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Extended urbanisation and the agrarian question: Convergences, divergences and openings

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Abstract

The question of urbanisation 'beyond the city' has generated a lively debate in the fields of urban studies and geography in recent years. This paper brings a key concept from this discussion – 'extended urbanisation' – in conversation with distinct yet related concepts from critical agrarian studies. We briefly review the 'classic' agrarian question in order to situate contemporary agrarian questions within the historical geographies of capitalist restructuring since the late-nineteenth century. We then examine a selection of contemporary agrarian scholarship attuned to the interconnectedness of agrarian and urban sociospatial relations to argue that the concept of extended urbanisation and urban studies more generally have much to gain from a closer engagement with this work. To this end, we identify three openings for further analysis: (1) 'global depeasantisation' and 'deruralisation' as the labour dimensions of extended urbanisation; (2) the co-existence of *banal* 'operational landscapes' with landscapes of high-intensity extraction and agro-industrialisation; and (3) relational periodisations of urbanisation that incorporate successive world-historical 'food regimes' and their associated commodity frontiers in order to unearth geohistories of extended urbanisation in colonial and postcolonial contexts. We conclude by rearticulating the 'right to the city' in terms of a broader 'right to space' as a means of re-centring ongoing struggles against capitalist urbanisation in spaces beyond the city.

Keywords

agglomeration, agrarian studies, development, economic processes, extended urbanisation, globalisation, theory, urbanisation

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摘要

近年来，“超越城市”的城市化问题在城市研究和地理学领域引发了热烈的讨论。本文从这场讨论中引出了一个关键概念“扩展城市化”，与批判性农业研究中截然不同但又相关的概念对话。我们简要回顾了“经典的”农业问题，以便将当代农业问题置于19世纪后期以来资本主义重组的历史地理框架内。然后，我们回顾了一些精选的当代农业学术研究成果（这些学术研究关注农业和城市社会空间关系的相互联系），以论证扩展城市化概念和更广泛的城市研究从与这项工作的更密切互动中获益良多。为此，我们确定了进一步分析的三个切入点：（1）“全球去农民化”和“去农村化”是扩展城市化的劳动力层面；（2）平庸的“操作局面”与高强度开采和农业工业化局面并存；以及（3）城市化的相关时期划分（结合了连续的世界历史“食物制度”及其相关的商品边界），以挖掘殖民和后殖民背景下扩展城市化的地理历史。最后，我们用更广泛的“空间权”来重新表述“城市权”，以此作为一种手段，将反对资本主义城市化的斗争重新集中在城市以外的空间。

关键词

集聚、农业研究、发展、经济过程、扩展城市化、全球化、理论、城市化

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Introduction

In recent years, the concept of planetary urbanisation has transformed the field of urban studies by subjecting its most basic epistemological categories – ‘the urban’ and ‘urbanisation’ – to meta-theoretical scrutiny. It has recast ‘the urban’ and ‘urbanisation’ as theoretical categories instead of empirical objects and, in so doing, offered a powerful alternative to the inherited epistemologies *and* to the entrenched ‘city-centrism’ of contemporary urban scholarship and discourse (Brenner, 2013, 2014, 2019; Brenner and Schmid, 2011, 2014, 2015). However, despite the radically transformative implications of this theoretical intervention, its epistemological framework is built primarily upon a foundation of heterodox urban theory and draws inspiration, in particular, from Henri Lefebvre’s prescient hypothesis of the ‘complete urbanisation of society’ (Lefebvre, 2003[1970]); one that he would go on to qualify as the ‘threat’ (‘*menace*’) of the ‘planetarisation of the urban’ (‘*la planétarisation de l’urbain*’) (Lefebvre, 1989: n.p.; see also Merrifield, 2013).

This paper attempts to contribute to the discussion on planetary urbanisation by introducing a set of complementary concepts from the inter-disciplinary field of agrarian studies in order to further develop the ‘reflexive epistemological framework’ proposed by Brenner and Schmid (2015).[1] Insofar as the concept of planetary urbanisation is motivated by its ambition to reframe and rescale the urban question, the urban question itself, we argue, is inextricable from the so-called agrarian question. Any thoroughgoing epistemological reformulation of the former requires sustained dialectical engagement with the latter. Brenner himself has recognised the need to link ‘urban’ political struggles to the ‘broader politics of the global commons’ playing out in decidedly ‘non-city’ contexts, including the myriad ongoing struggles led by ‘peasants, small landholders, farmworkers, indigenous populations, and their advocates’ (Brenner, 2013: 108). He has argued that the methodological proposition undergirding the concept of ‘planetary urbanisation’ allows for the construction of strategic *and* analytical connections between the multifarious forms of

dispossession precipitated by capitalist sociospatial restructuring (Brenner, 2013: 109, 2019). It is this invitation to forge analytical and political connections that this paper takes as its premise.

Although reflections on 'the urban' and its relationship to 'the rural' have long animated the field of urban studies, the 'agrarian question' and indeed the vast and heterogeneous field of agrarian studies have largely escaped critical engagement and consideration.[2] Relatedly, agrarian studies scholars – including those whose work we review in later sections – are rarely encountered in urban studies and urban geography scholarship despite their essential insights into the interrelationships between agrarian/ urban sociospatial and socioeconomic change, particularly in the context of the postcolonial South.[3] The aim of this paper is to move two vast and multidisciplinary fields of scholarship towards one another through a reading of key complementary concepts that enable fuller understandings of the relations between city and non-city sociospatial restructuring under capitalism. At the same time, we do not seek a synthesis – 'the agrarian question *is* the urban question' or vice versa – for such a task is not only hubristic but undermines our ability to transgress the boundaries of disciplinary knowledge without undermining their philosophical differences, intellectual inheritances and epistemic specificities. Thus, our aim is not to seek a 'heuristic consensus' (Gulbenkian Commission on the Restructuring of the Social Sciences, 1996) but to engender a form of epistemological 'frame switching' that establishes conceptual links between the perspectives under discussion while recognising the 'legitimacy of competing perspectives on the same issue' (Tadmor and Tetlock, 2006: 174; quoted in van Meeteren et al., 2016); and by seeking *openings* for further conceptualisation with and through these distinctive perspectives. We do not mean to imply that the agrarian question *is* the urban question but to simply suggest that insofar as these 'questions' designate historically constituted disciplinary divisions of labour, there is in each a space to consider the other. The intellectual approaches discussed in this paper offer the basis for one such instance of mediation and translation.

