

Contested Space, Contested Imaginations: Deconstructing the Greenbelt Controversy in South Korea

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Abstrak

This essay analyzes the greenbelt controversy in South Korea, triggered during the greenbelt revision process in 1999. Drawing on Lefebvre's theory of the production of space, it examines how Korean greenbelts were produced both as abstract and social spaces, and how they were appropriated by different groups involved in the controversy. The case study shows that the contestations over greenbelts were not only material but also symbolic and discursive processes where different imaginations of, as well as interests in, land and nature competed. Deconstructing the diverse discourses of greenbelts and highlighting their complexity, this essay challenges the dichotomy implicit in new social movement theories, which tends to assume defensiveness as the basic nature of progressive collective actions against colonizing efforts by globally operating forces. Instead, it decouples defensiveness and progressive politics, and suggests that local contexts shape diverse paths of collective actions.