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NURTURING THE POST-GROWTH CITY

Bringing the rural back in

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1. Introduction

It is widely acknowledged that cities are destructive to the environment and the natural resources that sustain human and non-human life (Næss et al., 2020). Any planning for post-growth cities must take on the challenge of resolving the currently prevailing dissonance between urban societies and the ecosystems on which they draw to survive.

Urban sustainability scholarship has put forward numerous proposals to resolve the dissonance between cities and their natural environments, and their ideas can greatly inform post-growth visions of ecologically sound cities. However, rather than over-hastily choosing from these proposals the perfect blueprint for ecologically sound post-growth cities, we would like to use this chapter to slow down and take a step back. Looking at proposals for ecologically sustainable cities, we find a shared excitement about and predisposition to the concept and socio–natural reality of the city. There is no drastic break with the idea of cities as compatible with, or even crucial for, the achievement of ecologically sound futures. This belief in cities is certainly not always shared in more radical contributions, but even in those cases, we find an optimistic idea of the city as a space of disruption and revolution.

However, is it sufficient to solely enquire into ecologically sound post-growth *cities*? Are the notions of the 'city' and the 'urban' able to accommodate and prefigure post-growth futures in which humans and more-than-humans thrive? Or might planning for post-growth cities need to extend the frame beyond the urban?

To engage with these questions, we embed the problem of urban unsustainability in the history and present of capitalist societies. Marxist and political ecologist accounts of the evolution of capitalism provide useful insights into the relationship between capitalism's environmental destructiveness and the rift between the rural and the urban. Building on these understandings, we review academic debates

on ecologically sustainable cities, enquiring how they consider the relationship between the nature/society and urban/rural divides. From this, and building on feminist and postcolonial urban studies and the diverse economies agenda, we draw lessons for a post-growth vision for urban sustainability planning that contributes to the mending of these binary rifts. We propose conceptual lenses and empirical foci to extend post-growth urban sustainability planning beyond the frame of the city. We use the case of the Colombian movement *Territorios Campesinos Agroalimentarios* to illustrate our proposal.

2. Capitalism and the rift between the rural and the urban

Marx (1981) drew a direct link between the ecological destructiveness of capitalism and the urbanization of society. Foster (1999) further developed these observations into the concept of the metabolic rift, which posits that the fundamental connection between nature and society was disrupted by the onset of capitalist development and the accompanying urbanization process, namely the introduction of capitalist wage labour, the commodification of land, the development of large-scale industry, the industrialization of agriculture, the expropriation of smallholders and the consequent de-peasantization and forced migration into industrializing cities (Foster, 1999; McClintock, 2010). These processes have engendered the virtually complete subjugation of the rural to the urban. Planetary urbanization theorists observe that '[t]he rural[,] this supposedly non-urban realm[,] has now been thoroughly engulfed within the variegated patterns and pathways of a planetary formation of urbanization' (Brenner and Schmid, 2015: 174). As Brenner and Schmid (2015) argue, capitalist urbanization has eroded any foundation for speaking about rural and urban as independent categories.

Ironically, it has similarly become commonplace to speak of a global 'urban/rural divide' (Andersson et al., 2009), which refers to the difference in 'economic development' between cities and countrysides (Gopinath and Kim, 2009). At present, the majority of the global poor live in the countryside (CFS, 2016), and rural communities are lacking much-needed investments into education, health, small-scale agriculture and infrastructure (FAO et al., 2013). At the same time, the notion of the urban/rural divide represents the purification of these concepts as discrete categories in modern capitalist societies (McClintock, 2010), which is manifested in the disconnection of city dwellers from the countryside and that between urban consumers and the mostly rural places where their food is produced (Kneafsey et al., 2008). It is similarly represented in current cultural discourse, in which the rural has become synonymous with the past (Woods, 2012). The cultural disconnection between the rural and the urban—and the livelihoods of their dwellers, the obfuscation of the countryside as a crucial *agent* in the continuous making of the world, serves to conceal the ongoing subjugation and material plundering of the rural by the urban.

