in a statement by British filmmaker Matt Hulse, who was a jury member at PIFF in 2016. Hulse

revealed how just prior to the final jury debate (to determine which film would win the festival prize), the North Korean jury member announced that a particular North Korean film would win the prize, so as to "honor" the festival hosts. Subsequently, no real discussion took place and the North Korean film won (Matt Hulse, personal correspondence, June 4, 2017). Discussing such instances of unexpected propaganda, Nicholas Bonner expressed that it is ultimately more important that some of the festival's organizers truly want to make PIFF a respected international film festival. While some North Korean partners prioritize political aims, others do believe engagement is the right way forward. Engagement is therefore about providing them with information about festivals in other parts of the world, to help them grow and, over time, truly become more international (Nicholas Bonner, personal correspondence, May 5, 2017).

In relation to the ethics of their work, they also stressed how it is important to maximize people-to-people interactions, while minimizing interactions with the state. It is often impossible to fully bypass the government, but conditions not being perfect should not prevent engagement from happening (Simon Cockerell, personal correspondence, April 5, 2017). Cockerell added that they have an advantage working with KITC, which is within the de facto private sphere and operates with a profit motive. Consequently, a large share of their revenue is reinvested in the organization (Simon Cockerell, personal correspondence, April 5, 2017). Simon Cockerell added that they have seen North Korea become increasingly more marketized—a development that has stimulated the spirit of entrepreneurship and opportunities for engagement, and therefore, one of the most important developments they have seen in recent years (personal correspondence, April 5, 2017).

Koryo Group, while operating as a for-profit business, seems genuinely driven to have a positive impact on North Korean people's lives. They acknowledge the obstacles and moral issues that are intricately connected to the work they do, but also have faith in their work being able to bring about serendipitous ripple effects—which may make small changes more meaningful over time.

Chapter 4: Traavik.Info

Traavik.Info is a non-profit foundation for "arts, interventions and development" ("Organisation," 2016), run by Norwegian artist and director Morten Traavik.[25] Traavik, in carrying out artistic projects, borrows from a wide range of art forms and is known for treating the world as his stage, having executed (what he calls) *interventions* across the globe ("Interventions," n.d.). Since 2008, Traavik has performed various interventions in collaboration with North Korean artists and cultural authorities, both in North Korea and in Norway. His arts projects often blur the lines between arts and activism, and he calls his work method *hypertheatre*, which he defines as a,

"sensibility [that] recognizes the staggering degree to which real-life social, ethical and political issues contain role-play, drama, masked intentions and gripping accounts of the human condition. And then to feel your way forward to the most efficient artistic means of expression to put the given or chosen issue in a different light, in the playful, questioning and ambiguous manner that is art's privilege over commercials, entertainment, propaganda or politics." ("Method", 2016).

This definition builds on the Norwegian word for performance, *forestilling*, as this word has a double meaning: it not only refers to theatre, but also to a conception, or an imagination. Given the latter connotation in his native language, Traavik sees hypertheatre (hyper implying *over* or *beyond*) as an invitation to a change in conception (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017). Moreover, when his hypertheatre is a collaborative project with North Korean partners, he regards it as cultural engagement too (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017).

4.1 Traavik.Info: An Overview

[25] For this case study, I conducted a semi-structured interview with Morten Traavik in Beijing (on June 2, 2017), which lasted two hours. Traavik consented to the use paraphrased statements from the interview in this chapter.

Traavik's first project in the DPRK dates back to 2008, and he has since then carried out various cultural projects with the help of the CCRFC (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017). In 2012, for example, Traavik hosted a Norwegian cultural festival in Pyongyang on Norway's National Day, which consisted of an evening performance by Norwegian musicians, as well as a photography exhibition with photos of Norway and controversial projects he had carried out previously ("Yes, We Love This Country," 2012a, 2012b). The same year he also brought North Korean Mass Games instructors to Norway, who trained a group of Norwegian Army border guards to turn over flip books as human pixels, creating alternating images in the same way such images were created for the backdrop of North Korean Mass Games ("The Promised Land," 2012). During this flip book display, Traavik also invited North Korean accordion students to provide a soundtrack to the spectacle and stage a small evening concert ("The Promised Land," 2012). In 2014, he again invited North Korean students to Norway to perform in a play he dubbed *Kardamomyang*—his take on the Enger play *When the Robbers Came to Cardamom Town*—which he later explained was "an attempt to, with a pinch of humor, ask some questions about how Norwegians perceive themselves, how North Koreans perceive themselves, and how we perceive each other." (Traavik, as cited in in Skåtun, 2014).

Though he has organized various other projects in recent years, Traavik is internationally best known for bringing the industrial band Laibach to stage a concert in Pyongyang in 2015, as well as the subsequent documentary *Liberation Day* about the process of staging the performance. However, the concert was not without controversy, as Laibach—a Slovenian band established in 1980 as an artistic dissident group in then Yugoslavia—is known for its references to totalitarianism in its music and music videos (Šentevska, 2017). In Pyongyang, Laibach played a concert at the city's Ponghwa Theatre (as well as an acoustic set at a local music school), which included their take on songs from *The Sound of Music* (a film known to many North Koreans) as well as some of their own classics (Hotham, 2015). Laibach had also prepared to perform their take on three popular North Korean songs, "Honorable", "Mount Paektu" and "Arirang", but in the end, cultural authorities only allowed them to play the latter, deciding Laibach had altered the other songs too drastically (Hotham, 2015).

When asked about their motives for doing the concert in Pyongyang, one of the band members answered, "Who wouldn't want to embark on such an experience?