Urbanisation beyond the city

In his classic work *The Urban Revolution*, Henri Lefebvre laid the foundations for the theory of planetary urbanisation by formulating the hypothesis that 'society has been completely urbanised' (Lefebvre, 2003[1970]: 1).[4] Lefebvre argued that human society had entered a 'critical phase' where industrialisation had been supplanted by '*urban problematique*' as the 'motive force of historical change' (Smith, 2003: xvi). Thus 'industrial society' had given way to 'urban society' as 'the urban' had become the predominant *problematique* of the present conjuncture. The notion of 'urban society', for Lefebvre, represented a point of departure – 'an elaboration, a search, a conceptual formulation' (Lefebvre, 2003[1970]: 5) – for reconceptualising the epistemological lineaments of the urban and by reclaiming the 'the city' as a locus of revolutionary political practice.[5]

Building on Lefebvre's insights, the theorists of planetary urbanisation propose a reconfiguration of the terms in which uneven spatial development has been conventionally understood. In contradistinction to such inherited categories as 'urban/rural, metropole/colony, First/Second/Third World, North/South, East/West' in urban scholarship (Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 152), the authors propose a schema consisting of three mutually constitutive and dialectically intertwined 'moments' of urbanisation – concentrated, extended and differential urbanisation. These 'moments', the authors

argue, offer a 'multifaceted' conceptualisation of urbanisation that 'transcends the limitations and blind spots of mainstream models' (Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 166). Concentrated urbanisation refers to the urban agglomerations that constitute the sites as well as the 'engines' of capitalist urbanisation. While agglomerations – small and large – have long motivated the study of urban space and its transformations, Brenner and Schmid emphatically reject the singular emphasis on agglomerations as the 'privileged or even exclusive terrain of urban development' arguing that spatial transformations in agglomerations are inextricably linked to the places, territories and landscapes – often located far beyond the jurisdictional limits and spatial boundaries of metropolitan regions – that undergo concomitant transformations as a consequence of, or in support of, the 'everyday operations and growth imperatives' of apparently distant agglomerations (Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 167). The transformation of these spaces, traditionally understood as the *Other* of 'the city', constitute moments of 'extended urbanisation'.

The notion of extended urbanisation encapsulates those processes of sociospatial and ecological transformation that both *enable* and *result from* the expansion of capitalist relations of production. Brenner and Schmid broadly categorise these processes as: (1) the 'operationalisation' of 'distant' landscapes to meet the 'socio-metabolic imperatives' of city growth including the 'procurement and circulation' of food, water, fuel and raw materials; (2) the construction and reorganisation of transportation and communications infrastructures such as roads, rail, pipelines, canals, internet and electricity cables, etc. that connect agglomerations across time and space; and (3) the appropriation of land from 'established social uses' for the purposes of capital accumulation as well as the extension of capitalist social relations to 'non-commodified modes of social life' (Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 167; see also Monte-Mór, 2005). The third moment, differential urbanisation, refers to the cyclical 'creative destruction' of sociospatial arrangements, including as a result of crisis-induced restructuring within *and beyond* the limits of cities (Harvey, 2006; Smith, 2008). Crucially, these three 'moments' of urbanisation are not meant to signify 'distinct morphological conditions, geographical sites or temporal stages' but refer to a set of 'historically specific processes of sociospatial transformation' that are 'mutually constitutive' and 'dialectically intertwined' (Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 169).

While the three 'moments' offer an epistemological framework of urbanisation by reconstituting the limits of 'the urban', the authors recombine them with three 'dimensions' derived from Lefebvre's famous spatial triad. The three 'dimensions' are distinguished as spatial practices, territorial regulation and 'everyday life'. What emerges from this multidimensional conceptualisation of urbanisation is a polyvalent as well as multifocal analytical toolkit and a 'new lexicon of sociospatial differentiation' attentive to the uneven and mutating spatial expressions, mediums and effects of world-market expansion and capitalist development (Brenner, 2013: 99; Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 172). It is critical here to distinguish the epistemological propositions articulated by Brenner and Schmid – the three 'moments' and 'dimensions' – from the concept of 'planetary urbanisation'. The latter, in the authors' formulation, refers to the historically specific 'contemporary' formation of urbanisation that emerged in the long 1980s; a conjuncture characterised by the dissolution of Fordist-Keynesian and national-developmentalist regimes of accumulation and the onset of neoliberalisation characterised by massive financial

deregulation, the global mobilisation of finance capital and the 'creation of new forms of market-oriented territorial regulation at supranational, national and subnational scales' (Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 173; see also Brenner, 2019; Brenner et al., 2010). While 'planetary urbanisation' is built upon the epistemological framework of extended, concentrated and differential urbanisation, it is a concept articulated to a 'radically reconfigured'*form* as well as *process* of urbanisation specific to the late-20th and early-21st centuries (Brenner and Schmid, 2011: 11). The sociospatial transformations that inform the concept of 'planetary urbanisation' include: (1) new scales of urbanisation represented by the proliferation of 'extremely large, rapidly expanding, polynucleated metropolitan regions around the world', (2) the regionalisation and reterritorialisation of urbanisation processes through the extension and dispersal of 'central functions' to peri-urban zones, small and medium-sized towns and transportation corridors, (3) the transformation and degradation of 'wilderness spaces' due to the sociometabolic demands and consequences of urbanisation, and (4) the disintegration of erstwhile 'hinterland' spaces by their progressive 'operationalisation' to 'facilitate the continued expansion of industrial urbanisation and its associated planetary urban networks' (Brenner and Schmid, 2011: 11–12).

