

Territories of Extended Urbanisation. Planetary Struggles and Agendas for Action

At the time of writing the last pages of this book, apocalyptic news of migrant tragedies, governance failures, political polarisation, and warfare are inundating the media. Since our international group of scholars started this project in 2017, perceptions of urban stability have been forcefully shattered again and again: exhausted palm oil plantations in Sumatra were burnt to make room for new plantations cloaking Singapore in dangerous fumes; floods swept through the densely settled areas of Bangladesh and Pakistan forcing thousands to resettle; heat waves struck popular holiday destinations in Europe and North America, and forest fires in Canada caused toxic clouds of smoke to choke New York. The entrenched centre-periphery dynamics of stable urban core zones that externalise the crises generated by their own consumption is changing significantly: the turmoil in the peripheries is folding back onto the centres. We argue that destructive developments in both peripheries and centres are aspects of urbanisation.

One of the main motivations of this book, then, is to examine how planetary social and environmental crises are related to urbanisation. Our research perspective stands in contrast to mainstream academia, media, international institutions, state actors, and global enterprises who promote cities and agglomerations as solutions to those crises and present them as the future of humanity; however, they do not acknowledge the planetary character of urbanisation. Such city-centric imaginaries are no longer simply

naïve—they are dangerous. Urbanisation needs to be reframed as a multifaceted and contradictory process that is simultaneously productive and destructive and affects both urban centres *and* sparsely settled peripheries. During its historical course, and particularly in the last five decades, urbanisation has unleashed a host of destructive forces leaving a footprint that extends across the planet. For some, this can be seen as “creative destruction” advancing the modernisation of society, the “unintended consequences” of which must be accepted as the price for progress, economic growth, and private profit.

While urban development in the metropolitan centres—“concentrated urbanisation” in our vocabulary—has attracted much attention, “extended urbanisation”—the urbanisation of the peripheries—has remained largely overlooked by mainstream scientific research and public discourse. However, new concepts and engagements with this kind of urbanisation have recently been developed in certain strands of critical and postcolonial urban research, as well as in architecture and urban design. This book contributes to these endeavours, based on insights resulting from ethnographic engagements with many different actors and situations. Most significantly, our interactions with people struggling to establish and protect their livelihoods reinforced our impression of urgency. In conversations with food hawkers along the Lagos-Abidjan corridor, pastoralists in the Arcadian mountains, *camponeses* in the Amazon, workers on oil platforms in the North Sea, villagers in Dongguan and West Bengal, farmers in Iowa, and inhabitants of subaltern settlements in Delhi, we encountered growing political consciousness, struggles for self-determination, and in some cases, organised political movements engaging with and contesting the manifold impacts of planetary crises. Tracing these struggles and resistances against the devastating effects of extended urbanisation became a focus of our research and is the focus and inspiration for this book.

We are convinced that the study of extended urbanisation can give us a better understanding of the interlinked planetary crises. But, in order to engage with these processes, a critical perspective on conventional concepts and theoretical frameworks concerning urbanisation is required. The examples analysed in this book affirm that urbanisation processes unfold both within and beyond centres and agglomerations. A perspective that goes beyond city-centrism does not focus on the facts and statistics that are used to define areas we call “cities” and does not restrict attention to settlements that fulfil the limited criteria of density and population size. In this project, we understand urbanisation as a multidimensional process that produces territories and settlements with implications for the entire planet. We also see it as part of a collective social practice that is neither inevitable nor neutral but intrinsically political. We emphasise the agency

involved in the processes of urbanisation and explore the inherent possibilities for changing social practice. Our perspective is directed towards action.

THE PROJECT

This edited volume is a common intellectual project resulting from a collective effort of empirical research and theory building. We selected eight territories to study how processes of extended urbanisation unfold on the ground. These territories are located across North-South and East-West divides to bring different geographies and urban constellations into comparison and dialogue. We were looking for a diversity of study areas, that could allow us to identify and conceptualise different processes of extended urbanisation. When we started this project, most case studies were part of ongoing research projects; thus, the researchers were already familiar with their fields of study. By initiating a transdisciplinary conversation, we analysed how these territories develop, learning from the different experiences, and building a common understanding of urbanisation processes.

