

Locating Land Power in Global Cities: The Urban-Rural Dynamic

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Key shifting trends connect a globally connected urban archipelago and its hinterlands, warranting new studies of power in its most contemporary forms. This essay locates land power and where that power is exercised. Urbanization continues to drive vast political transitions, uprooting longstanding agrarian modes of living while creating myriad inequalities within cities. Are the world's most powerful agglomerations active agents in this transformation? Answering in the affirmative, this essay reframes urbanization as a vast geopolitical transfer of power from urban to rural on a global scale. Leading global cities such as New York City, London, Hong Kong, Chicago, and Singapore are not merely impressive collections of factor endowments. They are also sites of concentrated power with coercive influences beyond municipal boundaries. This essay furthers this project by asking just how cities project power in the contemporary global system. World cities are undergoing jolting internal reconstructions ostensibly intended to enhance competitive standing. In practice new land uses in urban cores favor private capital over non-elite constituencies. These transformations have not been neutral toward the global hinterlands. Juxtaposing data on global connectivity with the location strategies of private firms, we learn that the world's most successful global cities are also sources of exploitive accumulations of land, livestock, crops, metals, energy, and other rural resources. For these reasons, urbanization in its current form is hardly an inevitable apolitical process. Backed by states, private urban managers reconstructed both cities and hinterlands on their terms.

Keywords: global cities, urban-rural, land grabs, power, World Bank

INTRODUCTION

Contemporary globalization underpinned the emergence of an urban archipelago characterized by extensive, intensifying social interactions between cities. Urban power within this system is popularized by a series of indexes intended to measure the influences of individual cities.¹ This structure of trans-urban relations warrants critical scrutiny. How do global cities project power in this system? *Where* do they project power, *over whom*? Are trans-urban relations diffuse enough to be called democratic? This essay explores the territorial interactions of global cities writ large rather than any singular place, generating propositions for how power works in the global context of urbanization. The central argument is that global cities have come to dominate territorial uses, thereby changing modes of living in incalculable ways. This is especially clear with the subordination of isolated rural regions falling increasingly under urban management through extensive resource acquisitions—indicated by so-called land grabs. Despite the specialized, complementary nature of the urban archipelago, global cities are undergoing physical and demographic transformations in order to enhance geopolitical influences.

The term *urban archipelago* is broadly similar to the widely theorized “world city network,” whose emergence demands a rethinking of geopolitical power (Friedmann and Wolff, 1982; Castells, 1996; Sassen, 2001; Taylor, 2001). The concept is useful for helping us understand shifts in global power relations. The urbanizing world is undergoing social changes on a global scale, led by structural economic shifts rather than democratic forces or amalgamated individual choices. These include jarring changes in patterns of work, travel, subsistence, production, and remuneration across world populations. If the multiple localities making up the urban archipelago represent the “triumph of the city,” than devalorized rural populations

effectively constitute the marginalized global hinterlands (Glaeser, 2012). This is of course not the only meaningful geographically constructed understanding of power relations. Other constructs include direct colonial rule in previous eras, contestations between “East” and “West,” and persistent North-South imbalances favoring a US-led economic order backed by force. The urban archipelago constitutes another asymmetrical dyadic relationship where global cities project territorial power.

Land power is the ability of some actors to control the uses of space, recognizing a spatial element in classic innovations in the study of power (Dahl, 1961; Bachrach & Baratz, 1962; Lukes, 1973). Power is a crucial factor in the push toward urbanization in its neoliberal form, which governing institutions routinely present as an apolitical inevitability (The World Bank, 2009; The World Bank and International Monetary Fund, 2013). Global cities are undergoing palpable reconstructions in their built environments in the interests of private capital. They also collectively show an interest in the uses of the hinterlands (evidenced through apparent increases in land grabs). These global peripheries can be anywhere within urban spheres of influence, not just the proximate urban fringes being devoured by urban sprawl. The financialization of the global economy has expanded the urban reach well beyond city lines. Financialization has enabled land management in rural places such as central Australia or Ethiopia’s Gambela region. Trans-urban relations are particularly difficult to challenge for rural smallholders. Power exercised in one place is often located somewhere else, namely global cities with deep reservoirs of physical and financial capital. Local governments typically side with urban managers in land grab cases, given the potentially lucrative values of rural resource transactions.

Global cities are “command centers” managing geographically disperse forms of global production (Sassen, 2001). They possess high concentrations of physical, human, and financial

capital to coordinate global production networks. These are the central nodes in the urban archipelago, with cities such as New York City, London, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Chicago drastically reorienting their own built environments toward high-end, globally significant uses. Not coincidentally, firms located in global cities were central purveyors of land grabs in rural regions, taking control of millions of hectares of agrarian space. This relationship is also clear in the management of commodities such as land, livestock, metals, crops, energy, precious stones, and other rural resources. These commodities are subject to growing financialization under the aegis of world financial capitals.

This essay proceeds in four parts. The first section initiates an alternative frame for urbanization rooted in power shifts. The subsequent section explores measures for the concentration of power in global cities, the most important being Globalization and World Cities (GaWC). The third section critically scrutinizes extensive urban transformations toward global city status in accordance with accepted power metrics. This is rooted in the assumption that massive construction projects are unchallengeable when city leaders desperately seek mobile private capital. A fourth section juxtaposes the GaWC's findings with expressions of land power in the global hinterlands, particularly data on land grabs, putting forth evidence of urban power projection. Given these realities, this essay concludes with conjectures on the democratization of space.

FROM NUMBERS-BASED TO POWER-BASED URBANIZATION

Urban implies concentrations of population, services, and built environments (Mumford, 1961). *Rural* by contrast implies dispersal, in addition to economies directly tied to agrarian output. Suburbs by this framework are essentially urban because they are untied to agricultural

production and largely integrated with non-agrarian urban economies. In reality these modes of living rest on a continuum. Sprawling urban areas such as King of Prussia, Pennsylvania isolate individuals from social spaces, limiting physical access to nearby core cities through a lack of transit options. Some disperse regions are capable of urban integration with distance-saving technologies such as the internet, while others function as leisure sites for urbanites with minimal connection agrarian economies. Mendocino, California would hardly classify as rural, even though it remains remote from city centers in concert with open land protection campaigns.