Just as the concept of planetary urbanisation has inspired a spate of sociospatial scholarship, much of which focuses on the Global South (e.g. Angelo, 2017; Arboleda, 2015, 2016; Castriota and Tonucci, 2018; Ghosh, 2017; Horn, 2018; Kanai, 2014, 2016; Kanai and Schindler, 2019; Khan and Karak, 2018; Monte-Mór and Castriota, 2018; Wilson and Bayón, 2015), so too has it elicited critical responses from a range of theoretical and politico-epistemological standpoints including (broadly) geographical political economy (Walker, 2015), post- and anti-colonial theory (Jazeel, 2018; Reddy, 2018; Roy, 2016), queer theory (Oswin, 2018), and feminist urban theory (Buckley and Strauss, 2016; Derickson, 2018; Mclean, 2018; Peake 2016a). While we are firmly attentive to these criticisms and concerns, we do not intend to enter into an already crowded field of critics. Rather, our purpose is to take a cautious step forward by taking a step back. Even though planetary urbanisation is a concept born out of the epistemological framework formulated by its proponents, the central concern of this paper is the framework itself. We take the tripartite schema of concentrated, extended and differential urbanisation as an invitation to explode the analytical limit-conditions of sociospatial scholarship by incorporating within its concerns those landscapes and peoples that have been historically underrepresented, if not entirely neglected, by the so-called 'urban question'. These landscapes, it must be noted, constitute most of the surface of the planet and are inhabited by at least half of its human population. Dominant meta-narratives of 'the urban age' – including those that Brenner and Schmid forcefully critique – function to dismiss non-city spaces and their inhabitants as remnants of an obsolete world awaiting the inevitable 'transition' to urban ways of life. By reconceptualising 'the urban' as a *theoretical category* and urbanisation as an irruptive, uneven and relational *historical process* whose dynamics extend far beyond sites of agglomeration, the theorists of planetary urbanisation have not only challenged mainstream city-centric 'urban age' discourses but have also reconfigured the spatio-temporal and epistemological horizons of critical urban studies.[6] At the same time, we echo Kasia Paprocki's (2020: 5–6) assertion that this incipient interest in socio-spatial transformations beyond the city has much to gain from a closer engagement with the field of critical agrarian studies.

The 'classic' agrarian question: Then and now

The massive intellectual and political labour expended on the 'agrarian question' since its original late-19th-century formulation evidence its multifarious, historically conditioned meanings, implications and political visions. Despite the fact that the agrarian question – by the late-20th century – had acquired multiple 'layers of meaning' in Marxist discourse, the common core shared by its diverse formulations was an interest in 'urban/industrial as well as rural/agricultural transformation' (Byres, 1991: 10, see also 1986; Bernstein, 1996; Levien et al., 2018). For Marx and Engels, capitalism was a dynamic historical force that would spur the development of cities and concomitantly transform the countryside by '[rescuing] a considerable part of the population from the idiocy of rural life'[7] (1962 [1848]). In this classic formulation, the development of the capitalist mode of production was predicated on the dispossession and displacement of peasants who would then go on to join the ranks of the proletariat and eventually 'dig the grave' of capitalism (Marx and Engels, 1962 [1848]: 30).

Building on the foundation established by Marx and Engels (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2010a; Levien et al., 2018), Karl Kautsky formalised the 'classic' agrarian question at the end of the 19th century in the *The Agrarian Question*: a work principally concerned with 'whether, and how, capital is seizing hold of agriculture, revolutionising it, making old forms of production and property untenable and creating the necessity for new ones' (Kautsky, 1988 [1899]: 12). For Kaustky, the emergence of agrarian capital was structurally bound to the expansion and deepening use of industrially produced commodities – and the simultaneous curtailment of commodity production under 'pre-capitalist' conditions – in the countryside. This intensifying market dependence created a 'need for money', resulting in the increased commoditisation of agriculture and the development of agrarian capital (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2010a). What resulted was differentiation and specialisation within the peasantry as certain sections would become competitive producers for markets and mobilise strategies of capitalise accumulation while those unable to compete would continue to produce for subsistence even as their land-holdings fragmented and diminished, rendering them 'increasingly unable to meet all the needs of the household' and forcing them to sell their assets and eventually their labour power in order to survive (Kautsky, 1988 [1899]: 172). At the same time, Kautsky crucially recognised that smaller peasants and 'dwarf-holding' farmers could become functionally integral to capitalist agriculture – as sellers of labour power to large-scale agricultural enterprises and as buyers of the products of large-scale farms for subsistence needs (1988 [1899]: 166–167, 175).

The processes described by Kautsky presaged contemporary global agrarian transformations, in particular the diverse ways in which agro-industrial capital subsumes – without fully transforming – petty commodity production to its demands (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2010a: 188; Kautsky, 1988 [1899]: 284). Kautsky nevertheless held that the inexorable expansion of industry into the countryside would *eventually* transform relations of production in agriculture, for 'any agricultural activity linked with and dependent on industry passes into a phase of uninterrupted transformation, constantly creating and recreating new forms – just like industry itself' (1988[1899]: 328). Kautsky's contribution set the terms for future debates on class formation and the agrarian question, between romantic representations of a unified peasantry as a progressive anti-capitalist force on one side and an emphasis

on the 'death of peasantry' (Hobsbawm, 1994) and the obsolete or reactionary nature of this category on the other. As Jairus Banaji (1990) has argued, *The Agrarian Question* sought to devise a 'middle course' for social democratic parties in Western Europe that would neither seek to 'protect' the peasantry against capitalist development nor brashly hasten their 'inevitable' proletarianisation to prepare the conditions for the victory of social democracy in the countryside.

The publication of Kautsky's *The Agrarian Question* made an impression on Lenin's analysis of agrarian change in tsarist Russia. In his review of Kautsky's book, he praised it as 'the most important event in present-day economic literature since the third volume of *Capital*' as he considered it the first 'systematic' Marxist study of capitalism-in-agriculture (1964[1899]: 94). Even though Lenin's writings espoused a sceptical view of peasant class-consciousness typical of vanguardist political movements at the time, his contributions to the agrarian question are nevertheless fundamental. He influentially identified two paths to the development of capitalism in agriculture that had divergent political-economic entailments (Lenin, 1972[1908]; see also Byres, 1996). The 'Junker' or 'Prussian road' posited that large feudal landlords would gradually transform into a capitalist landlord class while dependent sharecroppers/tenant farmers would be condemned to 'decades of most harrowing expropriation and bondage' (1972[1908]: 267). In this model, capitalist transformation proceeded 'from above' – controlled by large landowners – and constrained the development of a 'peasant economy' as well as class differentiation within the peasantry (Byres, 1996: 28). Lenin's second model – the 'American road' – represented the development of agrarian capitalism 'from below'. Here, the absence of a pre-existing landlord class resulted in the unfettered development of small peasant farming, which in turn would lead to an 'internal' differentiation of the peasantry into the bourgeoisie farmer and the rural proletariat 'where the capital/wage labour relationship would grow … in a far freer form than in the Prussian case' (Byres, 1996: 30).