What does it mean to carry out research in territories of extended urbanisation? The researchers had to cover vast study areas and often stayed there for long periods of time. They traversed territories on foot, by train and car and applied adapted mobile and multi-sited ethnographic research methods. They also worked with photographs, video, and oral histories. Two of the case studies, Arcadia and the North Sea, build upon prior research that was conducted with architecture students in design studios. Another important instrument brought into this project was an adapted form of radical cartography. It was led by geographer and cartographer Philippe Rekacewicz in collaboration with the researchers. Our main instrument of synthesis were workshops that served as moments of evaluation, comparison, conceptualisation, and theory building. Four workshops took place in Zurich (between 2017 and 2022), two in Singapore (2018), and two at AAG conferences in Boston (2017) and Washington DC (2019). These workshops were generative as we learned from the different positions of the team members, opened up conversations with other researchers, engaged with diverse perspectives, and developed new understandings of the emerging categories and concepts of extended urbanisation, now presented in this collection.

EXTENDED URBANISATION

To contribute to the concept of extended urbanisation, we worked with a dynamic, multidimensional understanding of urbanisation, inspired by diverse researchers and thinkers whose ideas have allowed us to gradually refine; these efforts are presented in the opening chapter by Christian Schmid. We further developed these thoughts and concepts during the research and workshops. We understand urbanisation as a historical process that should not be confounded with the long history of human settlements and their traces on Earth. Our focus is on the relatively recent historical phase of urbanisation as a process linked to the development of capitalism and rooted in Western anthropocentric rationality and the philosophical split between society and nature. In many parts of the world, it is characterised by the industrialisation of society and the commodification of space, time and experience. The shift from earlier stages of the development of human territories, including the establishment of cities, to urbanisation as a dominant, and potentially planetary, process is not marked by a single event. Starting with the industrial revolution in the early nineteenth century and anchored in the core zones of colonial empires, urbanisation unfolded gradually as an uneven and non-simultaneous process affecting both central and peripheral territories.

The concept of planetary urbanisation captures the latest chapter of this historical development, resulting from a shift in the world capitalist system that started at the beginning of the twentieth century, to fully unfold in the last decades. This resulted from a major shift of the global accumulation regime occurring during the long 1980s, based on the globalisation of financial circuits, the development of global communication and production networks, the gradual deconstruction of the Fordist-Keynesian and national-developmental regimes of accumulation, the collapse of state socialism, and the subsequent establishment of an intricate web of global production networks. In the wake of these processes, the entire planet has become an arena of extractivism and commodification. Planetary urbanisation produces a “space of effects” consisting of territorial outcomes such as pollution, the exhaustion of resources, and the destruction of nature, with grave social consequences. This space of effects destabilises existing spatial arrangements, often because neither state actors nor other protagonists can provide the instruments and regulations to ensure stable or sustainable “spatial fixes” to such extended processes that often occur in remote locations. This not only aggravates the climate crisis and intensifies social and economic crises but erodes the very conditions that sustain life itself.

THE BOOK

This book presents extended urbanisation as a theoretical concept and a tool for social practice and action. It traces planetary struggles provoked by extended urbanisation in order to increase our capacity to act and challenge the conditions that lead to planetary crises. It outlines strategies of empowerment to achieve social change and self-determination through political networks and everyday practices at different scales and levels. It is a scientific contribution, a theory book, and comprises a collection of well-researched essays. The eight case studies explore and analyse different constellations of extended urbanisation processes, and document the transformations of territories and the social struggles that these sparked and implied. They inform the theoretical propositions concerning the character and forms of extended urbanisation.

The opening chapter by Rodrigo Castriota, “The Mine, the City and the Encampment: Contesting Extractivism in Eastern Amazonia,” shows that extractivism has induced various forms of extended urbanisation in Amazonia. In Carajás, the construction of the largest open pit mine in human history and the associated extension of logistics infrastructure led to unprecedented in-migration and urban growth in the Amazon rainforest. Once the mine was completed, most of the workforce was made redundant, as the mine offered permanent jobs to fewer than a hundred workers. Castriota followed the struggles of mining workers who lost their jobs and used their knowledge of the area to squat land in the vicinity of the mine. Amid extreme socio-environmental disruption, new forms of resistance and contestation informed by indigenous and immigrant experiences and practices took hold.