Urbanization, narrowly defined, is the process of growth in the populations of urban spaces, and attendant expansions in their built environments. The transitory term implies processes of change away from rural social relations, including rural-to-urban migration, and is occurring on a global scale today. Urbanization is an elemental global trend that captures widespread attention in popular venues such as *Foreign Policy* (2010), with an emphasis on demographic milestones. The majority of the world population now resides in cities, while rural populations stagnate (UN Habitat, 2010b). For some this heralds an “urban age” with cities at the center of key geopolitical policy spheres (Burdett & Sudjic, 2010). The city is at once an independent variable, a unit capable of addressing myriad transnational problems from economic underdevelopment to climate change. It is also a dependent variable, forced to cope with rising sea levels, fickle global markets, slums, and persistent migratory influxes.

Despite highly visible urban transformations, numerical urbanization is slowing. Global urban growth rates peaked in 1950, mostly declining ever since (UN Habitat, 2010b, p. 5). Natural population increases account for a larger share of growth than rural-to-urban migration. Overall growth across developed cities has nearly leveled off. The vast majority of urban growth is in developing cities, which were growing by nearly three percent annually in 2000, down to an

estimated 2.4 percent by 2010 (UN Habitat, 2013, p. 29). Asia is not expected to become majority urban until the 2020s, and by then its annual urban growth rates could be well below two percent.

The expansion of the urban footprint is more compelling. Land cover is expanding at twice the rate of population growth, with mostly negative social, ecological, and economic consequences (UN Habitat, 2013, p. 29). For instance the population of Los Angeles grew by 45 percent between 1970 and 1990 while its urban footprint expanded by 300 percent (UN Habitat, 2010b, p. 10). Hardly unique to US cities, horizontal urbanism is part of a long term global trend involving many cities (UN Habitat, 2012, p. iv). Partly this stems from longstanding efforts to reduce crowding. However this trend also includes the entropic forces of sprawl, indicative of deep social divisions across urban landscapes. The extension of de-facto urban boundaries through rural regions on urban fringes is a key expression of land power. This is most dramatically illustrated in China, where urban growth coincides with at times violent transfers of power and property from peasant classes to developers (Hsing, 2010, p. 181).

A power-based understanding of urbanization takes into account the role of an elite few decision-makers whose activities shape the contours of city growth. This process favors some populations over others, as well as certain systems of living and production over others. For some political scientists power is the ability to influence decision making processes, or to keep issues off the agenda (Dahl, 1961; Bachrach & Baratz, 1962). For others power entails the control of some actors by other actors, including through direct contestation, in a ceaseless struggle to maximize coercive capability (Morgenthau, 1978; Waltz, 1979). “Invisible” power structures remain uncontested even when fundamental change is in the interests of subaltern groups (Lukes, 2004, p. 120). In this regard power relations can be so deeply embedded that at

given times they appears unassailable, reinforced through ideational deep structures. This applies most clearly when it involves the core principles of superstructures shaping social relations, particularly that of urbanization. In a globalized system of ideas, urbanization benefits from powerful rhetorical truths. The prevailing wisdom is that it fosters the omelet of modernization while intransigent rural economic systems are the eggs that must be broken.

Desperate realities in cities complicate the view that urbanization alone fosters prosperity. Urban settings by no means guarantee improved human development. Despite far greater wealth than the rest of India, Mumbai's average life expectancy of 56.8 falls well below the national level of 63.7 (Tembhekar, 2009). Inequality across the urban world is significant, and shows potential signs of worsening. This is evident in built environments across cities, starting with the global housing crisis. The slum population increased by 200 million people between 1990 and 2012, rising by more than 40 million people between 2010 and 2012 alone. The total slum population now stands at more than 862 million. In absolute terms this may be an all-time high, though the share of the urban population in developing countries living in slums has declined somewhat to roughly a third (UN Habitat, 2013, p. 151).

Power-based urbanization has political ramifications not immediately evident in a numbers-based account. Henri Lefebvre, for his part, saw cities as increasingly important sites of political activity, encouraged by widespread protests spanning from Paris to Mexico City in 1968. Lefebvre (1970) understood these fundamental changes in global production early on, as did Harvey (1973). Both were writing during a period of decline in many de-industrializing Western cities. Urban cores in cities as varied as New York, Seattle, Denver, Philadelphia, and Detroit declined as populations dispersed into suburbs. This was by no means a return to rural modes of living, despite popular back-to-the-land subcultures. Where Marxist schools of thought

traditionally focused on dialectical relationships between capital and labor, Lefebvre's (1970) "urban revolution" involved new focal points of contestation over the occupation of space. This kind of dialectic became increasingly relevant as world cities rushed toward privatization. Despite deindustrialization, management needs spurred financially driven renaissances in New York, London, and Tokyo (Sassen, 2001). These cities, among others, recast themselves as command centers in an ever more elaborately integrated global economy, managing geographically disperse production networks. Global networks were aided by advances in communication as well as free trade agreements that deregulated the flow of transnational capital. Class A office space replaced the factory as the preeminent symbol of urban economic vitality.