While these 'classic' approaches and concerns seem far removed from contemporary issues of agrarian development, they form the theoretical bedrock upon which subsequent iterations of the agrarian question have been constructed. At the same time, they are specific to a historical moment in which the state (and in particular emerging nation-states propelled by the end of empires) was seen to play the primary role in promoting capitalist development in the countryside in order to facilitate accumulation and industrialisation at the national scale. Henry Bernstein has provocatively posited that in the globalisation era starting in the 1970s this classic agrarian question *of capital*– including the 'transition to' or the 'emergence of' agrarian capitalism – has been rendered irrelevant (Bernstein, 2006, 2009; but see Patnaik and Moyo, 2011). Bernstein makes a number of interrelated points to support this claim: (1) the end of predatory landed property as 'significant economic and political force' in the South by the late-1970s as a result of post-war land reform, (2) the implosion of state-led developmentalism and the related abandonment of a putatively 'agrarian-based strategy of industrial accumulation', and (3) the 'extraordinary ongoing growth of productivity in capitalist agriculture' as a result of the intensifying capitalisation of world agriculture and the relentless globalisation of agribusiness (Bernstein, 2006: 452). Bernstein also emphasises, in subsequent writing, 'the internationalisation of capitalist social relations in the organisation of economic activity' including the thoroughgoing

transformation of the agricultural sector under late-capitalism as it is increasingly albeit unevenly *integrated* through global, national and subnational divisions of labour, circuits of capital, commodity chains, industrial processing, and infrastructure and logistics networks (2009: 248). As Bernstein writes:

> for capital on a global scale, the definitive questions of continuously raising the productivity of labor in farming, the production of cheap food staples, and the agrarian sources of industrial accumulation *have been resolved*, albeit with all the customary – and intensifying – contradictions of combined and uneven development that characterizes contemporary capitalism' (emphasis added) (2009: 250)

If the agrarian question of *capital* has indeed been made irrelevant by globalisation and geo-economic integration, the agrarian question of *labour* remains central to it. Masses of peasants and rural workers, 'bypassed' by global capital, increasingly struggle for access to livelihoods and face a 'crisis of reproduction' (Bernstein, 2006: 455). Therefore the agrarian question is only relevant insofar as it 'shapes political struggles by subordinate classes of labour over resources, production and accumulation' (Akram-Lodhi and Kay, 2010b: 267; see also Bernstein, 2016). These are not systematic coordinated struggles, suggesting a 'replay in contemporary conditions of the epic peasant movements and struggles of previous epochs', as they do not relate simply to the question of land ownership but may, on the contrary, be the result of a 'fragmentation of labour' understood as the defining characteristic of globalisation (Bernstein, 2006: 456; see also Davis, 2007; Marsden, 1995).

In the context of the anti-/alter-globalisation movements of the past 25 years, global peasant movements have come to represent, for some scholars, a key locus of resistance to the hegemony of global capital by articulating political imaginaries of radical democracy and international solidary (McMichael, 2008; Patel, 2006). For Bernstein, these arguments in favour of 'restoring' the peasant to the land (as a way to separate her from the logics of capital) may be misguided, as (1) they tend to essentialise the contemporary peasantry as a unique class and 'the peasant' as a unitary class subject, eliding the contradictory and 'multi-class character' of 'peasant' struggles; and (2) they force them to subject their petty production capacities to the 'vagaries of relentless micro-capitalism' (Bernstein, 2006: 458).

Who is dispossessed and exploited? What economic and territorial transformations in 'the countryside' are making this possible? Where are these fragmented classes finding the means for their social reproduction? If the contemporary agrarian question is indeed only made relevant by focusing on *labour*, as suggested above, we should then turn to the mechanisms through which globalisation has produced a new 'global division of labour', adapting Marx's classic concern for the emergence of an 'industrial reserve army' (1990 [1867]: 784–791) to a globalised world.

'Global depeasantisation' and the new division of labour

Farshad Araghi has attended to the agrarian question from a world-historical perspective by situating it within the dynamics of global capitalist development (Araghi, 1995, 2009a, 2009b). In contradistinction to those studies that restrict their 'geography of analysis' to their 'geography of observation', Araghi has insisted on an approach that conceptualises social phenomena as 'local-global processes within a specified historical context' (Araghi, 1995: 337). Central to this formulation is a reconceptualisation of the spatiotemporal coordinates of the agrarian question as well

as its constitutive phenomena at the world scale. Agrarian relations, for Araghi, are co-constituted by spatial and social relations that transcend the binary, fixed and 'given' distinctions of 'rural or urban localities' as well as the 'quantitative and flat space of rural–urban continuum' (Araghi, 2009b: 131). Araghi adopts a radically relational view of agrarian social relations by privileging its 'profound interconnectedness' with environmental degradation, urbanisation and informalisation (Araghi, 2009b: 113). The key concept that drives Araghi's work is 'global depeasantisation' which refers to the 'experience of the Third World peasantries' from around 1945 to 1990 when a massive number of people involved in agriculture with 'direct access to the production of their means of subsistence were expropriated and displaced, creating huge urban masses of superfluous people' (Araghi, 2000: 145, see also 1995; Davis, 2007). The concept of 'global depeasantisation' is disaggregated into two broad phases:

(1) the period of 'long national developmentalism' originating in the early 20th century and intensifying in the period between 1945 up to the 1970s; and
(2) the period of 'postcolonial neoliberal globalism' beginning in the 1970s (Araghi, 2000, 2009b).

Araghi traces the origins of the national developmentalist phase to the Russian Revolution of 1917 and the emergence of the Soviet Union, which provided the basis for the rise of the welfare state in the West and the post-Second World War national developmental states of the Global South. Araghi further distinguishes the latter into two: (1) state-led or socialist national developmentalisms and (2) market-led 'Western-oriented' national developmentalisms (Araghi, 2009b: 123). The second variety of national developmentalisms (in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, parts of Latin America) were shaped, in part, by the American political response to the rapid expansion of socialist nationalisms that threatened to restrict 'the political and commercial space of the global free trade and free enterprise regime, the implementation of which was being sponsored by the USA' (Araghi, 2009b: 124). The USA attempted to strike a 'compromise' with national developmentalist import-substituting industrialisation policies by extending land reform programmes that turned Leninist agrarian strategy 'on its head' by delinking postcolonial peasant movements from urban nationalist and socialist movements (Araghi, 2009b: 125). However, coeval with the drive to reform agrarian property ownership by extending petty capitalist ownership in the countryside was the massive reorganisation of world agriculture in the post-war period through the construction of a US-centred 'food regime' (Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; see also Friedmann, 1982; McMichael, 2009, 2014).