There is no second chance to play in Pyongyang for the first time", while adding that, "Laibach has, since its very foundation, been dealing with totalitarianism in all its manifestations; therefore visiting North Korea was absolutely a must-do." (Novak, as quoted in Grow, 2015).[26] The band also expressed that they had, "wanted to perform the concert within North Korea and open the debate in the rest of the world, and that is what happened and is still going on." (Novak, as quoted in Hotham, 2015).

Laibach indeed sparked much debate, as media and academics alike tried to interpret their intentions for doing the concert. While media mainly discussed Laibach's goal to be the first rock band to play in North Korea (for example, van Gijssel, 2016; Ramzy, 2015), academics questioned the (perceived) aim to challenge North Korea's totalitarianism and enhance the political situation in North Korea (Breuker, 2015b). Notably, Slovenian philosopher and cultural critic Slavoj Žižek endorsed the concert in a video, arguing that Laibach's ulterior motive had always been to expose the totalitarian impulse that is present in each society and that ultimately their concert was not about subverting North Korea's totalitarianism, but rather about exposing the hypocrisies and anxieties of the West (TraavikInfo, 2016).

4.2 *Motives for Cultural Engagement*

Although Traavik perceives his work as cultural engagement, from the interview it was evident that his work is first and foremost meant as art. Supported by the Arts Council Norway with a permanent grand, he is in a highly privileged position as he has the ability to exercise his artistic freedom without having to give consideration to the interests of external funding parties (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017).[27] Given this unique privilege, he is able to carry out projects according to his own creative vision, and one of his main drives seemed to be expressing his artistic view and creating hypertheatre.

---

[26] Although the concert was widely hailed in the media as the first Western concert in Pyongyang, it was not really the first time a Western band performed in the city. Roger Clinton (the brother of former U.S. President Bill Clinton), for example, performed in Pyongyang in 1999 (North Korean Economy Watch, 2007), and Pyongyang has seen other concerts by foreign performers too.

[27] According to Traavik, the Arts Council reviews an artists' eligibility to the grand every 3 to 4 years. However, as the grand is reserved for Norway's most distinguished artists, it is highly unlikely for the Arts Council to withdraw the grand once it has been given to someone (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017).

Discussing his work, Traavik expressed that his work can be distinguished as art by arts potential for ambiguity—an ambiguity that he intends to exploit: "Art and culture is supposed to insist on the privilege of being ambiguous. Thereby opening up for reflections and problems without providing an answer. If you come up with answers, it's politics. Or propaganda. Not art." (TraavikInfo, 2013b). For this reason, the interpretation of his work is up to its audience, for his work to remain art (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017). The ambiguity of his work also leaves room for the art to interact with its environment, so as to give rise to interpretations that he originally had not intended.[28]

Exploiting arts' potential for ambiguity, he has shown to not shy away from provocation or testing limits. In fact, insisting on arts' ambiguity seems to be to a large extent his way of pushing boundaries, both in and outside of North Korea. On his first visit to the DPRK, Traavik, for example, brought a disco ball—as a symbol of "bourgeois Western decadence"—to test to what extent authorities would tolerate its presence (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017). Having been allowed to carry the object to Kim Il Sung Square at a time when Kim Jong Il was about to make an appearance, he seems to have been emboldened to keep testing the limits of artistic expression in North Korea (notably, on his website, this "intervention" is indicated as "a work in progress"; see "Discocracy", 2008). Similarly, at the Norwegian cultural festival in Pyongyang in 2012, he included highly nationalistic imagery of Norway in the performance and remarked he wanted to see if it was possible, "to import nationalistic fireworks of Norwegian culture into the Evil Empire itself" (TraavikInfo, 2013a).

These (what he himself has called) "subversive"[29] layers are central to his work as hypertheatre and are presented as a way of challenging people's perspectives of themselves and others: "I'm there to create a space, to create room, in which both sides can challenge themselves to stretch all those boundaries that have become so ingrained . . . The projects are not only about North Korea, but also about how we view ourselves and the world around us." (Traavik, as quoted in Skåtun, 2014). Outspoken about the hypocrisy of the Western world and its media in dealing with

---

[28] Citing an example of such an interaction between the intervention and its context, Traavik mentioned Laibach's cover of the Beatles' song *Across the Universe* that included the line "Nothing's gonna change my world", which he found to reveal a radically different meaning when played in Pyongyang (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017).

[29] This was acknowledged during the interview; see also TraavikInfo (2013a).

North Korea, Traavik also conveyed that his projects are ultimately about more than just North Korea and that, in exposing the hypocrisies of the West, North Korea functions mainly as an example (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017). He believes his projects provide North Koreans with new perspectives too, stating that Laibach, for example, was unique in that it showed North Korea that art can be both beautiful and ugly at the same time (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017).