In the framework of the metabolic rift, the breaking off of the 'dialogue between humans and nature' is directly tied to the cultural divide between the rural and urban.

Originally, this linkage was explained with reference to the disruption of nutrient cycles through planetary urbanization—the idea that nutrients (food) flowing from rural areas into cities are not 'recompensated' by a reflow of nutrients (waste) back from cities, leading to a degrading quality of soils (Moore, 2000). However, we consider the *socio-cultural* dimension of the metabolic rift most instructive. Schneider and McMichael (2010) as well as McClintock (2010) interpret the metabolic rift to manifest at the societal and individual levels as well as ecologically. Human–nature relations were disturbed by the onset of urbanization because 'the proletarianization of rural populations who flood into urban centres in search of work' alienated humans from land and labour and instilled in humans 'the perception of self as external to the environment' (McClintock, 2010: 196, 201). Peasants' migration to cities and their transformation from autonomous farmers into agricultural labourers disrupted the 'production and reproduction of knowledges about agricultural practice and local ecosystems' (Schneider and McMichael, 2010: 477), thereby rupturing the cultural bond between humans and nature. This alienation is understood to sit at the root of the false belief in the possibility of human mastery over and decoupling from nature (Moore, 2017), a core tenet of modern Western societies that must be overcome in order to find a way out of the current ecological crisis.

What does the foregoing imply for creating cities that form a symbiosis with the ecosystems on which they depend? We propose that it signals the need to pay tribute to the historically entangled evolution of the nature/society and rural/urban rifts as well as the ways in which the cultural obfuscation of the links between human and nature might be effected through imposing a divide between the urban and the rural—and vice versa. It implies that we need to reconfigure the exploitative relations between the urban and the rural and emancipate the latter both materially and culturally. Thus, we are presented with the difficult task of *both* unmaking the cultural rift between city and countryside by insisting on their hybridity and interlinkage *and* empowering the rural as a liberated agent in planning for sustainable futures.

3. Visions for ecologically sustainable cities: which role for the rural?

This section engages with the heterogeneous field of urban sustainability studies through two questions: (i) Which concepts and ideas used in the urban sustainability studies community explicitly engage with the rural and its relations to the urban? (ii) Which visions for sustainable cities offer solutions to the difficult task we have described?

To address the first question, given the rather technical, solution-oriented approach of many urban sustainability studies, it is unsurprising that only a few concepts and ideas explicitly consider rural–urban relations as a structural underpinning of urban sustainability. Although urban studies, in particular urban political ecology, has long criticized the concept of the city as being insufficient to understand global and multi-spatial urbanization processes that reach beyond the 'boundaries'

of the city (Brenner and Schmid, 2015), the debate around urban sustainability seems broadly untouched by these developments. As Angelo and Wachsmuth (2020) diagnose, 'dominant forms of urban sustainability planning and thinking focus too narrowly on cities' (13). Most discussions of urban sustainability exclusively focus on greening the city space, including proposals for nature-based solutions in cities (e.g. Frantzeskaki et al., 2019). However, even perspectives that extend beyond the city space mostly limit themselves to implicit considerations of the rural as 'that which is outside the city'. Recent reviews of the role of cities in achieving sustainability fail to meaningfully examine the rural and the role of rural–urban relations for urban sustainability (e.g. Bayulken and Huisingh, 2015; De Jong et al., 2015; Heymans et al., 2019; Roggema, 2017; Wolfram and Frantzeskaki, 2016).