Sassen (2001, p. 13) makes extensive note of centralized management functions. Taylor (2004, p. 215) takes stock in the producer services accumulated within leading global cities. Their explorations of producer service functions are often used to approximate arsenals of power within cities. *Management* in this scheme primarily generates exclusive goods to private beneficiaries for profit. I define management as a source of authority over land uses. Far reaching decisions occur within these private spheres. Management's range of political options—including location—is expanded by diminished regulatory structures at multiple levels of government. Externalities born by the public in management decisions are both positive (employment opportunities, public benefits to new land uses) and negative (displacement, dispossession, ecological damage, social divestment, unemployment). Management contrasts with *governance* because the latter ostensibly produces public, non-excludable goods. UN Habitat (2002, p. 14) defines *urban governance* as "the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, plan and manage the common affairs of the city." The global

cities literature conceptualizes management into the governance picture through its emphasis on private sector location strategies, primarily FIRE sectors (finance, insurance, and real estate) (Sassen, 2001, p. 131). Given widespread public sector divestiture in cities, this perspective is imbued in municipalities seeking to bolster employment markets without the help of the central state.

MEASURING URBAN POWER: GLOBAL CITIES INDEXES

Loughborough University's Globalization and World Cities Research Network (GaWC) was the first research group to produce an index that examined the strengths of cities in a global network. GaWC initiated its first world cities index in 1998, roughly a decade before other major indexes.² Private sector urban managers are central to this rendering of the urban archipelago, rather than the public sectors that ostensibly set parameters for private capital. For Taylor (2001) "it is the multinational corporations who are the key actors, the loci of the decisions behind the control and command." This includes multinational headquarters and the supporting offices needed to maintain seamless global production networks. Concentrations of these producer services are the key criterion, rather than proxy measures such as transnational flights (Taylor, 2001). *Producer services* provide the management functions in the global economy, influencing the locations of multinational firms. These comprise banking, management consultancies, accounting, advertizing, insurance, and legal services (Taylor, 2004, p. 215). Such services are often specialized in a cooperative, positive-sum global network where new global cities emerge alongside others (Taylor et al, 2010). This is supported by the fact that the number of alpha global cities expanded over time; from 33 in the year 2000 to 45 by 2012 (table 1 summarizes the GaWC's global connectivity gradations). The work of GaWC provides useful criteria for

understanding how the global economy is managed from the private sector. This school of thought focused on urban units, decoupling its analysis from the nation-state system in International Relations (Magnusson, 1994; Curtis, 2011). Just as compellingly the GaWC viewed cities in relational terms rather than in isolation (Taylor et al, 2010).

[Table 1: GaWC levels]

Variations on the GaWC's world cities index emerged in the 2000s, often in association with for-profit companies. These indexes correspondingly define the urban power structure in terms of an expansive neoliberal paradigm where state maximalism (or minimalism) operates according to market-based logics corresponding with management interests (Harvey, 2005; Harvey, 2006, p. 25). The Global Cities Index (GCI) produced by A.T. Kearney and the Chicago Council on Global Affairs informs business location strategies while providing urban analysts with proxy measures for private sector competitiveness. Its criteria comprise business activity, workforce assessments (so-called human capital), cultural experiences, information exchange, and political engagement (A.T. Kearney, 2012, p. 10). Started in 2008, the GCI also emphasizes business climates in emerging market cities such as those in BRICS countries. These criteria emphasize the competitive drive to attract mobile high-end labor and global business investment. Doing so could include potentially publically supported undertakings such as hosting international conferences or sporting events. Sites of political engagement include international organizations, embassies, conferences, and think thank clusters (A.T. Kearney, 2012, p. 10). It is worth noting that these public networks are of use to the private sector, providing information, qualified personnel, and contracts to private business. Such measures of political engagement

would exclude globally influential social movements that do not serve the interests of private capital.

[Table 2: Indexes]

The collaborative Global Power City Index (GCPI) spearheaded by the Mori Memorial Foundation draws on very similar criteria, directly assessing the business regulatory environment. This index, which began in 2008, incorporates additional factors such as livability, transit access, cost of living, and other quality of life indicators (Mori Memorial Foundation, 2013, p. 6). The Qatari and London based Global Financial Centres Index focuses primarily on competitiveness in investment climates. For these reasons, London relinquished the top position to New York City in 2014. “Whilst financial services employment is increasing in London” the most recent report argued, “there is some evidence that job growth is in regulatory and compliance, including IT compliance jobs” (Z/Yen, 2014). Table 2 gives an overview of six popular global cities indexes that play pivotal roles in generating popular discussion on urban competitiveness.³ Here we see the head start of GaWC, while other indexes were initiated only in the late 2000s and early 2010s. Also notable are the collaborations between academia, research institutions, and corporate financial sectors. Academic knowledge in this area is widely sought after by financial sectors seeking strategic analysis on the urban archipelago. The Citi banking group commissioned the City Competitiveness Index (CCI) (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2013). Business interest groups and governments seeking to promote specific localities have also financially supported urban power indexes, such as with the Cities of Opportunity (CO) index (Partnership for New York City) and GFCI (the Qatari government). The criteria for these studies—though varying in data compilation, weighting, and methodology—unsurprisingly

reflect these interests. Many of these studies emphasize favorable tax and regulatory environments while none comprehensively addresses social need or civic inclusivity (PWC & Partnership for New York City, 2012, p. 74; Z/Yen, 2014, p. 7). Where some studies take into account the production of public goods such as infrastructure and environmental quality, they present them in the context of attracting private investment. The GFCI, for its part, pointedly draws on the points of view of financial workers in its conclusions, excluding other social classes or interest groups (Z/Yen, 2014).