Notwithstanding such statements, including "subversive layers" in his projects in North Korea seems more geared at testing the limits of the North Korean system and showing that the project can be done, rather than truly challenging long held conceptions in the country. Particularly in the case of the Laibach concert, facilitating changes in perspectives seems to have been more of a positive side-effect than a real aim, as it is questionable to what extent a Laibach concert would truly be the best way to evoke a radical new understanding of art in a North Korean audience. [30]

However, testing the limits of the system does not necessarily equal subverting the system as Traavik, discussing the ethics of his work, also talked about the importance of dealing with the country as it is, daring to ask what we could learn from North Korea, and having a genuine dialogue with them. In fact, he described the latter as another important motivation for working in North Korea, as through dialogue and collaboration he has built friendships, established trust, and learned to understand cultural references (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017).[31] Such efforts to question what we could learn from them are reflected in some his previous projects, such as his projects with accordion students and the North Korean Mass Games instructors he brought to Norway in 2012. Stressing North Korean artists' high skill and lack of ego, he argued North Korea, in many ways, is the ultimate invitation for us to reflect (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017). From that perspective, it is perhaps also the ultimate setting for

[30] In this case, Traavik is more likely to have somewhat challenged the worldview of its Western audience, particularly given the worldwide success of his documentary and the international media attention the concert received. Additionally, it is conceivable that his upcoming intervention, the DMZ Academy, will be more successful in this regard, as it will pair North Korean and foreign artists to work together and exchange ideas about art, see "The DMZ Academy" (2017).

[31] He added that he works with people who are genuinely open to friendlier relations with the outside world, and that motives for cultural engagement in the CCRFC vary more than people think. In the case of the Laibach concert, for example, there are people in the CCRFC who are truly happy the concert took place, while there are also those who genuinely regret it (Morten Traavik, personal correspondence, June 2, 2017).

hypertheatre—and one of the main reasons why Traavik keeps coming back. Few other places in the world provide such a highly challenging and dynamic setting where barriers can be moved and bridges built. In that sense, North Korea is a theatre where Traavik can keep renewing himself—and remain his status as one of Norway's most distinguished artists.

Chapter 5: Paektu Cultural Exchange & Michael Spavor

Paektu Cultural Exchange (hereafter PCE) is an organization that is dedicated to bringing both businesses and individuals to the DPRK for various projects, including tourism, sports competitions, and other cultural exchanges ("About PCE," n.d.).[32] The organization is based in Yanji in northern China and is headed by Michael Spavor, who—in addition to his capacity as head of the organization—works as a private consultant on various engagement and business-related projects ("About," n.d.-b).[33] According to its website, PCE is a "non-profit social enterprise" that works with various contacts within the DPRK, "at the ministerial level and above", including the Ministry of Sports ("About PCE," n.d.). Additionally, Spavor facilitates various humanitarian projects (to, for example, promote sport opportunities among children and the handicapped), cultural heritage restoration, and business-related projects (to connect DPRK trade companies, organizations and government offices with potential foreign partners; "Work," n.d.). The company further aims to connect interested individuals to their network in North Korea, to help find "new channels and creative methods to connect, collaborate, and communicate with the DPRK." ("About PCE," n.d.). In line with this statement, Spavor defined cultural engagement as a method for dialogue and communication between non-state actors; a method that uses culture as a medium for facilitating dialogue and that should include an element of social responsibility and a focus on sustainability (Michael Spavor, personal correspondence, June 22, 2017).

5.1 Paektu Cultural Exchange & Michael Spavor: An Overview

PCE organizes various cultural trips and exchanges to the DPRK every year, called "delegations", that interested individuals can join by paying a fee. Often these exchanges offer the opportunity to attend an important cultural event in Pyongyang (for example, the annual April Spring Friendship Art Festival, that brings

[32] For this case study, I conducted a semi-structured telephone interview with Michael Spavor (on June 22, 2017), which lasted one hour. Spavor consented to the use paraphrased statements from the interview in this chapter.

[33] During the interview Spavor explained that Paektu Cultural Exchange is his public brand for cultural engagement; he carries out more private projects and consulting (including his work with Dennis Rodman, discussed in this chapter) under his own name (Michael Spavor, personal correspondence, June 22, 2017).

international artists to the city to perform in a semi-diplomatic cultural event, see "2016 DPRK April Spring Friendship Art Festival," n.d.), or the opportunity to participate in a (national) sports competition. PCE offers the latter opportunity to both professional and amateur athletes, and has taken participants to various sports events, including a tennis table competition ("2017 DPRK Trips & Delegations," n.d.), a figure skating festival (Spavor, 2017), and the Pyongyang International Friendship Ice Hockey Exhibition, which PCE co-organized (Dunbar, 2016).

However, despite his role in organizing such exchanges, Spavor is best known for bringing American professional basketball player Dennis Rodman to Pyongyang on various occasions. Rodman, who first traveled to the country in 2013 with the media company VICE (see VICE staff, 2013), befriended the country's leader Kim Jong Un on his first visit, and has since then entered the country several times with the help of Spavor. Of these subsequent visits, most notable was Rodman's visit to the country in January 2014, when he organized a friendship basketball match between former NBA players and North Korea's national basketball team. Although both Spavor and Rodman have been quoted saying the match was engagement and therefore about sports rather than politics (see, for example, Bucholtz, 2017; Demick 2017), such statements were questioned after Rodman sang a birthday song to Kim Jong Un and came under scrutiny in the media for hosting him a birthday party (the match was held on January 8, Kim Jong Un's birthday; see, for example, Shabbir, 2014). Exacerbating the criticism was the way in which Rodman supported different narratives of the event, presenting the event as a form of sports diplomacy (by, for example, stating he "wanted to make history") while simultaneously claiming the event was only about sports ("I didn't go there for political reasons, I went for sports"), often within the same interview (Rodman, as quoted in Bucholtz, 2017).[34] Rodman was also heavily criticized for stating that he did not intend to secure the release of imprisoned American missionary Kenneth Bae and drunkenly defending Kim Jong Un during a live television interview from Pyongyang (see, for example, Mullen, 2014)—turning his sports exchange into an international media fiasco.