The undervaluation of the rural leads directly to a second tendency that can be identified across the literature on urban sustainability, namely that 'everyone now thinks cities can save the planet' (Angelo and Wachsmuth, 2020: 2202). Designs for dense urbanism, or the 'compact city', are now considered the most ecologically sustainable settlement forms versus smaller settlements interspersed with rural and green spaces (Bayulken and Huisingh, 2015; Næss et al., 2020). Cities have become key players in the governance and mitigation of global warming in the climate change discourse (e.g. Bulkeley et al., 2014; van der Heijden et al., 2019). Likewise, in the sustainability transition and innovation debate, cities are quite broadly seen as 'incubators and catalysts of socio-economic and environmental change' (Wolfram, 2018: 11).

Similar pitfalls sometimes appear in radical visions of sustainable cities. Although far from committing the fallacy of perceiving the urban phenomenon as constrained to the spatial form of the city, Harvey (2012: 120) reproduces the idea of urban exceptionality when he insists that it 'is inherently worth asking' if 'struggles within and over the city [should] be seen as fundamental to anti-capitalist politics'. Other anti-capitalist urban studies similarly reproduce the cultural idea of the city's dominance by restraining their research to grand, structuralist theories of capitalist urbanization, as observed by Roy (2016a, 2016b), Derickson (2018) and Jazeel (2018). Theorizing urbanization in the Global South, Roy (2016a) highlights how Brenner and Schmid's (2015) universal narrative of a planetary urbanization leaves limited space for those realities, places and stories in which urbanization is a messy entanglement of rural and urban performances.

Post-colonial and feminist urban scholarship has provided valuable contributions on the urban that can be mobilized for this chapter's task. However, even if we restrict our search to the literature on sustainable cities, we can identify starting points for an explicit consideration of rural–urban relations. For example, Martin et al. (2018) criticize proponents of the smart-sustainable city for their limited consideration of 'the extra–urban ecosystems that supply resources to the city' (271). The landscape approach used in urban planning implicitly grasps the interrelation of rural and urban lives, as evinced in its demand for a consideration of the 'connectivity of landscapes between multiple geographical scales' (Heymans et al., 2019: 11). In a similar vein, Haughton (1997) distinguishes types of cities according

to their 'relations to their environmental hinterlands' (Roggema, 2017: 7), including 'self-reliant cities', which resemble other proposals for sustainable, circular city-regions such as the 'regenerative city' or 'bioregionalism' (Sale, 1985).

Still, considerations of cities' metabolic relations to countrysides do not automatically capture the political processes and power-laden realities in which the rural and urban are embedded. Although the concept of urban metabolism, or circulatory metabolic flows, has been discussed both in urban studies accounts that do not talk about capitalism (e.g. Bayulken and Huisingh, 2015; Céspedes Restrepo and Morales-Pinzón, 2018; Kennedy et al., 2007) and in those that critique it (Gandy, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2006), this does not mean that their analyses of sustainable urbanisms are aligned. Beyond agreeing that cities depend 'on spatial relationships with surrounding hinterlands and global resource webs' (Kennedy et al., 2007: 43), the two debates are quite at odds with each other. Non-radical scholars have largely ignored their Marxist colleagues' writings. Gandy (2004) finds in those accounts of urban metabolisms a 'functionalist impetus [that] has consistently failed to grasp the way in which urban space is historically produced' (364). With their apolitical and ahistorical analyses of material flows in and out of cities and limited assessments of cities against a blueprint of a sustainable, circulatory urban system, non-radical accounts of urban metabolisms neglect the circulatory processes that unsustainably and unjustly *produce*, *constitute* and *transform* urban and rural socio-natures and cultures under capitalism (Gandy, 2004; Swyngedouw, 2006).

Although radical urban scholarship has also failed to sufficiently grapple with their reproduction of some aspects of the rural–urban divide, it proves useful for the task of meaningfully reinserting the rural into planning for post-growth urbanities. Howard's (1902) early concept of the 'garden city' could be understood as a design-based proposal for how to achieve some kind of 'marriage of town and countryside' (Clark, 2003). Bookchin's (1974) monograph on 'the limits of the city' recounts the development of the city through the lens of transformations in rural–urban relations. Grounded in this analysis, Bookchin formulates a vision of a better urbanism as one 'that go[es] beyond the city as such and produce[s] a new type of community, one that combines the best features of urban and rural life in a harmonized future society' (5). More recently, Angelo and Wachsmuth (2020) have reiterated calls for studies on urban sustainability that extend beyond the boundaries of the city.