New York City and London lead every list, with the former ranking first on all but one. This reflects the primacy of finance in each of these indexes, sectors which comprise large shares of income and spending power in these cities. Paris and Hong Kong receive top-five rankings in four of these six lists. Singapore, Seoul, Chicago, Los Angeles, and San Francisco also make repeated appearances in global top ten indexes. Most of these cities saw massive changes in their workforces heading into the globalization era. This includes some degrees of deindustrialization, shedding manufacturing workforces for high-end white collar and supporting service sector employment. Gentrification processes fostered demographic change along lines of class and ethnicity, with these cities featuring relatively high costs of living. As the global cities literature would predict, data indicate that the leading global cities feature steep levels of economic inequality (Sassen, 2001, p. 268). While comparable data on inequality for all cities is incomplete, table 3 hints at steep stratification across the urban archipelago. Gini coefficients measure levels of social inequality by income or consumption levels. Many of the world's leading global cities are well above UN Habitat's official international alert level of .40. The agency warns that levels above this threshold foment discordant social relations (2010, p. 51). The data presented in table 3 are limited, not taking into account variance in poverty levels. They

are also cross-sectional, originating from a number of different sources, thereby making comparisons between cities or over time difficult. Non-global variables such as levels of development, social redistribution, and political history also affect inequality. New York City and London have significantly higher inequality than their respective nation states. Even though London falls below the international alert line, it is thought to be the most unequal city in the UK (Lee, Sissons & Jones, 2013, p. 16). New York County, which comprises Manhattan, has a gini coefficient of 0.60, well above the already steep national level (US Census, 2012, p. 4). Developing cities are noticeably higher on this index, in some cases reflecting traditionally high levels of inequality at the national level (as with South Africa and Brazil). In all, we see a startling number of leading global cities falling above the international alert line, while others are among the most unequal places in their respective countries.

[Table 3: Gini]

POWER PROJECTION IN URBAN SPACES: EVIDENCE FROM KEY CITIES

Land power projections occur acutely within global cities. A veritable arms race to construct attractive high-end spaces for producer services is occurring across the urban archipelago. Only 11 of the world's tallest 100 completed buildings were built prior to the 1990 (Council on Tall Buildings and Urban Habitat, 2014). While the vast majority of new supertall construction takes place in Asia and the Middle East, Northern cities have also embarked upon similarly large scale projects. New York, London, Toronto, and Miami notably underwent construction booms prior to the 2008 global financial crisis. High profile architecture edged above London's low-rise oriented skyline in the 2000s, such as the Shard and St. Mary Axe. A

recent study conducted by New London Architecture found that there were 236 skyscrapers planned or under construction across the city (Sedghi, 2014). Political contestations over land uses are often heightened because most global cities have unusually high densities, with most areas already in use. Hong Kong and Manhattan are clear examples, with natural barriers limiting horizontal development. Producing new spaces means destroying old ones, or adapting old buildings to new uses for new constituents.

[Fig. 1]

[Fig. 1 caption: Downtown New York City in 2010. Photo by the author.]

[Fig. 2]

[Fig. 2 caption: Kowloon, Hong Kong in 2012. Photo by the author.]

The business complexes that are emerging in these cities are long term, state subsidized undertakings. They marshal state authority and resources to reshape urban landscapes on unprecedented scales while tempering neighborhood opposition. Though justified to meet the needs of private capital, success is hardly assured. Fig. 1 shows New York City's World Trade Center site in an early phase, conveying the extent of the downtown physical transformation that occurred after the Sept. 11th, 2001 attacks. One World Trade Center, its centerpiece, rises 541 meters. Though the project has struggled to find corporate tenants, it receives billions of dollars in public financing. The full figure has proven difficult to calculate (Powell, 2014; Bagli, 2014). Note the similarities in Hong Kong's extensive International Commerce Center site (Fig. 2). This project features a supertall tower which rises 484 meters, topped by a Ritz Carleton hotel and the world's highest cocktail bar. Around the completed building are the hallmark cranes working to

complete the rest of the project. The site's expansive layout more closely resembles Hong Kong's downtown area than the city's more walkable districts, implementing the scale of the city's financial district on territory across the harbor in Kowloon. There are similar "radiant city" interfaces in Shanghai's Lujiazui financial district (Corbusier, 1923; Corbusier 1929). As with the previous two projects, the area's centerpiece of supertall towers represents a departure from human scales, or the virtues of easy walkability that is the hallmark of New Urbanist thought (Fig. 3). Consistent with the radiant city archetype, these projects will foster very high densities, thereby at least theoretically increasing value production on relatively narrow spaces. These projects are advertised as high-tech centers intended to promote connectivity with the rest of the world city network. The Shanghai World Financial Center's official brochures emphasize the building's specific role in promoting global integration. Dubai has been another laboratory of near constant construction. For this reason the city appears in state of incompleteness. Entire complexes of towers remain in various stages of construction, thereby devoid of users as new projects commence. Figure 4 indicates the role of public infrastructure in the city's neoliberal project, with the newly constructed rail system linking a spread out network of skyscrapers. These transformations coincided with increased global connectivity over time in each of these cities as determined by GaWC.

[Fig. 3]

[Fig. 3 caption: Shanghai's World Financial Center (left) and Jin Mao Tower (right).
Photo by the author.]

[Fig. 4]

[Fig. 4 caption: Dubai skyline. Photo by the author.]

New York City was a primary innovator of neoliberal governance. This phase arguably emerged after near municipal bankruptcy in 1975, evident in the subsequent mayoral terms of Ed Koch (Tabb, 1982). Private capital supplanted public funding as a financing model in many governing spheres. This justified extensive public subsidies for upscale residential and commercial land uses. A competitive ethos overshadowed city governance, with pro-labor, pro-social welfare policies permissible within urban power structures inasmuch as they do not appear to risk capital flight. This is not to underestimate the persistent power of labor or tenants. New York City maintains relatively high levels of unionization, and maintained more public housing than any other US city. New York mayor Michael Bloomberg avoided deep divestments in urban infrastructure. He instead offered a neoliberal model of urban governance that has proven attractive in other global cities: tying the production of public goods to the interests of city's powerful FIRE sectors (Brash, 2011). This couples favorable tax and regulatory climates for high-end business while maintaining attractive levels of services for elite, globally mobile workers. Examples of this approach are myriad. The adaptively reused elevated railway park on Chelsea's High Line spurred soaring rents and new high-end development projects in the district (David & Hammond, 2011). The costly expansion of the subway to the city's far west side will boost the value of Bloomberg's favored \$20 billion Hudson Yards mega-project that emphasizes exclusive high-end commercial and residential uses totaling 17 million square feet. Another ongoing Bloomberg era project in Brooklyn's Atlantic Yards area included heavy public subsidies for projects including a sports arena, although public goods such as adjoining park spaces were reduced in the final planning stages (Oder, 2014).