Nikos Katsikis’s chapter, “The Horizontal Factory: The Operationalisation of the US Corn and Soy Belt,” reconstructs how large parts of the North American Midwest have become a highly specialised hinterland for the primary production of commodities—such as bio fuel, corn syrup, and animal fodder linked to other hinterlands of cattle raising—subjected to an extreme degree of operationalisation. With this term, we denote a process of mechanisation, automation, and exhaustion of ecological surplus in the production of raw materials. This process has led to the gradual depletion of the soil’s natural fertility, the pollution of land and groundwater, the loss of jobs, and continuous emigration. The result is a hinterland-of-hinterlands, a highly exploited, emptied, and dehumanised landscape, an exclusive production zone of agricultural commodities.

In “Losing Sea: Abstraction and the End of the Commons in the North Sea,” Nancy Couling examines a vast, dispersed, but mostly invisible urbanised realm that stretches across the

North Sea bordering Europe, above and beneath the surface of the water body. The urbanisation of the North Sea is supported by a circulating offshore workforce, which compares to that of a small metropolis. This ocean space is abstractly conceived for resource extraction and then equipped with prefabricated steel and concrete at discrete locations but on an unprecedented scale. This has led to an operationalised and commodified sea space that has replaced the previous sea commons and is now marked by an evacuation of the social.

In “Expropriation and Extended Citizenship: The Peripherisation of Arcadia,” Metaxia Markaki reflects on the future of rapidly depopulating mountainous regions in Greece. Revisiting the mythicised Arcadia on the Greek Peloponnese, she uncovers processes of extended urbanisation in areas that are imagined as “pristine nature” and have even been officially declared as “uninhabited” by state and EU institutions following the Greek crisis. Markaki reports that these landscapes are not “empty” but animated by seasonal activities and movements that see inhabitants maintaining local, regional, and transnational connections to Athens, Albania, Europe, and other regions. For such constellations, she proposes that we give attention to strategies of extended citizenship formed through the reciprocity of social relations connecting centre and periphery.

From Lagos to Abidjan, a metropolitan corridor has emerged along the Gulf of Guinea in West Africa, spanning 1,000 kilometres and bringing together a dense fabric of megacities, towns, and villages. In “Urbanisation through Movement: The Lagos-Abidjan Corridor,” Alice Hertzog shows that mobility is inherent to the everyday life of this region. Residents and temporary migrants travel back and forth along the corridor and move from landlocked peripheries towards the coast, seeking opportunities for jobs and income. In the words of Hertzog, these activities “weave” the urban fabric. She analyses how mobilities and movements produce entirely new urban configurations across borders and localities, bridging central and peripheral areas and enabling the often-surprising experience of urbanity in everyday life.

In the outskirts of Kolkata, in a zone where processes of extended and concentrated urbanisation overlap, Elisa T. Bertuzzo explores local processes of domestic industrial production and fierce fights by farmers against the expropriation of their land for the construction of factories and new towns. In “Translocalisation and the Production of Space: West Bengal’s Excentric Territories,” she finds an example of a different process of the production of space that represents a range of transformations that the inhabitants themselves induce, often financed by remittances earned through temporary and circular migration.

Dongguan was a rural backwater located in the geographical centre of the Pearl River Delta between the Chinese metropolis of Guangzhou and the colonial city of Hong Kong. In the last four decades, an unprecedented urban explosion transformed the Pearl River Delta into the planet's most populous megaregion, setting off a dispersed form of rural industrialisation in Dongguan. In "The Territory and the State: The Urbanisation of Dongguan," Kit Ping Wong reconstructs the contradictory process of extended urbanisation unfolding in the conflictual interplay between state strategies and the counteractions of villagers, who constructed settlements and attracted both investors and mobile migrant labourers. A spectacular process of export-led industrialisation and extended urbanisation ensued, creating the Chinese "world factory." As a result of urban intensification strategies in the last decade, this process was transformed into concentrated urbanisation.

In "The Highway Revolution: Enclosure and State Space in India," Nitin Bathla traces the devastating impact of India's national highway programme setting in motion a cascade of effects based on enclosure of land, from forests, protected nature reserves, and tribal lands to the fertile agricultural belt around Delhi. The resulting corridors of urbanisation have redirected entire settlement systems across the country towards a haphazard form of extended urban development, fuelling the rapid, decentralised urbanisation of India.

These eight case studies are framed by two theoretical texts. The introductory text "Extended Urbanisation: A Framework for Analysis" by Christian Schmid outlines the basic arguments of a general theory of urbanisation, develops the guiding principles of our approach to decentring urban analysis, presents a critique of conventional conceptions in urban studies and urban design, and gives an overview of the different processes of extended urbanisation that we could detect during our research.