Countering the negative media storm that followed, Spavor and other members of the delegation stressed the powerful symbolism of Kim Jong Un's

---

[34] Rodman has since then also held a talk at the U.S. Modern War Institute on "Alternative tools of diplomacy" (see Modern War Institute, 2017).

friendship to Rodman, and argued that the sight of Kim Jong hugging a rather eccentric American must have been a powerful gesture to many North Koreans: "Dennis Rodman says what he wants, he has all these tattoos—you don't get more American than Dennis Rodman. For the North Korean people to see their leader accept him—that's huge." (Volo, as quoted in Modern War Institute, 2017). In addition to these remarks, other statements by the delegation also echoed the belief that sports exchanges could lead to official government meetings and summits, and potentially, improve bilateral communication between the US and the DPRK (see, for example, Modern War Institute, 2017). As the next section demonstrates, Spavor also expressed this belief—that cultural exchange can reduce tensions, restart dialogues, and possibly even lead to the peaceful resolution of conflict—when asked about his motives for engaging with North Korea.

5.2 Motives for Cultural Engagement

According to PCE's website, its main aims are to enhance people's understanding of North Korea and to promote people-to-people exchanges, in "a non-political, neutral setting – between citizens of nation-states that share mutually disreputable perceptions of each other due to historical legacies, the influences of mainstream media/propaganda, and very limited opportunities for interaction amongst ordinary people." ("About PCE," n.d.). They hope such exchanges can "build empathy and compassion between the participants whose nations have historically been at war and continue to have mutual resentment", to ultimately "promote greater peace, friendship, and understanding." ("About PCE," n.d.). In person, Spavor reiterated these points, and stressed how cultural engagement is a necessary first step to relationship and peace building between the DPRK and other nations (Michael Spavor, personal correspondence, June 22, 2017). Talking about his activities, he displayed both a genuine connection the country, as well as a strong personal gratification in bringing people together and facilitating what he believes are intellectually enriching experiences. Such experiences can take on a larger scope when working with celebrities and politicians (Michael Spavor, personal correspondence, June 22, 2017).

Strikingly, in comparison to other non-state actors, Spavor's take on cultural engagement is at times closer to cultural diplomacy, as Spavor not only stresses the

importance of building bridges between nations, but also has direct ties to North Korea's leadership. Although PCE promotes its activities as apolitical in nature, Spavor's work has clearly entered the realm of politics, particularly after he decided to meet Kim Jong Un during his first visit with the Rodman delegation in 2013. In fact, his connection to Kim Jong Un seems to have become an important component of his public image, as Spavor not only regularly comments on Kim Jong Un's personality in international media (see, for example Fifield, 2017; Köhler, 2013), but also explicitly showcases photos of the two of them—holding hands and laughing amicably—on his personal website ("About," n.d.-b). Presumably, Spavor utilizes his connection to the North Korean leadership to demonstrate his unique expertise and access to the country, as a way to distinguish himself from other (tour and exchange) organizations and promote his enterprise. However, while undoubtedly there are benefits to promoting this connection to his contacts in the DPRK, one wonders to what extent such a public image is not counterproductive elsewhere. Beyond the moral questions that the connection raises, the media response to Rodman's visit in early 2014 demonstrated that projects that engage the leadership are likely to reinforce the standard narrative of the country (as discussed in chapter two), which is not in line with the narrative that Spavor wishes to promote. Unfortunately, Spavor—during the interview seemingly unaware of the more critical views of his connection to the North Korean leader—seems more concerned with the North Korean interpretation of his media narrative than interpretations elsewhere. While he with a doubt feels a genuine love for the country and wishes to promote greater peace, it is questionable to what extent his method truly serves his stated purpose.

Conclusion

This thesis set out to explore what motives drive non-state actors who engage with North Korea through cultural projects. As demonstrated in the case studies of Koryo Group, Traavik.Info and Paektu Cultural Exchange, these non-state organizations all bring their own unique approach to cultural engagement, as they have their own specific work methods, collaborate with different North Korean institutions, and define engagement in different ways. Subsequently, the case studies uncovered diverse motives for engagement, and these motives showed both similarities and discrepancies. One parallel among organizations was the belief that engagement is a collaborative undertaking and therefore an opportunity to learn more about the other, establish trust, and build relationships of which there are too few between North Koreans and people from other nations. They all acknowledged the problematic lack of contact between North Korea and the outside world, and discussed how this lack of contact has shaped perceptions of the other on both sides of the divide. These negative perceptions play an important role in their work because it motivates non-state actors to challenge people's worldviews. All organizations therefore, to some extent, seemed driven to create dialogue, spark debate, and raise questions about how we perceive and represent ourselves and the other, both in North Korea and elsewhere.

Given the complex nature of working in North Korea and with North Korean organizations, all non-state actors push boundaries and traverse territory where others have not traversed before. Although testing limits is to some extent an inherent aspect of the work, non-state actors' motives for doing so did vary. In some cases, pushing boundaries was discussed as a way of providing people in North Korea with alternative information and new perspectives, to help them pursue their aim to stage an international event or produce a film for entertainment, so as to ultimately provide them with opportunities that otherwise would not be there. In other cases, pushing boundaries seemed to be part of an artistic statement—not only as a way to provide people in North Korea with something radically new, but also to create something radically new oneself. In a world of seemingly limitless opportunity, some are driven to seek out places where limits can still be found and tested. In that case, a place like North Korea does not disappoint.