This international food regime constituted a key component of American post-war strategy that sought to 'widen and deepen' capitalist relations within the world economy by extending them to parts of the post-colonial South (Friedmann, 1982; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989). The primary vehicle for its construction was the US food aid programme – a surplus export regime for subsidised American grain that extended the grain market to peoples 'formerly engaged in subsistence and barter relations' thereby shifting a great proportion of the world population away from 'direct access to food and incorporating it instead into food markets' (Friedmann, 1982: S255). This period of US-inflected national developmentalism – characterised by the simultaneous implementation of inward-oriented developmentalist programmes and the construction of an 'international food order' –

had two contradictory outcomes. The promotion of petty capitalist ownership in the countryside through agrarian and land reform led to uneven 'nation-based peasantisation' in the Global South. At the same time, the restructuring of world agriculture exposed petty producers to unequal world-market competition with highly capitalised and subsidised farms in the North and a new *global* division of labour that 'substantively undercut and derailed home market formation and nation-based divisions of labour' (Araghi, 2009b: 128).[8] As Araghi writes:

> some Third World peasants benefited from production under subsidized conditions and consequently became the net buyers of (rural) labor. Most, however, became the net *sellers* of labor as part-time wageworkers/cultivators, in varying forms and proportions, and increasingly as temporary or permanent urban migrants. (1995: 352)

The demographic underpinnings of this simultaneous peasantisation and depeasantisation can be understood in terms of a historical combination of *push* and *pull* migration factors operating at the global scale (Araghi, 2009b: 130). Global push factors are the complex of operations – surplus dumping through food aid programmes, growing food import-dependency and exposure to the global price form – that undermined the intended outcome of petty commodity production, resulting in the *displacement* of 'rural' populations to 'urban' locations. Global pull factors refer to the political-economic imperatives of developmentalist 'modernisation' that *drew* rural populations to metropolitan regions by promoting domestic industrialisation and urban development. The sum spatial effect of the push and pull migration factors in the Global South was 'deruralisation' through 'relative depeasantisation' in the period between 1950 and 1970, expressed by the accelerating decline of rural populations because of net rural outmigration to 'urban centres' which contributed in turn to 'overurbanisation' (Araghi, 1995: 338, 2009b: 131).

The pace of global depeasantisation ramped up in the period following 1973 as the dissolution of American hegemony, the breakdown of post-war Keynesianism and the rise of global stagflation ushered in a crisis of capital accumulation. The era of neoliberal restructuring transformed the welfare state in the North and dismantled the national developmentalist welfare state in the South where import-substituting industrialisation was progressively replaced with 'so-called outward-oriented or export-led industrialisation strategies' (Araghi, 1995: 355). This further dismantled 'nation-state-based agricultural versus industrial divisions of labour' that had hitherto constituted the centrepiece of post-colonial developmentalism (Araghi, 2009b: 131). What emerged in its stead was a reorganised international division of labour freed from the countervailing protections of the agrarian welfare state as well as the 'subsumption of formerly protected home markets' forcing 'millions of petty producers in the South to compete with heavily subsidised agro-industrial food transnational corporations in the North' (Araghi, 2009b: 133–134). The regulatory entrenchment of unequal terms of competition led to 'absolute (as opposed to relative) depeasantisation' through dispossessions by displacement, producing a massive reserve army of partially as well as fully mobile migratory labour that constitute a vast majority of the 'world slum population' (Araghi, 2009b: 134, 2009a; Davis, 2007; Sanyal, 2014). This complex process of spatial restructuring that results in rural dispossession by displacement is characterised by Araghi as the 'great global enclosure of our times' whose spatial expression takes the form of 'global deruralisation' and 'global hyperurbanisation' (2000).

Araghi's notion of 'global enclosure' is undergirded by David Harvey's concept of 'accumulation by dispossession', itself an elaboration and reinterpretation of Marx's 'primitive accumulation' (Araghi, 2009b; Harvey, 2003). Contra Marx's assumption that 'primitive' or 'original' accumulation is the 'point of departure' for the capitalist mode of production (Marx, 1990 [1867]: 873), Harvey has argued that the processes described by 'primitive accumulation' play a continuous, cyclical and persistent role in the historical geographies of capital accumulation, intensifying during crises of overaccumulation in the expanded reproduction of capital (Harvey, 2003). Relatedly, Araghi argues that the neoliberal phase of capitalism and its processes of accumulation by dispossession have more in common with 'colonial-liberal globalism' between 1834 and the late-19th century than is typically recognised, namely 'economic liberalism, antiwelfarism, free-market fetishism, and design for constructing a truly global division of labour, as witnessed in the "workshop of the world" project shared by both' (Araghi, 2009b: 114). Therefore, from a world-historical standpoint, neoliberal capitalism functionally resembles colonial-liberal global capitalism even as it follows post-war national-developmentalism chronologically.

In sum, the concept of 'accumulation by dispossession' refers to the heterogeneous and variegated multi-sectoral processes through which global capital reproduces itself and overcomes periodic crises of overaccumulation. Dispossession by displacement through 'global enclosures' is one such process wherein 'global depeasantisation' is exacerbated and spatially expressed through simultaneous 'deruralisation' and 'hyperurbanisation' as masses of agrarian petty producers are expropriated and transformed into partial or fully mobile migratory labour. Thus, Araghi argues that 'if simultaneous peasantisation and depeasantisation was the distinguishing character of the agrarian program of national developmentalism, simultaneous depeasantisation and deproletarianisation is the defining feature of the agrarian program of postcolonial neoliberal globalism' (2009b: 134). This agrarian programme of neoliberal global enclosure – 'the enclosure food regime' – is characterised by Araghi as a '*spatial regime of dispossession*' whose primary thrust is the 'enclosure of the spaces of existence of the world's peasantries' through the appropriation of land and non-market means of subsistence; the dissolution of national agrarianisms; the constriction of agricultural petty production and the promotion and subsidisation of agroindustrial corporate agriculture; the commodification of food security and the intensification of food-import dependency; the freeing up of under-reproduced (cheap) labour power for global consumption and the institution of a global division of labour (2009b: 135; see also McMichael, 2012, 2014). The post-2008 conjuncture has seen the intensification of large-scale enclosure and depeasantisation through 'global land grabs' in response to the 'converging multiple crises of food, energy, climate and finance, as well as the rising demands for commodities from newer hubs (e.g. Global South transnational corporations and state-domestic capital alliances) of global capital' (Borras et al., 2012: 410).