In the final chapter "When Extended Urbanisation Becomes Extensive Urbanisation" AbdouMaliq Simone looks from the perspective of the people who are both affected by and coproduce processes of extended urbanisation. He shows how urban dwellers themselves produce urban spaces by their activities and actions. He argues that to be extensive implies to extend, as in the sense of extending a hand and offering something to the functionality of places, bodies, and systems. Extended urbanisation, then, not only signals the progressive unfolding of urbanisation as a set of discrete processes but as a modality of extension, a means through which the operations of multiple systems and actors extend themselves to and through the world.

A TERRITORIAL APPROACH

The eight empirical case studies summarised above were the starting point for the development of a common conceptual framework through a collaborative process. Our discussions and reflections resulted in two major outcomes: first, we revised and refined the analytical framework of extended urbanisation, and second, we developed a vocabulary to grasp a range of extended urbanisation processes. These results are based on and complement three earlier collective research efforts. The projects *Switzerland: An Urban Portrait* (2006) and *The Inevitable Specificity of Cities* (2015), edited by Roger Diener et al., were conducted at ETH Studio Basel and led to the development of a territorial approach to urbanisation based on Henri Lefebvre's theory of the production of space. The third project focused on processes of concentrated urbanisation, based on the comparative analysis of eight large metropolitan territories; it is published in the volume *Vocabularies for an Urbanising Planet: Theory Building Through Comparison* (2023), edited by Christian Schmid and Monika Streule.

Analysing extended urbanisation requires a decentring perspective and involves a thorough recalibration of various concepts to adapt them to the specific problematic. Thus, terms such as urban and rural, planetary, territory, urban fabric, city and non-city, state and state space, territorial regulation, and many others had to be revised. Since this conceptual effort is by necessity an open process, the terms we propose here are revisable, and we invite readers to edit, expand, or enrich these concepts through their own experience.

A key concept underpinning our approach is that of "territory." The term can be misleading in Anglo-American discourse, where it is often reduced to a political geography of state power and offset against the notion of landscape. However, this term has a very different intellectual history and meaning in the context of Roman languages in both Europe and Latin America. In architecture and critical urban studies, this term has rich polysemic connotations. It includes the materiality and life of territories produced by human and non-human activities and labour. In this understanding, territory is a socially appropriated space imbued with social meaning, in which historical production processes, social relations, power constellations and ecologies are inscribed. We incorporated these understandings into Lefebvre's theory of the production of space and analysed urbanisation as a three-dimensional process, including the material production of a territory, territorial regulation, and the experience of urban space in everyday life.

In this triadic thinking, we first understand urbanisation as the *material production of a territory* that transforms built and

non-built environments and landscapes. In the course of this process, an *urban fabric* comprising infrastructure and settlements is produced extending from urban centres to territories of primary production, facilitating socio-metabolic processes of industrial production and circulation of goods, energy, information, money and people. We analytically embed the material production of a territory into environmental processes at the planetary scale, and we also see it as enmeshed with ecologies of planetary life, which is itself transformed and obliterated through urbanisation.

In our project, we recognised the great importance of the *movements of people* in the production of territories of extended urbanisation. It is not only the urban fabric that determines urbanisation but also the various forms of movements that pervade a territory. In contrast to agglomerations, where daily commuting prevails, territories of extended urbanisation are marked by different movement rhythms and by longer, more sporadic, and varied forms of mobility, such as practices of temporary migration, whereby people only migrate for a certain time or follow a recurrent pattern of returning regularly to their places of departure. These movements are often induced by the search for income and livelihoods, but they also create networks of interaction and support against peripheralisation and precarisation.

The second dimension of urbanisation is *territorial regulation*, a concept that encompasses the rules that guide the production of the urban fabric and determine the use of the land. Here we realised the great significance of the state space and state actors in the production of territories of extended urbanisation. In recent years, with the rise of massive national and transnational investments and ambitious development strategies, these actors became much more dominant. Intensified interventions by nation-states, international institutions, and corporate actors in the territory correspond to the weakening of more local forms of governance.

In this context, we also encountered the question of *mediation*. The specific role of urban areas is to facilitate a mediation of divergent interests and bring together and moderate the different parts of a territory. However, territories of extended urbanisation offer very different conditions and political and spatial settings than large metropolises, which often have strong metropolitan governments. Because of the fragmented character of the local political entities, this mediating level is therefore usually weak in territories of extended urbanisation. Therefore, regional popular movements and organisations that can mobilise networks of solidarity and support are of particular importance to the creation and defence of participation and self-determination in such territories.