This model is stylistically apolitical, rendering pro-development, pro-business policies unchallengeable in a desperate rush to compete with other cities, or to avoid flight to nearby

suburbs (Brash, 2011, p. 3). Under Bloomberg the city underwent massive rezoning, intended to reorient its built environment to reflect New Urbanist tenets such as walkability, but on a scale favorable to economically motivated investors. In the words of Amanda Burden, the Bloomberg administration's most important urban planner, this meant building "like [Robert] Moses, on an unprecedented scale, but with [Jane] Jacobs firmly in mind" (Leon, 2013). In this light, the Bloomberg administration attempted to rezone 73 square blocks in already-congested Midtown East for greater height. Current building stocks, the city argued, failed "to meet the needs of corporate tenants" (NYC Planning, 2013). Failing to enable more high-end floor space in the district risked losing ground to London or Shanghai. Critics contend that the city is advancing expanded construction that will strain already crowded transportation infrastructure (Stern, 2013).

New York's World Trade Center site is among the most elaborate commercial spaces in the world, already looming over the nearby Tribeca neighborhood despite being a long way from completion. The accompanying \$4 billion train station is one of the most lavished projects in the transit-deficient US, but will handle only a fraction of the traffic of other major New York rail hubs. Its primary architect, Santiago Calatrava, has a history of similar cost overruns that have left some European cities deeply indebted (Daley, 2013; Holleran, 2013). Commenting on the uses of the World Trade Center site, *The Nation's* architecture critic Michael Sorkin usefully reminds us of what the mega-project will *not* contain. "In the larger site," Sorkin notes, "there's no housing, no community space, no social or health services" (Sorkin, 2013).

[Fig. 5]

[Fig. 5 caption: Obliterated hutong housing in Beijing, China. Photo by the author.]

Shanghai and Beijing are undergoing some of the most far reaching transformations in the urban archipelago. More than 1.25 million residents in Beijing were displaced for construction related to the 2008 summer Olympic Games in Beijing (Centre on Housing Rights and Evictions, 2008, p.6). The controversial destruction of the city's vernacular hutong alleys (see Fig. 5) continues as the city seeks the higher end, more profitable uses that have incentivized growth in China (Hsing, 2010). Shanghai did not have the impetus of an Olympics to spur evictions. The 2010 World Expo was a similarly pivotal juncture in the city's recent development trajectory, but displaced far fewer people. Shanghai's overall transformation did however lead to large scale relocations over time. Half the world's cranes were rumored to be operating there at once during the 1990s boom (Chen, 2010, p. xv). The number of high-rises has expanded significantly, with the Lujiazui financial district in the city's Pudong New Area containing some of the world's tallest buildings. As one regional planner explained, officials are "trying to make the physical environment as attractive as possible" for foreign investment and globally mobile white collar professionals (Wang, interview with the author, 6.6.10; also see Zhang, 2010).

[Fig. 6]

[Fig. 6 caption: Rush hour in Chhatrapati Shivaji Terminus, Mumbai's central station. High population density creates crowding in public spaces. Photo by the author.]

The case of Mumbai indicates the drawbacks of willy-nilly densification promoted by international financial institutions. Mumbai urban planners have sharply questioned World Bank-led assumptions about the uses of space (Das, 1995; Patel, 2013). This includes its push to greatly relax Floor Space Index restrictions in already crowded cities (Shirish B. Patel,

correspondence with author, 5.29.12).⁴ Despite World Bank support for high density residential towers, crowding undermines quality of life in the city. The city's dated infrastructure is heavily overburdened at current density levels, including dangerous levels of crowding in its rail system, which sits precariously close to informal communities (see Fig. 6). Open Mumbai, a 2012 geospatial exhibition at the city's Nehru Center, reported that Mumbai has just 1.1 square meters of open space per person, compared with approximately 30 square meters each in London and New York City (Rajadhyaksha, 2012). More than 60 percent of housing in Mumbai is informal. The city's work patterns have globalized, with the slums of Dharavi bustling with export activity and local business services for transnational industry (SPARC/KRVIA, 2010). Mumbai is the urban heart of the largely rural state of Maharashtra, a major location for farmer suicides (Mohanti, 2005). Economic pressure on farmers has also helped catalyze the city's growth.

POWER PROJECTION IN RURAL SPACES

The recent history of land grabs indicates centralized, urbanized control over far flung spaces. Table 4 is an overview of land grabs of at least 200,000 hectares initiated since 2006, drawing mainly from data compiled by the GRAIN (2012) organization.⁵ Included in the table are the cities where the purchasers are based, alongside their world city network connectivity as measured by GaWC. Global cities disproportionately lead these land purchases. A majority of these 42 large scale land acquisitions were from alpha global cities, 23 in all. Of these, five were from either New York City or London, the most robust global cities according to GaWCs calculations. Singapore, Seoul and Kuala Lumpur (all alpha cities) are the only cities with more than one land purchase on this scale. Of the remainder, there are twelve beta global cities involved in land acquisition. Two cities, Edmonton and Chongqing, show some global

connectivity. Only four cities show insufficient connectivity (Harbin, Kostanay, Mecca, and Pyongyang). At the national level China, India, the UK, and Germany all rank among the largest land grabbers (GRAIN, 2008).

