

Bust on the Border: Demilitarization and Urban Development in Dongducheon

Bridget Martin

In 2002, the US and South Korea agreed to move the vast majority of US forces out of North Gyeonggi Province and south of the Han River. This included plans for the US to move all of its forces out of the city of Dongducheon and to close all of its bases there by 2011, including the large sites of Camp Casey and Camp Hovey. However, while the US has closed several bases elsewhere in North Gyeonggi Province, it has continually delayed closures in Dongducheon, and continues to maintain control over 30% of the city's land. On top of this, another 24% of the city's land is classified as military easement area, tactically important space where development is prohibited or limited. This presentation provides an overview of the current status of base closures in North Gyeonggi Province and an explanation of the base conversion process. It also shows how and why an anti-base coalition has formed in the city, driven not by peace activists or leftists but by a pro-development coalition. Since 2003, local political leaders have framed the city as a "sacrifice zone for national security". Highlighting Dongducheon's "painful history" as the country's sex work capital, and a city that has suffered "deformed development", they demand collective compensation from the central government in the form of urban development benefits such as deregulation and state support for large-scale projects. The target of their critique is not the US military, but an "unfair" central government. This presentation examines the demands of this pro-growth anti-base coalition and positions their pro-growth agenda within a wider, interconnected geography of spatially uneven development, locally driven competitive growth regimes, and inter-scalar politics in the country.

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Date & Time: November 22nd (Wed) 2017, 12:00-13:00

Place: SNUAC Rm#406