Bookchin's (1974) imagination of eco-communities is presently being taken up by post-growth scholarship, which has implicitly begun to break with the cultural dominance of the city in advancing what Mocca (2020) even describes as an 'anti-urbanist view' (86). The post-growth debate has put forward alternative types of human settlements, such as demoi, urban villages or bioregions (Cato, 2011; Mocca, 2020; Xue, 2014). Emphasizing a re-grounding of communities in the 'local' and the 'territory' and demanding some kind of disconnection from the global market and a reconnection of production and consumption within localized economies (Latouche, 2016), these alternative settlement types not only explicitly question the cultural hegemony of the city as a symbol of the future, they also offer (largely unembraced) opportunities to rethink the relations between the rural and

the urban. However, while representing important opportunities, these ideal types of post-growth settlements have been contested for their romanticization of local communities (the local trap), for reproducing a global–local binary and for their disputed environmental sustainability as decentralized settlement forms (Mocca, 2020; Xue, 2014).

Other proposals in the radical urban literature can help us further reconfigure the rural and the urban. Envisioning the 're-earthing of cities' through 'rurbanization', among other means, Escobar (2019) highlights Martínez Espinal's architectural designs, which reconnect the rural and urban by 'introduc[ing] a peasant view of the soil into the city' (136). Moreover, extending beyond the too easily maintained simplification of 'the rural' as synonymous to the agricultural, Escobar (2019) takes inspiration from Roy's (2016a, 2016b) work, which, as described, has crucially shaped the critique of the urban fetish within urban theory. Roy (2016a) carves out the many ways in which the rural is an agent in itself and proposes a research agenda capable of capturing historical difference due to its engagement in a 'non-totalizing' theory of the urban.

4. Rural-inclusive planning for urban sustainability

In our proposal for a post-growth vision for urban sustainability, we follow Roy's call for an approach that takes difference seriously and thus build on post-struc-turalist, feminist and post-colonial scholarship that has suggested ways to look for difference in the economy and the urban. These insights inform a perspective that can contribute to the reconfiguration of the exploitative relations between the rural and the urban while not reproducing a cultural rift between them. In fact, this perspective invites a reconsideration of the usefulness of speaking about *urban* planning. We nonetheless retain this terminology for the following reasons. This chapter is intended as an explicit contribution to the urban planning community whereby we advocate for the integration of the rural into the discipline's thinking. Similarly, acknowledging the persistent cultural force of the concepts of rural and urban in our society, we did not wish to casually propose an alternative concept. In the same way as calls for abandoning the human/nature binary do not abolish the need to call for a consideration of *societal* issues in *nature* protection policies, it is still useful to remind us that urban policies must consider the rural.

Post-colonial and feminist scholarship on the urban has brought the non-European urban, non- and not-fully urban and rural into the theorization of urbanization (Derickson, 2018; Jazeel, 2018; Roy, 2016a, 2016b). Referring to her research on Calcutta, Roy acknowledges that 'trying to read [the maps and histories of Calcutta] using the conventional dualisms of urban analysis: city and countryside; formal sector and informal sector; state and civil society; household and firm' impeded her from grasping the realities and social relations forming the subject of her study, and she had to 'dramatically reshape the social and spatial categories in which [she] had been trained' to understand the places she was researching (2016b: 2). As an urban theorist, Roy does not aim at prefiguring urban

sustainability. Nonetheless, her work can be instructive for our project of bringing the rural back into urban sustainability planning. She teaches us to let go of the 'general' or 'universal' concept of the urban, the city, the rural, the countryside (Roy, 2016b), and thus also of the sustainable city or the sustainable countryside. We become able to see the city, the urban and the project of urban sustainability as an 'experience … negotiated at spatial scales that implode the city' (Roy, 2016b: 7).