[Table 4: Land grabs]

What can this tell us about contemporary geopolitical divides? Struggling rural areas are susceptible to large scale sales. These land purchases occurred mostly though not exclusively in the global South, particularly in least developed economies. Most of the documented uses of these lands are agricultural. GRAIN (2012) contends that rising food prices, and the search for new investments in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis, spurred intensified land searches. While most of the purchasers were agribusiness firms, financial firms and investment funds together accounted for a third of all documented land grabs (GRAIN, 2012). The financialization of land management reflects the factor endowments of the world's leading global cities, particularly New York City and London, who have the personnel and infrastructural resources to manage far flung properties. Resource politics at the national level are also in evidence. Governments in Egypt, China, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, and North Korea directly accounted for some of the largest land grabs, reflecting national resource interests as well as investment opportunities.

With heavy financialization in the global economy we can predict upper echelon global cities with deep reservoirs of producer services to expand their influences in a variety of land use spheres. This is the case in extractive industries, where large operations often base close to their longest standing source commodities. Most of the largest mining firms nevertheless maintain significant transnational operations. Four of the world's ten largest extractive firms are at least partly headquartered in London (BHP Billiton, Rio Tinto, Xstrata, and Anglo American) (see

Table 5). Six of ten largest extractive firms maintain bases in alpha global cities. All the city locations for these firms show significant degrees of global connectivity.⁶

[Table 5: Extractive industries]

Global trading in rural commodities happens only in global cities, particularly the GaWC's Alpha global cities. These places are central to the location strategies of major transnational commodities trading conglomerates, as shown in table 6. These activities are heavily consolidated, evidenced by the amount of commodities trading brokered under the aegis of just two conglomerates. This follows a wave of acquisitions in which the Chicago-based CME Group acquired the New York Mercantile Exchange, and Hong Kong-based HK-ex group acquired the London Metal Exchange. Together these two conglomerates operate the four highest profile commodities exchanges in the world, which oversee the contracted purchasing of unfathomable volumes of raw materials. Marxist theorists have long emphasized the control of raw materials in North-South terms, or as a colonial construct (Hobson, 1902; Fanon, 1961; Wallerstein, 2004). Given the eminence of northern cities (Chicago, New York City, London), and their clear impact on materials acquisition worldwide, this analysis resonates today. Geneva is also a major base for the largest individual commodities trading firms (Szala, 2013). In sum, alpha global cities marshal immense amounts of the world's resources into various forms of production, consumption, and financialization, effectively assigning value to raw goods located in far flung places. For these reasons, global cities are hardly passive bystanders in urbanization processes, influencing the transactional terms upon which rural economies operate. These terms have not been kind to rural dwellers, with economic and environmental pressures fomenting the "push factors" associated with continued urban growth.

[Table 6: Commodities exchanges]

Proponents of urbanization point out that cities account for levels of economic production that are disproportionate to their shares of population or land areas (UN Habitat, 2008, p. 20; World Bank, 2009, p. 50). Rural settings are relatively poorer than cities (UN Habitat, 2008, p. 26). More concretely, the “urban advantage” of cities brings people in proximity with public and private services, theoretically concentrating social needs. According to UN Habitat (2008, p. 26), “cities can be real poverty fighters.” These findings underscore the importance of cities to development, and the inevitability of gradual urbanization as economies develop.

The World Bank’s benchmark *World Development Report 2009: Reshaping Economic Geography* correspondingly presents urbanization as a natural evolution toward modernity. This is inevitable alongside the decline of rural modes of living. “The unintended social and environmental effects” of neoliberal urbanization were explicitly beyond the report’s scope of discussion (World Bank, 2009, p. 34). The Bank called for a shift away from rural smallholding in favor of large scale commercial agriculture, a key theme exemplified in specific World Bank undertakings. For the Bank, “the market forces of migration” promise to self-correct geographic economic imbalances. The report’s key policy implication is that better channels for personal geographic mobility can facilitate movement “from laggard to leading areas” (World Bank, 2009, p. 10). Migration into cities, the Bank argues, leads to more efficient urban population densities. Rural spaces would be used more efficiently as well, benefitting from economies of scale while producing more profitable commercial crops. Other international organizations promote more moderated views toward the urban-rural divide. In the face of urbanizing poverty, UN Habitat’s seminal *Global Report on Human Settlements 2003: The Challenge of Slums* called

for decentralized urbanization in order to spread urban-to-rural migration more evenly (UN Habitat, 2003, p. xxvii).

In practice the Bank draws scrutiny for its support for rural land grabs occurring mainly in the global South (Stoddart, 2013). In the case of Ethiopia, the Bank called for “increased focus on commercialization of smallholder agriculture, with shifts to large-scale commercial farming where feasible” (World Bank, 2012, p. 5). The Bank has enthusiastically backed the Protection of Basic Services (PBS) program, which was ostensibly designed to cluster social services and housing for the rural poor, a process of “villagization” among largely nomadic populations. The PBS program reflected the Bank principle of density, as it envisioned nomadic rural populations forming better connected year-round villages (Leon, 2014). Human rights groups, the Bank’s own inspection panel, and residents in country’s Gambela region by contrast reported a violent series of evictions. World Bank funds helped clear the way for large scale land acquisitions approximately the size of the Netherlands (Oakland Institute, 2012; Human Rights Watch, 2012; George, 2013). Villagers additionally report being deprived of their farming rights in lands purchased by foreign firms, undermining traditional economies.

CONCLUSION: TOWARD A DEMOCRATIC LAND POLITICS

Democracy by definition requires diffuse power arrangements. As we have seen, land power in the current economic geography is heavily concentrated. In short, the current geographic distribution of power gives rise to a troubling democratic deficit. This is especially relevant given discordant social relations in the urban archipelago, much of it related to economic imbalances in territorial authority—evident in sites of protest including Cairo, Rio de Janeiro, Sao Paulo, Istanbul, New York City, London, and Madrid. The findings above are

germane to these contemporary problems. Longstanding *right to the city* norms speak to the issue of land power within cities and across their spheres of influence (Harvey, 2012, p. 4). Pioneered by Lefebvre (1996, p. 147), the right to the city has spurred calls for broad based inclusion in local development decisions, equalized access to the urban advantage, and the production of non-excludable public goods to promote human flourishing.