The non-state organizations studied in this thesis all claimed that their engagement is not driven by a political agenda, and that their activities do not seek to

subvert the North Korean system or achieve political change. Nevertheless, their work continues to be criticized for failing to bring out such change, or worse, for strengthening political forces in the country. While the organizations in this study do not believe that their work supports the continuation of North Korea's political status quo, voices that critique the lack of political change are comprehensible when activities do not entirely avoid politics. In fact, as this thesis has demonstrated, these non-state actors often operate in a political grey area in North Korea, where it is difficult to fully steer away from the state. However, while some aim to avoid government involvement as much as possible, others have quite literally embraced the North Korean leadership as they seek different methods to support their aims.

Such aims often include promoting one's organization, as all non-state organizations in this study are—in their various forms—a business undertaking that needs to secure the inflow of cash to continue their work. Although this is no organization's main motive, money matters do impact the work, which makes cultural engagement part of a brand that needs to be promoted. This requires a delicate balancing of interests at various levels, as organizations need to work with market and media forces, while securing the trust and safety of their North Korean counterparts. Consequently, this balancing of interests might also have impacted some interviewees' ability to speak freely during this study's interviews, as these organizations are careful not to jeopardize their contacts in the country. To circumvent this problem, this thesis tried to pay careful attention to the possibility of self-censorship, as well as the presence of personal motives that are rarely explicitly stated. In this regard, being actively involved in the cultural engagement environment was a great benefit, and provided me with insights that helped me to make sense of the various motives for cultural engagement.

Studying non-state organizations' motives for cultural engagement eventually raises the question when cultural engagement is successful, and the answer to that question widely varies. The organizations in this study do not always share the same goals and motives, and therefore also define success in different ways. Additionally, as this thesis has shown, academics' assessments of cultural engagement greatly differ too, since different theoretical perspectives and paradigms in academia influence that assessment. Having studied cultural engagement from a social constructivist perspective—by taking into account how socially constructed ideas and identities shape our world and our interactions in it—I believe the value of cultural engagement

lies in its ability to make people reflect on the social and political dynamics that shape their worldview. Given their universal nature, cultural expressions—whether through art, music, film, or sports—provide people with the opportunity to find common ground while simultaneously leaving room for cultural variations. Culture can therefore be an effective mechanism for reflection, as it can bring people together and give them insight into the other's culture. Such encounters are necessary experiences to question and become aware of the subjectivity of one's own reality, identity, and worldview.

In this regard, I believe Bleiker's (2005) concepts of an ethics of difference and an ethics of dialogue are useful as guidelines for cultural engagement. Interestingly, all non-state actors in this study displayed an ethics of dialogue, and have brought about people-to-people encounters through their cultural projects. Additionally, they also showed an ethics of difference. In fact, what makes these organizations arguably so interesting is their willingness to collaborate with North Korean partners and accept that their worldviews are incompatible. Despite their differences, they believe that their different identities and worldviews do not have to stand in the way of working together and learning from one another.

Unfortunately, the one caveat to such an ethics of difference is that it should not be one-sided, and cultural engagement therefore requires one to carefully select one's counterparts. However, as several interviewees in this study pointed out, not all North Korean counterparts form obstacles to engagement, and while there are those who are in it for political reasons, there are those who truly believe in engagement too. As there is unquestionable value in increasing people-to-people contacts between North Korea and the outside world, it is important to acknowledge this variety among the engagement community, both in and outside of North Korea. I therefore agree with Cathcart and Denney's assessment that we should not "let an uncomfortable history needlessly limit our capabilities to look at every new case anew and be open to signs of actual change and consider its positive consequences." (2013, p. 40). Because just like non-state actors are driven by a variety of motives, their North Korean partners are too.

Bibliography

2016 DPRK April Spring Friendship Art Festival (April 11th to April 20th 2016). (n.d.). Retrieved from http://paektuculturalexchange.org/2016-dprk-april-spring-friendship-art-festival-april-11th-april-20th-2016-2/

2017 DPRK trips & delegations. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://paektuculturalexchange.org/2017-trips-delegations/

3DPRK. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://koryostudio.com/collections/3dprk/

3DPRK. (2016). Retrieved from http://www.matjaztancic.com/#gallery/3dprk1/1

About. (n.d.-a). Retrieved from http://www.engagedprk.org/about

About. (n.d.-b) Retrieved from http://michaelspavor.com/about/

About PCE. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://paektuculturalexchange.org/about-pce/

About us. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://koryogroup.com/about-us

Anderson, D. (2017, March 6). Useful idiots: Tourism in North Korea. *Forbes*. Retrieved from https://www.forbes.com/

Andersson, M., & Bae, J. (2015). Sweden´s engagement with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. *North Korean Review, 1*(11), 42-62. Retrieved from https://dspace.mah.se/

Armstrong, C. (2003). The Cultural Cold War in Korea, 1945–1950. *The Journal of Asian Studies, 62*(1), 71-99. http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/3096136

Armstrong, C.K. (2013). Postscript. De-bordering, re-bordering, un-bordering. In Gelézeau, V., De Ceuster, K., & Delissen, A. (Eds.), *De-bordering Korea:*

Tangible and intangible legacies of the Sunshine Policy (pp. 206-210). London: Routledge.