Extended urbanisation and agrarian questions: New openings

The term 'enclosure', first used with regard to the appropriation of the commons in early-modern England, has a long history of usage in radical scholarship to refer to processes of 'spatially-orchestrated dispossession' (Sevilla-Buitrago, 2015). Araghi similarly uses the term to foreground the spatial dynamics of the reorganisation of agriculture under neoliberal capitalism. The

twin-processes of 'global deruralisation' and 'global hyperurbanisation' refer to the spatial effects of the enclosure food regime as vast numbers of the peasantry are expropriated and 'pushed' into urban agglomerations as surplus migratory labour subjected to forced under-reproduction through the market mechanism. Here, the agrarian question is turned 'on its head' by reversing the historical emphasis on its resolution 'in its peripheral and subordinate relationship to a national urban question' (Araghi, 2009b: 138). In doing so, Araghi reframes the agrarian question of labour in terms of its *global* sociospatial dimensions – transcending both the nation-state and the home market as privileged units of analysis (2009b: 118). Thus, global depeasantisation refers to the 'constriction of global rural space' through outmigration, suburbanisation and the 'increasing encroachment of industrial, agro-commercial, information and service economies into what was formerly rural space'(Araghi, 2009b: 119). Its corollary, global hyperurbanisation refers to the expansion of global urban space through the 'amassment of deproletarianised and homeless surplus labour populations' (Araghi, 2009b: 119) – a formulation remarkably analogous to Brenner and Schmid's proposition of dialectically intertwined moments of extended and concentrated urbanisation (Ghosh, 2017). Moreover, Araghi's periodisation of 'global depeasantisation' as an outcome of neoliberal restructuring originating in the early-1970s mirrors the periodisation – 'the long 1980s' – given by Brenner and Schmid in their concept of planetary urbanisation. While both formulations share much in common insofar as they attempt to theorise polymorphic processes of sociospatial restructuring at the world scale (see for instance Brenner, 2019: 365), the questions they set out with are substantively distinct. It is this moment of substantive difference *in the first instance*, rather than the convergence of concrete insights in the last that offers, we believe, a productive opening towards the development of a recombinant ensemble of concepts as well as a reflexive epistemological framework attuned to the thoroughly entwined spatiotemporal dynamics of agrarian and urban restructuring under capitalism. To this end, we would like to elaborate three potential 'openings' for further research and analysis:

(1) *Global depeasantisation and deruralisation as the labour dimensions of extended urbanisation*: The concept of extended urbanisation emphasises the transformation of spaces beyond the limits of cities because of their 'operationalisation' to meet the 'socio-metabolic imperatives' of urban growth: food, water, energy and so on. At the same time, Brenner and Schmid *specify* two other elements including the extension and intensification of infrastructure development as well as the enclosure of land via privatisation, commodification and other forms of accumulation by dispossession. The concept of deruralisation refers to the same set of processes but from an obverse standpoint. Even as Araghi frames his analysis in terms of the spatial discontents of a historically specific form of capitalist development, his guiding focus is the manifestation of 'historical value relations and class formation' in 'rural space' or landscapes of agricultural production (Araghi, 2009b: 119). Araghi pays close attention to the global class differentiation engendered by processes of depeasantisation and the constitution of an 'enclosure food regime'. 'Deruralisation', in this context, refers not only to the transformation of erstwhile agricultural land into non-agricultural land but also to the *urbanisation of labour* both in terms of

unprecedented 'rural to urban' migration and the 'urbanisation of agricultural employment' in the Global South (Araghi, 1995). While the dialectic of extended/concentrated/differential urbanisation offers a framework with which to understand the production of new 'urban' spaces by capital, it largely elides, however, the experiences of the *people* – the 'global industrial reserve army' and 'surplus populations' – that are dispossessed and immiserated as part of these processes (Li, 2010). While Brenner and Schmid accommodate transforming labour systems and their demographic implications within their framework, they offer but a sketch that is productively elaborated by the concept of 'global depeasantisation' (and its spatial expressions in 'global deruralisation' and 'global hyper-urbanisation') that takes as its theoretical *problematique* the agrarian question of labour. Indeed, greater attention to the question of labour and the violent repercussions of the *reproduction squeeze* under contemporary capitalism offers a theoretical coordinate for 'grounding' the extended/concentrated/differential schema in the *experiences* of 'the poorest people, who are routinely dispossessed through the very processes that enable other people to prosper' (Li, 2010: 87; see also Fraser, 2018). If critical urban theory should investigate the capital–nature nexus in relation to urbanisation, so should it account for the experiences of human labour, the uneven trajectories of proletarianisation and the creation of surplus populations. Concretely, this means attending to regional and international circular migration between non-city and city spaces as well as emergent climate refugee flows just as much as we reflect on the development of territorial infrastructure; it means accounting for the inter-regional and international remittances of migrant labour just as much as we analyse foreign direct investments by state-owned enterprises and multinational corporations. Recent contributions by Mezzadra and Neilson (2013, 2019), Deborah Cowen (2014), Cardoso et al. (2018), Gidwani and Ramamurthy (2018), and Martín Arboleda (2020) offer important points of departure that might be read in conjunction with Araghi's notion of 'global depeasantisation' in order to more fully apprehend the labour geographies of extended urbanisation.