Such alternatives to the neoliberal governance model are embedded in global agreements. The rights of adequate housing and secure tenure are codified in a series of landmark documents, most importantly the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESR) (UN Habitat, 2009, p. 11). The 1976 Vancouver Declaration (1976, p.3) was among a handful of global commitments to a “new international economic order” to emerge in the wake of decolonization. In this context the report addressed the housing challenges of both the urban and rural poor. Recognizing the potential for rapid urbanization to create spatial inequalities, the report called for improving rural habitats (UN Habitat, 1976, p. 7). The UN also called for public control over land decisions, and the equitable distribution of land values (UN Habitat, 1976, p. 5). This was particularly important given neo-colonial power relations, with developed countries deriving the most profitable values from labor and raw materials in the South. Local agrarian autonomy continues to be challenged as global cities embark upon intensified resource acquisitions in isolated regions.

Despite the neoliberal ascendance, the right to the city is today central to the governing doctrines of UN Habitat, a set of norms for which the organization has provoked extensive discussion in venues such as the World Urban Forum (UN Habitat, 2010; UN Habitat, 2003). The democratic deficit in land power was additionally addressed by the *World Charter for the Right to the City*, which directly scrutinizes the role of concentrated real estate interests in

shaping urban-rural and intra-urban power imbalances (UN Habitat, 2005). Deploying somewhat softer language, the 1996 “Habitat II” conference in Istanbul recognized global housing challenges. This twenty-year follow up to the Vancouver Conference also addressed paramount problems of insecure tenure and territorial labor rights. According to the corresponding Habitat Agenda, “rural-to-urban migration has steadily increased, particularly in developing countries, which has put enormous pressure on urban infrastructure and services already under serious stress” (UN Habitat, 1996). The Habitat Agenda also addressed key ecological questions raised by concentrated power, for which equitable land management will be central to epochal problems such as global warming. Given urban power over open spaces, it is hardly coincidental that human activity impacts 83 percent of the Earth’s land surface (National Geographic, 2007).

These precedents forge the start of a workable framework for a new international economic order (even if the term has been dropped from the present day global governance discourse). Variants on the right to the city are officially enshrined in governing documents in a number of places including Brazil, Ecuador, Argentina, Australia, and India. The global yearning for alternatives to neoliberal governance should come as no surprise in a world where half the population lives on \$2.50 per day or less. Power differentials manifest themselves in the form of myriad negative externalities, including those elucidated in this essay. What follows is not a comprehensive or one-size-fits-all approach to democratic land governance, but a series of policy implications that specifically address land power.

There is truth the promise of cities, and rural isolation is itself a form of deprivation for many. Decentralized non-market public investments in rural areas can smooth any necessary transitions away from rural smallholding or nomadic agrarianism. As we have seen in Ethiopia’s case, land grabs occurred at the expense of these groups’ territorial rights, also violating long

standing secure tenure norms. Despite having de facto legal rights to use the land, rural smallholders saw none of the monetary value generated by large scale land sales. Bringing essential support to these areas in the form of education, public health provision, legal protections, incremental housing upgrades and other such programs can spearhead humane societal transitions toward urbanization.

New urbanist tenets of open space protection, walkable commons, low cost transit, and the provision of other public goods promise to reduce inequalities (Speck, 2012; Duany, Speck & Lydon, 2010). Opposition to automobile-centric, decentralized sprawl patterns promises to mitigate displacement on urban fringes. New urbanism's emphasis on human scale precludes the gigantism inherent in contemporary development projects. The production of social spaces is also essential to the political health of communities (Jacobs, 1961; Gans, 1962; Putnam, 2000). This is key point overlooked by the World Bank's insistence on transient mobility out of so-called laggard areas. The Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centers (SPARC) in India works to create social solidarity among slum dwellers at risk of higher-end redevelopment. Its efforts have been critical to fostering community resistance toward slum clearances, and broad based support toward community-based housing solutions.

Global governance arrangements have exacerbated spatial inequalities through free trade agreements that created competition for small, poor, sometimes landlocked agrarian economies. This migratory "push" factor has spurred both international and urban-to-rural migration in the context of a global economy whose structures were determined by powerful Northern trade negotiators. As we have seen, large scale resource acquisitions have entered the breach, capitalizing on rural desperation. International financial institutions also play a role. The World Bank favors the devalorization of rural smallholding without any serious alternative, presuming

the economic advantages of density will compensate disposed rural migrants. These global governance schemes will have to be revised, with protections for agrarian regions as they develop. We can hope that the right to the city becomes common parlance within these critical spheres of negotiation, and that transnational action networks directly address power in the current economic geography. The swift decline in rural economies is a recipe for slums.

Mumbai's slum communities, Ethiopia's rural villages, and their innumerable equivalences have one more important commonality. Their lands are being bought and sold by powerful financial interests for large sums. Clear eyed responses to land power should ask why these communities seldom see the value generated from the ground beneath their feet.

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TABLES

Table 1

GaWC world city rankings

Level	GaWC explanation
Alpha++	The highest level of global integration, pertaining only to New York City and London
Alpha+	Highly integrated cities complementing New York City and London, primarily in the Asia-Pacific region
Beta+ / Beta / Beta-	Cities linking a significant region to the world economy
Gamma+ / Gamma / Gamma-	Cities linking smaller regions or states into the world economy, or with global capacity in areas other than producer services
High sufficiency / sufficiency	Have enough services to avoid dependence on world cities, specialists such as small capital cities, or manufacturing centers

Caption:
Designations summarized from GaWC (2014).