The third dimension of urbanisation we analysed is the question of lived space, or more precisely, the *experience of urban space in everyday life*. These experiences are quite different from concentrated urbanisation, where social density and proximity may allow for direct human encounters. Territories of extended urbanisation are usually marked by sparse population and by large distances between places and centres of activity. The absence of centrality and opportunities for gathering and mutual exchange in everyday life may lead to different social experiences and trajectories of political mobilisation. Social interactions usually proceed in more mediated ways and are generated through movements of people that allow connections to distant places and to each other through various forms of migration and social, political, and cultural organisations and networks. In this way, new popular and self-organised centralities and social movements are coming into existence.

Our cases indicate that people are usually not resisting extended urbanisation as such but respond to contradictions and crises produced by these processes. This results in fights against the expropriation of individual or collective land and other forms of dispossession, displacement, and the loss of jobs and livelihoods, destruction of environments and the foundations of life. At the same time, people are also fighting for better provisions and quality of life under these conditions. These struggles can be understood as assuming a planetary character because they respond to the systematic exploitation and commodification of planetary life and resources. Planetary in this context does not necessarily mean interconnected globally but designates the fact of being entrained within a systematic process of extraction and commodification. At the same time, the term planetary opens a horizon, a potential, and a common perspective.

PROCESSES OF EXTENDED URBANISATION

Based on this analytical framework, we identified and defined a series of dominant *processes of extended urbanisation*. Here we propose a dynamic analysis; we do not analyse static territorial forms but dynamic processes with varied and changing territorial outcomes. The spectrum of urbanisation processes we propose here is not exhaustive; it contains a selection of processes that proved useful in our research and revealed important parallels between seemingly dissimilar territories. This list is therefore preliminary and open.

Processes of extended urbanisation are transforming vast *areas of agricultural production*, which are outside the reach of influence of agglomeration and commuting processes.

Our case studies show that even in very different agricultural territories, such as Arcadia and the US corn and soy belt, a convergence of effects of extended urbanisation are manifest in an ongoing industrialisation of agricultural production, a shift toward monocultures, food-fuel competitions, reliance on migrant labour, and social and ecological desertification.

One widespread process of extended urbanisation we explored in Dongguan is *extended industrial urbanisation*. Today, various forms of peripheral industrialisation are initiated by state strategies that define special economic zones and export processing zones or support global sweatshop regions, back-office locations, data processing facilities, and intermodal logistics terminals. These are often located in periurban areas near large agglomerations, along main transportation corridors, and close to logistics hubs.

In this context, the *production of infrastructure* can itself be understood as a process of extended urbanisation because it leads to de- and re-territorialisation, such as processes of corridor urbanisation and the disintegration of hinterlands. Along motorways and around intersections and bypasses, as in the case of Delhi, countless urban fragments are produced extensively, if unevenly, across large territories, generating an irregular and haphazard urban fabric, which is being at once expanded and blurred.

The precondition for many processes of extended urbanisation is commodifiable land. This land has to be produced through often violent *processes of land enclosure*, which can include dispossession and destruction of traditional forms of land tenure and subsistence economy. While land enclosure can result from other processes of extended urbanisation such as corridor urbanisation or industrial urbanisation, we understand land enclosure as an urbanisation process in itself.

The concept of the *operationalisation of landscapes* brings together the rationalisation and automation of agricultural production, extractivism, energy production, and infrastructure expansion, which are amongst the most dramatic processes of extended urbanisation. The production of operational landscapes enables the procurement and circulation of food, water, energy, and construction materials; the processing and management of waste and pollution; and the mobilisation of labour in support of these various processes of extraction, production, circulation, and management.

The operationalisation of landscapes is often accompanied by extreme forms of rationalisation, which strongly reduces the necessary labour force and thus results in *processes of peripheralisation*. In a similar way, deindustrialisation and changing centre-periphery relations may lead to socio-economic and ecological restructuring, inducing the loss and relocation of economic

activities, selective emigration, and depopulation. As a result, permanent settlements are eroding and seasonal or sporadic movements of people to and from central urban areas are becoming more pronounced.

On a general level, extended urbanisation is always implicated in processes of peripheralisation and the production of centralities and thus involves the *restructuring of centre-periphery relationships*. On the one hand, the sequential production of peripherality opens new opportunities for land enclosure, extraction and investment. And on the other, the multiplication of various forms of centrality and their related peripheries across the planet leads to the emergence of large-scale, highly dynamic, and heterogeneous *polynucleated metropolitan zones*, bringing concentrated and extended urbanisation processes together.