We thus begin our engagement with the question of urban sustainability within a relational ontology of space, seeking ways forward without being constrained by inherited rural/urban dichotomies or cultural expectations of urban dominance in the variegated and local performances happening on the ground. This attention to diverse performances is particularly emphasized by the diverse economies agenda. Based on a feminist and post-structuralist critique of structuralist analyses of capitalism, the diverse economies agenda put forward by Gibson-Graham (2008) engages in an 'ontological re-framing' of the economy; rather than seeing capitalism as a monolithic entity whose logic now reigns over every action taking place, this agenda perceives the economy as a hybrid, contingent performance in need of constant re-production. Capitalist practices and relations co-exist with a variety of non-capitalist practices and relations which together comprise a diverse economy. This perspective helps to open up urban sustainability planning to the rural when we apply ontological reframing to capitalist urbanization and stop perceiving urbanization as a monolithic and finalized project. We can then perceive the diversity of performances—some rural, some urban, some in-between—that are shaping rural–urban space, and we start seeing that *not all* of them reproduce the material and cultural relations of power and exploitation that are dominant in capitalist society (Spanier, 2021). Seeing these hopeful performances of difference should not be misunderstood as ignoring patterns of dominant performances—the performances currently driving the dominant process of capitalist urbanization (Tsing, 2017). The performances attempting to reconfigure power relations between rural and urban have not yet shaped a new pattern; however, they are important starting points for the transformation towards different, sustainable rural–urban relations in a post-growth society.

In building on these two debates, our proposal for post-growth planning for urban sustainability particularly focuses on two questions. First, which lenses and concepts should planners use to enquire what post-growth urban sustainability could look like? Second, with which practices and cases should planners engage? The focus on these two questions rests on the idea that by engaging with certain concepts and cases, we contribute to the performance of a certain world. If we want to focus on the rural–urban dimension of post-growth sustainability, we require a research approach that does not in itself reinforce the cultural dynamics at the root of the problem. Similarly, we need an approach that pays attention to initiatives from which we can learn how to overcome these cultural and material dynamics. As such, our proposal consists of the following four elements.

Reading for diversity and difference. Post-colonial urban theory and feminist re-framings of the economy direct our attention to the local, practical performances

that produce difference within our capitalist economy and its production of rural and urban space. Rather than working with predefined concepts or designing prototypes of sustainable urban living and thereby neglecting existing difference, we start from concrete places and performances and their experiences in prefiguring sustainable post-growth societies within a world currently dominated by performances of capitalist growth and urbanization.

Taking this as a general guiding principle, the following elements should be understood as specific ways of enacting this reading.

Refraining from prioritizing the urban and the city. While Marxist scholarship on the urban has successfully taught us to study the urban beyond the boundaries of the city, post-colonial urban theory gives us the tools to similarly refrain from starting our research with the idea of an urban-dominated future. The diverse economies agenda motivates us to actively look for non-urban, not-fully-urban or rural performances when exploring pathways and experiments prefiguring post-growth sustainability. Even when envisioning ecologically sustainable cities, we may find inspiration in rural reconstruction movements (Alcock, 2019), back-to-the-landers (Calvário and Otero, 2015), or other 'radical rural' initiatives (Halfacree, 2007). A myopic occupation with imagining post-growth urban sustainability might obscure that creating a sustainable post-growth society could require an extension of urban planning beyond the urban and an engagement with alternative notions capable of countering the marginalization of the rural. This call for a diversity of concepts leads directly to the third element of our proposal.