Associated Press. (2012, October 3). South Korea invites northern neighbour to film festival. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/

Bleiker, R. (2005). *Divided Korea: Toward a culture of reconciliation*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

Breuker, R. (2014, August 4). Off the tracks diplomacy & the Primat Der Mensenrechte [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://leiden-ink.org/2014/08/04/469/

Breuker, R. (2015a, January 9). Off-the-tracks diplomacy with North Korea [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://leiden-ink.org/2015/01/09/off-the-tracks-diplomacy-with-north-korea/#more-633

Breuker, R. (2015b, August 19). Leather-clad missionaries in Pyongyang [Blog post]. Retrieved from https://leiden-ink.org/2015/08/19/leather-clad-missionaries-in-pyongyang/#more-747

Bucholtz, A. (2017, April 12). Dennis Rodman on North Korea’s Kim Jong-Un: “He knows basketball shit. I mean, a lot”. *The Comeback.* Retrieved from http://thecomeback.com

Cathcart, A., & Denney, S. (2013). North Korea's cultural diplomacy in the early Kim Jong-un Era. *North Korean Review*, *9*(2), 29. Retrieved from http://eprints.whiterose.ac.uk/80373/1/North%20Korean%20Cultural%20Diplomacy.pdf

de Ceuster, K. (2015). Misconceptions about North Korean art and why it matters. In Kim, H. (Eds.), *The 70th Anniversary of Liberation Day NK Project* (pp.138-142). Seoul: Seoul Museum of Art.

de Ceuster, K. (2013). South Korea's encounter with North Korean art. Between barbershop paintings and true art. In Gelézeau, V., De Ceuster, K., & Delissen, A. (Eds.), *De-bordering Korea: Tangible and intangible legacies of the sunshine policy* (pp. 156-171). London: Routledge.

Cha, V. (2012). *The impossible state: North Korea, past and future*. Retrieved from https://www.scribd.com/

Cha, K., & Kang, D.C. (2003). *Nuclear North Korea: A debate on engagement strategies*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Chubb, D.L. (2014). *Contentious activism & inter-Korean relations*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Comrade Kim Goes Flying. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://koryogroup.com/engagement/comrade-kim-goes-flying

Cooke, D. (2016, April 16). Behind the curtain: North Korean artist's work gives glimpse of another future. *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Retrieved from http://www.smh.com.au/

Delissen, A. (2013). The end of romanticism? Teaching the "Other" Korea in the Sunshine era. In Gelézeau, V., De Ceuster, K., & Delissen, A. (Eds.), *De-bordering Korea: Tangible and intangible legacies of the sunshine policy* (pp. 189-205). London: Routledge.

Demick, B. (2017, March 3). Dennis Rodman talks North Korea diplomacy before an audience of cadets at West Point. *Los Angeles Times*. Retrieved from http://www.latimes.com/

Discocracy. (2008). Retrieved from http://www.traavik.info/projects/discocracy/

Dunbar, J. (2016, March 3). Canadian brings hockey to North Korea. *The Korea Times*. Retrieved from http://koreatimes.co.kr/

European Alliance for Human Rights in North Korea. (2015). *Separative engagement*. Retrieved from https://www.eahrnk.org/articles/policy-and-research/download/13_b3a961e5c1e9f1c07f8fe3a62b8b57eb

Fifield, A. (2017, March 25). North Korea's leader is a lot of things - but irrational is not one of them. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/

Fifield, A. (2017, June, 15). Dennis Rodman just gave Kim Jong Un 'The Art of the Deal.' And it may be a genius move. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from https://www.washingtonpost.com/

Fousek, J. (2000). *To lead the free world: American nationalism and the cultural roots of the Cold War*. Retrieved from https://www.ebscohost.com/

Fruchard-Ramond, P. (2013). Facts or acts? Korean new agencies reporting on inter-Korean relations. In Gelézeau, V., De Ceuster, K., & Delissen, A. (Eds.), *De-bordering Korea: Tangible and intangible legacies of the sunshine policy* (pp. 137-153). London: Routledge.

Gelézeau, V. (2013). Life on the lines: people and places of the Korean border. In Gelézeau, V., De Ceuster, K., & Delissen, A. (Eds.), *De-bordering Korea: Tangible and intangible legacies of the sunshine policy* (pp. 13-33). London: Routledge.

Gelézeau, V., De Ceuster, K., & Delissen, A. (Eds.). (2013). *De-bordering Korea: Tangible and intangible legacies of the Sunshine Policy*. London: Routledge.

van Gijssel, R. (2016, November 11). 'Wij zijn allemaal Noord Koreanen'. *De Volkskrant*. Retrieved from http://www.volkskrant.nl/

Goldby, D. (2017, February 24). '3DPRK' - Possibly the world's most difficult photo project. *Fstoppers*. Retrieved from https://fstoppers.com/

Grinker, R. (1998). *Korea and its futures: Unification and the unfinished war*. New York, NY: St. Martin's Press.

Grow, K. (2015, August 25). Cannabis and 'the sound of music': What Laibach learned in North Korea. *Rolling Stone*. Retrieved from http://www.rollingstone.com/

Hogarth, H.K. (2012). South Korea's Sunshine Policy, reciprocity and nationhood. *Perspectives on Global Development and Technology, 11*(1), 99-111. https://doi.org/10.1163/156914912X620761

Hotham, O. (2015, September 9). Laibach rocks N. Korea: Scenes from a historic concert. *NK News.* Retrieved from https://www.nknews.org/

Independence, peace and friendship. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://www.pyongyanginternationalfilmfestival.com/

Interventions. (n.d.) Retrieved from http://www.traavik.info/project_cat/interventions/

Joinau, B. (2013). Sleeping with the (Northern) enemy**.** South Korean cinema and the autistic interface. In Gelézeau, V., De Ceuster, K., & Delissen, A. (Eds.), *De-bordering Korea: Tangible and intangible legacies of the sunshine policy* (pp. 172-188). London: Routledge.