In summarising these processes, we realised that extended urbanisation, in general, has a defining double aspect: On the one hand, territories shaped by extended urbanisation are often subjected to the unprecedented increase of extractivism in the broad sense, driven by massive capital investments, particularly by global corporations and nation-states (agribusiness, biotech, mining, energy, transport, logistics, etc.). On the other, this type of rationalisation and automation goes hand in hand with the dramatic reduction in labour power, often resulting in peripheralisation through the devaluation of local activities and the evacuation of the social (in the Amazon, the US corn and soy belt, the North Sea, and Arcadia). These processes have led to rapid commodification in areas that were formerly based on subsistence agriculture and common pool resources. We also note the intrinsic socio-ecological limits to these processes and the exhaustion of both social and natural resources.

At the same time, and in an opposing spatial movement, other territories are becoming more tightly enmeshed into urban networks and are pulled into the gravity field of concentrated urban areas. Here, we observe a divergent trajectory of *intensification of land use and activities*, such the infrastructure frenzy in India, the industrialisation of the Pearl River Delta, the urbanisation of the West African Corridor, and also spontaneous developments fuelled by remittances from circular or periodic migration.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

In the course of this collective project, as we met and reflected on our experiences with *camponeses* fighting against a mining corporation in Brazilian Amazonia, the inauguration of a new oil platform in the North Sea arriving from a construction site

in Indonesia, and the fight of villagers and supporters against the construction of a car factory in the outskirts of Kolkata, some insights gradually crystallised. They concern the contradictions of extended urbanisation, its implications and struggles, as well as possible alternative pathways and territorial strategies.

The early insights were disheartening: Territories of extended urbanisation appear as battlefields of exploitation and commodification with asymmetric power relations. Regions we worked in are marked by recurrent acts of dispossession, displacement, eviction, and deprivation of people living on and from the land and sea. Entire regions are transformed into landscapes of extraction, leading to deterioration of ecosystems and evacuation of the social, often far away from public attention. Additionally, many forms of extended urbanisation, particularly the construction of urban corridors and the disintegration of hinterlands, imply an enormous waste of resources, leading to the most unsustainable forms of urbanisation.

Our second insight was that urbanisation processes are uneven but also variegated. They can be highly unjust and devastating in social and environmental terms, but there are also inherent potentialities: their outcomes may offer conditions for connection, encounter, and emancipation. This potential could be called, after Lefebvre, differential urbanisation. It is associated with the creation of a differential space, an alternative space rejecting exploitative practices and consumer culture, that defies processes of abstraction and commodification, and enables self-determination and commoning.

The third insight concerns the stereotype that only “big cities” can provide the advantages of urban life. Are there alternatives beyond the big cities? Yes, there are! Several chapters in this book show how people create differential space through their activities and efforts, a space of potential beyond the progressivist mindset of many contemporary metropolises. The creation of self-governed economic circuits and metabolic loops, regenerative ecologies, solidarity networks, and popular centralities as places of meeting and interaction are opening pathways towards different urban futures.

The fourth insight we draw from our discussions and exchanges is that peripheries are not simply areas outside cities and urban life; they are always constituted *relationally* to centralities and other peripheries. As extended urbanisation includes the means to increase connections, it not only generates global connectivity, but also facilitates linking centres and peripheries through social, cultural, political, and economic networks, family ties, and manifold processes of migration and movements. We see a future of multiple belonging and extended citizenship erasing the “urban-rural divide” and connecting centres and peripheries through social practice.

In the course of the project, we repeatedly affirmed the urgency of engaging with the Earth. The conditions for inhabiting the planet are at stake: exhaustion of natural resources, loss of biodiversity, desertification, and evacuation of the social. These are all, to some extent, consequences of extended urbanisation, which are eroding the Earth's vitality. Rather than chasing promises of technocratic fixes, territories of extended urbanisation need to be re-embedded into bio-physical relations based on social and environmental justice and equality. We cannot accept the politics of global apartheid, which are reinforced by the catastrophic and divisive consequences of the current environmental and social crises. We may learn from our case studies that we have to develop connections, reciprocities, international solidarity movements, and mutual understandings in social and ecological terms. The planetary struggles we trace in this book point to some of the possibilities from which collective futures may emerge.