Complicating the categories of the urban and the rural. Conventional categories of rural and urban reproduce a cultural separation that is not representative of the multiplicity of relations that fundamentally connect and hybridize the two spheres. Such cultural purification conceals the ongoing subjugation and material plundering of the rural to and by the urban. Post-growth planning for urban sustainability should refrain from reproducing the urban/rural binary just as it should abolish the conceptual binary between nature and society. We propose that a greater openness to the many performances towards post-growth sustainability that occur across rural–urban boundaries and syncretize the rural and the urban will enable us to take into account performances that trouble expected rural/urban binaries, including those that shed these categories altogether.

Looking for performances that reconfigure the material, cultural and power relations between the rural and the urban. As the urban metabolism framework shows, scholarship on urban sustainability already includes the non-urban in conceptualizations of ecologically sustainable cities. We agree that it is critical to look into initiatives and practices that aim at establishing equitable, circular and fundamentally non-exploitative material flows between urban centres and the rural resources on which they draw. However, planning for post-growth urban sustainability requires more; we need to look for performances that not only reconfigure material flows between rural and urban but also unmake the ways in which these spheres interact, relate and constitute each other materially *and culturally* within capitalist society. This means exploring performances and practices that unmake the unequal power relations

between rural and urban—in which the rural is rendered as inferior and passive in contrast to the superior and active urban—as well as those practices that reconfigure the socio-natural assemblages through which these injustices unfold. Which performances unmake the capitalist cultural, material and power relations between rural and urban and how does this unmaking contribute to the construction of ecologically sustainable post-growth futures?

To illustrate the four elements of this proposal, in the next section, we present the case of the *Territorios Campesinos Agroalimentarios* (TCA) in Colombia as an example of rural–urban agri-food grassroots movements that challenge the industrial food system. Agri-food grassroots movements gather a range of capitalist, alternative capitalist and non-capitalist practices (Koretskaya and Feola, 2020) and include oppositional global, regional and local peasant movements; alternative food networks such as direct farm sales, farmers' markets, community-supported agriculture or permaculture; and urban gardening collectives or food policy councils (Goodman et al., 2012; Rivera-Ferre et al., 2014).

5. From the post-growth city to the post-growth territory: the *Territorios Campesinos Agroalimentarios* movement

The *Territorios Campesinos Agroalimentarios* (TCA) movement is an example of concrete, ongoing socioecological transformation towards a post-growth society at the territorial level (Coordinador Nacional Agrario [CNA], 2017). Through the lens proposed in this chapter, we observe how this case, like many others that remain too often overlooked in urban sustainability studies, challenges established categories of rural and urban and the primacy of the city in the pursuit of an ecologically viable post-growth society.

The first TCA, *Territorio Campesino Agroalimentario del Macizo del norte de Nariño y sur del Cauca*, was officially declared on 25 November 2016. Local communities from 15 municipalities, encompassing 3 community meetings in each municipality, various local mayors, and more than 3,000 peasants from the region, actively participated in the collective discussion and elaboration of the declaration.

TCA is a Colombian peasant movement motivated by the defence of human and non-human life and the assertion of peasant identity against capitalist appropriation and exploitation. As such, it cannot be reduced to a mere backward-looking defence of a supposed pre-existing peasant culture. Rather, TCA constructs a post-growth society at the territorial level by organizing novel and dignified social and political relations as well as ecologically and socially re-embedding economic practices, thereby improving the well-being of the local population and ensuring ecological sustainability. TCA structures and consolidates the performance of this post-growth society through institutions constructed through autonomous community-led planning (*Plan de Vida Digna*), which aims at conducting collective processes for the creation of visions of possible futures as well as at empowering communities to govern, decide and legislate over their territory, ways of living, economy and culture (CNA, 2017). *Plan de Vida Digna* is informed by principles of

solidarity, justice, dignity, autonomy and sovereignty, a holistic view of human and non–human life, and collective participation (CNA, 2015).