Katzenstein, P.J. (1996). *The culture of national security: norms and identity in world politics*. Retrieved from https://www.scribd.com/

Kim, J. [Hong-Ji]. (2016). North Korea took 70 percent of Kaesong wages for weapons program: South Korea. *Reuters*. Retrieved from http://www.reuters.com/

Kim, J. [Jongtae]. (2016). The discursive constructions of North Korea and the United States: National identities and representations on Fox News. *Korean Journal of Sociology, 50*(3), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.21562/kjs.2016.06.50.3.1

Kim, M. (2009). The social construction of North Korean women's identity in South Korea: Romanticisation, victimisation and vilification. *Korea Yearbook, 3,* 257-276. https://doi.org/10.1163/ej.9789004180192.i-356.76

Kim, N. (2016). *Memory, reconciliation, and reunions in South Korea: Crossing the divide*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Kim, S. [Suk-Young]. (2010). *Illusive utopia: Theater, film, and everyday performance in North Korea*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Kim, S. [Suk-Young]. (2014). *DMZ crossing: performing emotional citizenship along the Korean border*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Kim, S. [Suki]. (2014). *Without you, there is no us: My time with the sons of North Korea's elite*. New York: Crown.

Kirk, D., & Kim, K. (2013). *Kim Dae-jung and the quest for the Nobel: How the president of South Korea bought the peace prize and financed Kim Jong-il's nuclear program*. New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Köhler, N.(2013, December 1). The Canadian behind Dennis Rodman's travels in North Korea. *Maclean's*. Retrieved from http://www.macleans.ca/news/world/kim-jong-un-meet-the-nhl/

Lee, D. (2003). The Korean Sunshine Policy: Its light and shade. *Pacific Focus,18*(1), 175-200. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1976-5118.2003.tb00281.x

Macdonald, H. (2014). Inside the Pyongyang International Film Festival. *NK News*. Retrieved from https://www.nknews.org/

McCurry, J. (2017, June 21). North Korea could co-host 2018 Winter Olympics, Seoul suggests. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/

Merkel, U. (2008). The politics of sport diplomacy and reunification in divided Korea: One nation, two countries and three flags. *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, *43*(3), 289-311. https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690208098254

Method. (2016). Retrieved from http://www.traavik.info/method/

Middlesborough. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://koryogroup.com/engagement/middlesborough

Ministry of Unification (2002). *Sunshine Policy for peace and cooperation*. Retrieved from http://eng.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=1920&mode=view&cid=32771

Ministry of Unification, (n.d.). *Inter-Korean traffic*. Retrieved from http://eng.unikorea.go.kr/content.do?cmsid=3892

Modern War Institute. (2017, March 9). *Dennis Rodman at West Point* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EqRxpQecGYY

Mullen, J. (2014, January 9). Dennis Rodman apologizes for North Korea outburst, says he'd been drinking. *CNN*. Retrieved from http://edition.cnn.com/

Myers, B.R. (2014, January 29). Subverted engagement. *NK News*. Retrieved from https://www.nknews.org/

New York Philharmonic Orchestra. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://koryogroup.com/engagement/new-york-philharmonic-orchestra

North Korean Economy Watch. (2006, November 26). Shinhwa and Baby V.O.X. in DPRK [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://www.nkeconwatch.com/2006/11/26/shinhwa-in-dprk/

North Korean Economy Watch (2007, October 14). Roger Clinton's trip to North Korea [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://www.nkeconwatch.com/2007/10/14/roger-clintons-trip-to-north-korea/

North Korean Economy Watch. (2008, March 2). North Korea's cultural relations strategy [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://www.nkeconwatch.com/2008/03/02/north-koreas-cultural-relations-strategy/

Organisation. (2016). Retrieved from http://www.traavik.info/organisation/

Ouellette, D. (2016). The tourism of North Korea in the Kim Jong-un Era: Propaganda, profitmaking, and possibilities for engagement. *Pacific Focus,31*(3), 421-451. https://doi.org/10.1111/pafo.12084

Park, K. A. (2013). *Non-traditional security issues in North Korea*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press. Retrieved from https://muse.jhu.edu/

Pyongyang International Film Festival. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://koryogroup.com/engagement/pyongyang-international-film-festival

Ramzy, A. (2015, August 20). Hello, Pyongyang: Are. You. Ready. To. Rock. *The New York Times.* Retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/

Romijn, P., Scott-Smith, G., & Segal, J. (2012). *Divided dreamworlds? The Cultural Cold War in East and West* (Studies of the Netherlands Institute for War Documentation). Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Saunders, E. (2006). Setting boundaries: Can international society exclude “rogue states”? *International Studies Review, 8*(1), 23-54. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2486.2006.00552.x

Saunders, F. S. (1999). *Who paid the piper? The CIA and the cultural Cold War*. London: Granta Books

Sayej, N. (2016, September 1). 'Everyone screamed at the snake': backstage at North Korea's film festival. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/

Schneider, C. (2009). The unrealized potential of cultural diplomacy: “Best practices” and what could be, if only… *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society, 39*(4), 260-279. https://doi.org/10.1080/10632920903449027

Šentevska, I. (2017). *Who are Laibach, and why are they playing in North Korea?* Retrieved from http://www.liberationday.film/laibach-playing-north-korea/

Shabbir, N. (2014, January 8). Dennis Rodman's birthday present to Kim Jong-un: a basketball game. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/

Shim, D. (2014). *Visual politics and North Korea: Seeing is believing*. London: Routledge.