(2) *Operational landscapes beyond the 'colossal'*: The concept of extended urbanisation refers to 'spaces of the non-city [that] have been continuously operationalised in support of city-building processes throughout the global history of capitalist uneven development' (Brenner, 2017: 217). These landscapes are transformed – *operationalised* – 'relentlessly' into 'zones of high-intensity, large-scale industrial infrastructure' (Brenner, 2017: 219). In contrast to sites of small-scale commodity production, these operational landscapes 'are consolidated through the active production of *colossal* urban-industrial spatial configurations' (Brenner, 2017: 220, emphasis added; see also 2019: 364; Brenner and Katsikis, 2020). Several illuminating contributions have used this concept to emphasise the techno-managerially driven transformation of landscapes resulting from their appropriation by global extractive and logistical processes (Arboleda, 2020; Couling, 2018; Labban, 2014). While these discussions tend to focus on the increasing

capitalisation, mechanisation and robotisation of resource extraction and primary commodity production, there are also other, less spectacular ways in which 'hinterlands' are being operationalised by the corporate food regime of neoliberal capitalism (McMichael, 2012). This *banal* operationalisation of landscapes does not necessarily entail a departure from agriculture in term of land use, nor an irruptive descent of global capital upon previously 'untouched' landscapes but rather incremental and uneven transformations in social relations effected by supply chain reorganisation and vertical integration (McCullough et al., 2008; see also Tsing, 2009). This often results in social fragmentation within agrarian communities, as relations of production *and* social reproduction – including ethnic, caste, religious, gender and household relations – are reconfigured by generalised market imperatives (see, e.g., Balakrishnan, 2019; Chari, 2004; Hart, 1992; O'Laughlin, 2009; Razavi, 2009; Watts, 2009). An example of this can be found in the ethnographic work of Tania Li (2001, 2014) in the Lauje highlands of Sulawesi, Indonesia, where the uptake of cacao as a cash crop in the 1990s – and the ensuing formation of capitalist relations – was not 'imposed' by the state or agribusiness corporations through allocations of capital or 'high-intensity large-scale infrastructure', but was stimulated by initiatives taken by indigenous Lauje highlanders in response to opportunities presented by the Indonesian cacao boom. These highland landscapes of cacao cultivation should be considered, in this sense, banal operational landscapes as they constituted 'new' commodity frontiers where customary land and labour arrangements were transformed by capital, 'stealthily' but mediated nonetheless by the global price of cacao, resulting in the acceleration of enclosure, capitalisation and competition (Li, 2014). Relatedly, Nancy Lee Peluso's work (2017) on the overlapping mining and plantation frontiers in the West Kalimantan region of Indonesia shows that the reorganisation of plantation production following the 2007–2008 oil palm boom led to the racialisation of land politics and of the 'smallholder slot'. While smallholders were eliminated from the 'plantation lexicon', the concurrent post-2008 gold rush led to the intensification of smallholder mining on land claimed by or contracted to plantations (2017: 865). Consequently, the 'smallholder slot' came to be occupied by small-scale gold miners who 'self-identify as smallholders and resemble small farmers and smallholder plantation growers in material, symbolic, and political ways' (2017: 864). In the context of West Africa, Kojo Sebastian Amanor (2012) has shown how the transnational agribusiness-led restructuring of supply chains since the 1990s resulted in the internal fragmentation of the smallholder sector into more or less 'competitive' producers. The more competitive commercial smallholders expand and displace less competitive smallholders as they are integrated into global supply chains. Amanor characterises this tendency of internal differentiation within the smallholder sector as a 'gradual process of dispossession from below, in which the pressures of market competitiveness lead[s] to the exit of independent farm production by the rural poor, and the increasing concentration of farm property' (2012: 736). Here, as in Sulawesi, the mechanisms of dispossession entail

a complex and uneven reorganisation of smallholder production and its integration within global supply chains through multiple forms of commodification. This sets off a 'race to the bottom' that ultimately undermines smallholder production and food security, and increasingly immiserates marginal producers (Amanor, 2012: 745).

(3) *Towards relational periodisations*: While the concept of 'planetary urbanisation' is articulated to the socio-spatial and socio-ecological dynamics of neoliberal capitalism, the epistemological framework that undergirds it has the potential to enable relational analyses and alternative periodisations of prior formations of capitalist urbanisation – 'roughly from the 1830s to the 1970s' (Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 172). This framework 'would permit the dynamics of city growth during each period to be analysed in direct relation to the production and reconstitution of historically and geographically specific operational landscapes (mediated through Empire, colonialism, neo-colonialism and various forms of enclosure and accumulation through dispossession) that supported the latter' (Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 172). Such an approach to the historical analysis of urbanisation processes could be developed in relation to the world historical periodisations of global agrofood arrangements developed by proponents of the food regime perspective (Araghi, 2003, 2009b; Friedmann and McMichael, 1989; McMichael, 2009, 2014; see also Bernstein, 2016). Araghi, for instance, has proffered a *longue durée* account of the emergence and consolidation of 'the global food regime of capital' – conceptualised as a system that 'produces, transfers, and distributes value' (2009b: 120) as the basis for constructing dependent relationships between 'subsidised consumption' and 'forced underconsumption' – along the following lines: (1) the *long* 'first colonialism' from 1492 to 1834 characterised by racialised enclosures in the Americas and Castilian Spain, the proliferation of global colonial enclosures and 'the original primitive accumulation of capital in England' that together facilitated the rise of industrial capital in the 19th century (2009b: 120–121; see also Moore, 2017); (2) the 'second colonialism' between 1834 and 1917 characterised by the emergence of industrial capital and an 'increasingly globally organised system of forced underconsumption' that lowered the value of labour-power and instituted a 'value-based' global division of labour (2009b:122). This laid the foundations for (3) the national developmentalist period between 1917 and 1975 marked by the retreat of classical liberalism, the rise of Keynesianism and the temporary curtailment of *laissez faire* principles (2009b: 122). (4) The ongoing fourth period is characterised by the rise of neoliberalism, the retrenchment of welfarist national developmentalism and a 'restructuring of the neocolonial relation between Third World nationalisms and the wealthy capitalist countries of the North' (Araghi, 2000: 150). *Longue durée* periodisations of global agrarian transformation, such as the above, can open the door to relational approaches to the historical geographies of urbanisation, as a process thoroughly mediated by waves of agrarian restructuring. The food regime perspective defines a 'capitalist order' or a 'cycle of accumulation' in terms of the organisation of agriculture at the world scale and its associated