TCA's performance of a territorial post-growth society entails the reconfiguration of material flows, cultural relations and power relations. First, TCA reconfigures material flows between rural and urban spaces. It expels extractive industries from the territory, thereby putting a halt on resource transfer from rural to urban spaces at high ecological and social costs for the former. Furthermore, it envisions—and to an extent already practices—a re-localization of the territorial economy and an exit from market exchanges. Peasants are expected to first produce for themselves, and initial surpluses go to the local market before any engagement in trade with the rest of the nation and potentially other countries. TCA practices agroecology, which combines traditional and academic knowledge in support of an agriculture that works with and regenerates ecological cycles regardless of any administrative or symbolic (including rural–urban) borders.

Second, linked to the reconfiguration of material flows, TCA reshapes cultural representations of the rural and the urban. Peasants conceive of and represent TCA as a territorial rather than rural movement. The construction of peasant territoriality encapsulates the essence of the sustainability transformation pursued by TCA. While it refrains from employing the binaries of rural and urban (as well as human and nature), its use of the territory as a pivotal spatial category realizes peasants' relational ontology, supporting their holistic understanding of place-based, historically rooted socio–natural relations.

Lastly, the reconfiguration of material flows and cultural representations of the urban and the rural are elements of the reconfiguration of power relations. Although it is a grassroots peasant movement, TCA is not limited to local or rural struggles, but rather proposes and concretely performs an alternative to capitalist development that has broader significance. It reverts deeply seated historical legacies of peasant exploitation and marginalization in Colombia by affirming its members as autonomous agents capable of determining how the territory and the human-non-human community living within it will develop. Peasants reject inferior identities of labourers or food producers (or, at best, agricultural entrepreneurs), who solely exist to supply the city. They claim, construct and perform the social role of citizens and agents of change who can inform dignifying and ecologically sustainable approaches for the development of not only their local community but also society at large. In effect, the TCA model is already informing the performance of diverse economies in various Colombian cities through community gardens and urban agriculture, among other initiatives (Feola et al., 2020).

6. Conclusion

How should we tackle the task of resolving the current dissonance between urban societies and the ecosystems on which they draw in post-growth urban planning? In this chapter, we presented conceptual lenses that planners can use to enquire

what post-growth urban sustainability could look like. We proposed to look out for difference and diversity rather than constraining ourselves to inherited categories (such as the urban and the rural) and structural expectations (such as the dominance of the urban). We also advocated to not prioritize the city or the urban so that we can learn from non-urban cases that might be relevant for the prefiguration of urban sustainability, keeping the question open if a post-growth vision of sustainability should stick to the categories of the urban and the city. Third, we encouraged planners to complicate the categories of the rural and the urban, both as a performative act of not reproducing the cultural purification of these concepts and as a way to grasp the diversity of prefigurative performances that occur across imagined rural/urban boundaries. Lastly, we suggested looking out for performances that reconfigure the material, cultural and power relations between the rural and the urban as part of the performance of urban sustainability.

Where does this proposal lead? In this chapter, we identified lessons for a post-growth urban–nature symbiosis in a peasant movement far removed from the culturally expected boundaries of the city. TCA exemplifies emerging rural–urban agri-food movements that inspire us to think differently about urban sustainability by transcending the concept of the city. TCA constructs a post-growth society at the territorial level, ecologically and socially re-embedding economic practices in ways that advance the well-being of the local population and non-human life. We argue that this performance of a territorial post-growth society contributes to urban sustainability. By resisting resource extraction from rural to urban spaces, strengthening their territorial economies, transgressing any imagined rural/urban or nature/society boundaries and emancipating peasant identities and innovations as agents of transformations that concern society at large, TCA engenders the unmaking of unequal material, cultural and power relations between the rural and the urban. This movement proposes an alternative spatial concept—the territory—to prefigure post-growth sustainability that does not neglect the rural. In doing so, it reminds us that the rural also constitutes the urban; that envisioning post-growth *urban* sustainability is impossible without asking which role the rural plays in there—and which role it plays in *getting there*.

Acknowledgements

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