Shin, G., & Lee, K.J. (2011). *US-DPRK educational exchanges, assessment and future strategy*. Stanford, CA: Walter H. Shorenstein Asia-Pacific Research Center Books.

Shin, G. W., Straub, D., & Lee, J. (2014). *Tailored engagement: Toward an effective and sustainable inter-Korean relations policy*. Retrieved from http://aparc.fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/tailored_engagement_web_1.pdf

Skåtun, O.J. (2014, March 31). Cardamomyang: Bringing North Korea to Norway. *NK News*. Retrieved from https://www.nknews.org/

Smith, H. (2000). Bad, mad, sad or rational actor? Why the 'securitization' paradigm makes for poor policy analysis of North Korea. *International Affairs,76*(3), 593-617. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111%2F1468-2346.00154

Son, K. (2004). *South Korean identities in strategies of engagement with North Korea: A case study of president Kim Dae-jung's sunshine policy* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Sheffield, Sheffield, United Kingdom). Retrieved from. http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/14868/

Sorensen, R. (2009, December 29). Door slammed shut on North Korean 'propagandists'. *The Australian*. Retrieved from http://www.theaustralian.com.au/

Spavor, M. (2017). *North Korea welcomes figure skaters and media to participate in international competition this February* [Press release]. Retrieved from http://paektuculturalexchange.org/north-korea-welcomes-international-figure-skaters-and-media-to-participate-in-international-competition-this-february/

Spezza, G. (2014). Education, international cooperation and future challenges for the DPRK. In *Wiener Beiträge zur Koreaforschung* (VI, pp. 53-74). Retrieved from http://www.praesens.at/praesens2013/wp-content/uploads/daten/WBK6.pd

Sport. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://koryogroup.com/engagement/category/sport

Stanton, J. (2010, April 10). Of fools and their money, pt. 3: Thoughts on the end of Kumgang [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://freekorea.us/2010/04/10/some-brief-thoughts-on-the-end-of-kumgang/#sthash.ZdERY0FJ.dpuf

Stanton, J. (2013, October 24). Ambassador Gifford's Trojan rabbit [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://freekorea.us/2013/10/24/ambassador-giffords-trojan-rabbit/?c=1489546445989#sthash.ZmxvX9v0.FUzrIcrP.dpbs

Stanton, J. (2017, May 9). Our grand plans to engage North Korea must learn from their failures and evolve with the evidence [Blog post]. Retrieved from http://freekorea.us/?s=engage#sthash.VfBKYNdY.OpECPcBB.dpbs

The DMZ academy. (2017). Retrieved from http://www.traavik.info/projects/the-dmz-academy/

The heroes return. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://koryogroup.com/engagement/the-heroes-return

The promised land. (2012). Retrieved from http://www.traavik.info/projects/the-promised-land-2/

TraavikInfo. (2013a, September 25). *Yes we love this country (2012) - part 1 of 3* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjg28ZFO41M

TraavikInfo. (2013b, September 25). *Yes we love this country (2012) - part 3 of 3* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZrjJQQCcR3Y

TraavikInfo. (2016, November 27). *Slavoj Žižek introducing: Laibach in North Korea* [Video file]. Retrieved from https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NRfgKrmI9Po&t=151s

United Nations Human Rights Council. (2014). *Report of the commission of inquiry on human rights in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea* (A/HRC/25/63). Retrieved from http://undocs.org/A/HRC/25/63

VICE staff (2013, February 28). North Korea has a friend in Dennis Rodman and VICE. *VICE*. Retrieved from https://www.vice.com/

Wendt, A. (1992). Anarchy is what states make of it: the social construction of power politics. *International Organization*, 46(2), pp.391–425. http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0020818300027764

Work. (n.d.). Retrieved from http://michaelspavor.com/work/

Yes, we love this country! (2012a). Retrieved from http://www.traavik.info/projects/yes-we-love-this-country/

Yes, we love this country! (2012b). Retrieved from http://www.traavik.info/projects/yes-we-love-this-country-3/

Young, B.R. (2017, June 20). It's time to end engagement with North Korea. *NK News*. Retrieved from https://www.nknews.org/

Zheng, Y., Hong, L., & Szonyi, M. (2010). *The Cold War in Asia: The battle for hearts and minds*. Leiden: Brill.

Appendix 1: Interview Questions

1. General questions

How would you define *cultural engagement*?

What do you think are some of the most important engagement projects you have carried out in the past? Why?

2. Motivations & Expectations

What motivates you to do this work?

What do you believe is the added value of cultural projects over other forms of engagement (e.g. educational/humanitarian projects)?

What impact do you think engagement with North Korea is able to have (either in North Korea or elsewhere)? Can you give an example of a project that you have worked on that you know had a certain impact?

When do you feel a cultural engagement project has been carried out successfully?

What are the most common obstacles in carrying out this work?

3. Ethics

Why do you believe it is important to engage with North Korea?

Why do you believe it is ethically correct?

Can engagement projects have unintended negative consequences, and if yes, how? Can you think of an example?

What is the most common criticism that you encounter for doing this work? How do you respond to this criticism? (Depending on the answer to this question, I presented some of the critiques outlined in chapter two of this thesis and asked how they respond to these arguments).

Do you believe that your work can be seen as a form of cultural diplomacy?

4. Representations & Media

Before carrying out an engagement project, do you consider how the media might respond? How?

In dealing with the media or speaking/writing (online and elsewhere) about your work, do you consider how to represent North Korea? What image of North Korea do you wish to convey?

5. End

If you could do anything, what would be your ideal engagement project?

How do you see the future of engagement?

Is there anything you would like to add?