configurations of labour and capital, with each regime specifying a 'successive part of an evolving historical conjuncture – the age of industrial agriculture' (McMichael, 2015: 309–310; see also Araghi, 2003; Arrighi, 2010). At the same time, each successive regime is contingent upon expansive, world-shaping spatial and agro-ecological fixes that seek to mitigate crises of productivity and enable new rounds of accumulation (McMichael, 2015: 309; Moore, 2015). The food regime perspective thus offers a concrete critical-historical basis for *periodising, historicising* and *comparing* the socio-spatial (and socio-ecological) transformations that have enabled and resulted from food regimes transitions and consolidations in the long 20th century, and for analysing the relations between specific operational landscapes and sites of agglomeration. Conversely, historicising the dialectic of urbanisation with regard to historically and geographically specific commodity frontiers – from the production of the grain frontier in the American Midwest in the mid-19th century to the construction of the Punjab 'canal colonies' in the late-19th century – might not only unearth *other* geohistories of capitalist urbanisation but also help illuminate the rescaling processes and sociospatial interdependencies attendant to successive world-historical food regimes.

Conclusion

Brenner and Schmid's proposal to redefine the object of urban studies has elicited several critical responses, including some that balk at the proposition of an 'urban theory without an outside', fearing it might lead to analytical 'totalisation', epistemic violence and disciplinary border-policing (Derickson, 2018; Oswin, 2018). This scepticism misconstrues a strident *critique* of doxic urban/non-urban binary thinking and ideal-type conceptions of 'the city' in urban studies as a 'totalising theory of social relations with a singular, coherent subject' which undermines agency, alterity and difference (Derickson, 2018: 559; Ruddick et al.,2018; but see Angelo and Goh, 2020; Brenner, 2018). In the schema we have attempted to outline here, the *outside* refers to the outside of inherited spatial categories but also to *the outside of urban theory itself* (see also Jazeel, 2018). If the notion of an 'outside' is increasingly untenable because of the concrete conditions of the present conjuncture, the notion of an epistemic and political 'inside' of urban theory might have been untenable all along. As we have attempted to show in this paper, processes of 'urban' and 'agrarian' change have always already been co-constitutive and, as such, we endorse Kanishka Goonewardena's observation that a substantive criticism of Brenner and Schmid's framework might be that it is not 'sufficiently holistic i.e., totalising' (Goonewardena, 2018: 467; see also Gordillo, 2019; Schmid, 2018) – this serves as a helpful reminder of the long-held commitment in otherwise distinct traditions of Marxian social theory to conceptualising capitalism as an uneven, contradictory and historically evolving social totality in order precisely to disclose the conditions of possibility for its overcoming (see e.g. Fraser and Honneth, 2003; Jay, 1984; Postone, 1993). To this end, we have accepted Brenner and Schmid's invitation to analyse and revise the 'very conceptual and methodological frameworks being used to investigate the urban process' (2015: 159) by examining their own epistemological foundations and insisting upon a yet more expanded framework

attuned to the historically constituted agrarian question – in all its complexity – in the first instance and not just the last.

In political terms, this contribution is an invitation to reassess the now-familiar exhortation of 'the right to the city' (Harvey, 2008; Lefebvre, 1996). Lefebvre, it must be emphasised, insisted that his very conception of the urban, 'strives for the *re-appropriation* by human beings of their conditions in time, in space and in objects' (2003: 179). Notwithstanding the many contradictory ways in which the 'right to the city' has been appropriated and emptied of its radical emancipatory vision (for a critique see Merrifield, 2011), it has much to offer if understood more broadly, holistically and reflexively as a *right to space*; the right to resist and to alter the processes of capitalist urbanisation by communities within and beyond cities alike. Not only does this help redirect our attention to spaces that have been considered by most of contemporary urban studies to be outside its disciplinary field of vision but it also enables us to reinstate the enduring importance of manifold expropriations – including those implied by the concept of extended urbanisation – for the expanded accumulation of capital. Finally, the right to space would be an acknowledgement of the myriad actually existing struggles that show us that collective resistance to capitalist urbanisation does not simply occur in the cities we choose to study but also – and perhaps even more so – animates the vast non-city spaces of indigenous populations, frontline peasantries and agricultural labourers who suffer the most violent consequences of this current phase of capitalist restructuring.

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Notes

1. A number of scholars in critical urban studies have recently called for greater engagement with agrarian studies and agrarian questions including Goonewardena (2014), Roy (2016), Peake (2016b), Gururani and Dasgupta (2018) and Paprocki (2020).
2. This can be illustrated albeit cursorily by the results obtained from a search for the phrase 'agrarian question' in three major urban studies journals. Since 1990, it has appeared four times in *Urban Geography* and once in *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. The search yields zero results in *Urban Studies* despite the recent publication of an important paper that deals with related issues (Angelo, 2017).

3. For notable recent exceptions see Balakrishnan (2019), Gururani (2019) and Paprocki (2020).
4. While this hypothesis represented for Lefebvre 'a horizon, an illuminating virtuality' (Lefebvre, 2003[1970]: 16), the theorists of planetary urbanisation posit its actualisation under contemporary capitalism (see e.g. Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 173).
5. Much of Lefebvre's early research was concerned with the transformation of rural environments and peasant life. The significance of Lefebvre's early rural sociology and its relationship to his urban theory has been emphasised in some recent studies (Elden and Morton, 2016; Ghosh, 2017; Stanek, 2011).
6. Notwithstanding the relative absence of agrarian considerations in contemporary urban studies, several strands of human geography have long engaged with agrarian questions and have made fundamental contributions to agrarian studies. Notable among them is the interdisciplinary scholarship associated with Gillian Hart, Michael Watts, their collaborators and several generations of their students (see e.g. Hart, 1986, 1996; Watts, 2009, 2013; see also Chari et al., 2017). For a partial survey of geographical work on agrarian questions see Berndt (2018).
7. 'Idiocy' [*Idiotismus*] understood as 'isolation' or more concretely 'privatised social alienation', rather than as its common contemporary understanding as stupidity (Draper, 1984).
8. Araghi modifies Friedmann and McMichael's foundational work on 'food regimes' by extricating it from regulation theory and situating it within a 'global value relations' framework. The *global* food regime, in this formulation, refers to a manifestation of the 'political construction of value relations' that enable global capital to purchase labour power below the cost of its reproduction (Araghi, 2003).

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