Table 2

Popular world cities indexes

Index	Year of first index	Central criteria	Source (nationality)	Latest top ten (year)
Globalization and World Cities (GaWC)	1998	-World city network connectivity -Producer services	Loughborough University (UK)	New York City London Hong Kong Paris Singapore Shanghai Tokyo Beijing Sydney Dubai (2012)
The Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI)	2007	-Business environment -Taxation -Human capital -Infrastructure -Reputation -Market access	-Z/Yen (UK) -Qatar Financial Center (Qatar)	New York City London Hong Kong Singapore Zurich Tokyo Seoul Boston Geneva San Francisco (2014)
Cities of Opportunity (CO)	2007	-Innovation -Technological readiness -Infrastructure -Security -Environmental sustainability -Economic clout -Ease of doing business -Costs of doing business, taxation -Livability -Global access	-Price Waterhouse Coopers (US) -Partnership for New York City (US)	New York City London Toronto Paris Stockholm San Francisco Singapore Hong Kong Chicago Tokyo (2012)

Global Cities Index (GCI)	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Business activity -Human capital -Information exchange -Cultural experience -Political engagement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -AT Kearney (US) -Chicago Council on Global Affairs (US) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New York City London Paris Tokyo Hong Kong Los Angeles Chicago Seoul Brussels Washington DC (2013)
Global Power City Index (GPCI)	2008	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Business activity -Research and development -Cultural interaction -Livability -Environment -Accessibility 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mori Memorial Foundation (Japan) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> London New York City Paris Tokyo Singapore Seoul Amsterdam Berlin Vienna Frankfurt (2013)
City Competitiveness Index (CCI)	2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Economic strength -Human capital -Physical and financial capital -Global appeal -Cultural life -Environment -Future prospects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Economist Intelligence Unit (UK) -Citi (US) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New York City London Singapore Hong Kong Tokyo Sydney Paris Stockholm Chicago Toronto (2013)

Table 3

Gini coefficients in select global cities

City	Gini	GaWC Global city status (2012)
Johannesburg	0.75	Alpha-
Lagos	0.64	Beta-
Nairobi	0.59	Beta-
Mexico City	0.56	Alpha
Rio de Janeiro	0.53	Beta
Hong Kong	0.53	Alpha+
Ho Chi Minh City	0.53	Beta
Buenos Aires	0.52	Alpha-
New York City	0.50	Alpha++
Sao Paulo	0.50	Alpha
Shenzhen	0.49	Beta-
Miami	0.49	Alpha-
Bangkok	0.48	Alpha-
Los Angeles	0.48	Alpha
Houston	0.48	Beta+
Boston	0.47	Alpha-
Chicago	0.47	Alpha
Moscow	0.47	Alpha
San Francisco	0.47	Alpha-
Washington DC	0.43	Alpha-
Kuala Lumpur	0.41	Alpha
<i>International alert line</i>	<i>0.40</i>	
London	0.34	Alpha++
Shanghai	0.32	Alpha+
Beijing	0.22	Alpha+

Caption:

The greater the figure on a scale of 0 to 1, the higher the inequality. All figures derived from UN Habitat (2010b, p. 193), except for US metropolitan regions (US Census Bureau, 2011, p. 7), and London (Lee, Sissons & Jones, 2013, p. 16).

Table 4

Role of global cities in land management:

Land grabs reported by GRAIN of 200,000 hectares or larger

Hectares	Location	Use	Purchaser	Metropolitan base	<i>GaWC Global city status (2012)</i>
3,200,000	Australia	Livestock	Terra Firma Capital	London	Alpha++
1,500,000	Sudan	Unreported	Sayegh Group	Amman	Beta-
1,000,000	Mozambique	Unreported	AgriSA	Pretoria/ Johannesburg	Sufficiency/ Alpha-
750,000	Australia	Sheep, wheat	Hassad Food	Doha	Beta
700,000	Morocco	Citrus, olives	Tiris Euro Arab	Abu Dhabi	Beta-
666,850	Russia	Crops	Ivolga-Holding LLC	Kostanay	None
800,000	Uganda	Maize, wheat	Egyptian government	Cairo	Beta+
690,000	Sudan	Wheat	South Korean government	Seoul	Alpha-
600,000	South Sudan	Unreported	Nile Trading and Development, Inc.	Dallas	Beta+
470,000	Congo	Oil palm	Atama plantation	Kuala Lumpur	Alpha
426,667	Russia	Crops	Heilongjiang province, China	Harbin	None

424,000	Brazil	Soybeans, sugar cane	TIAA-CREF	New York City	Alpha++
400,000	South Sudan	Cereals, flowers, fruit, oil seeds, vegetables	Jarch Management	Hong Kong	Alpha+
400,000	Sudan	Maize, sugar, wheat	Egyptian government	Cairo	Beta+
400,000 (proposed)	Columbia	Cereals	Chinese Government	Beijing	Alpha+
329,000	Brazil	Sugar cane	Louis Dreyfus	Rotterdam	Beta-
326,000	Russia	Barley, wheat	Black Earth Farming	Moscow	Alpha
324,000	Pakistan	Alfalfa, crops, livestock	UAE Government, Abraaj Capital	Dubai	Alpha+
320,000	Brazil	Unreported	Tiba Agro	Sao Paulo	Alpha
311,000	Ethiopia	Maize, palm oil, rice, sugar	Karuturi	Bangalore	Beta+
300,000	Gabon	Palm oil	Olam International	Singapore	Alpha+
300,000	Nigeria	Rice	T4M	London	Alpha++
252,000	Australia	Unreported	Alberta Investment Management Company	Edmonton	High sufficiency
250,000	Benin	Sunflower	Green Waves	Milan	Alpha
250,000	Brazil	Cattle, sugar cane	Aquila	Hamburg	Beta+
250,000	Russia	Crops	NCH Capital	New York City	Alpha++

242,000	Argentina	Cattle, dairy, grain, soybean	Soros Fund Management/ Adecoagro	New York City	Alpha++
220,000	Brazil	Cereals, oil seeds	El Tejar	Sao Paulo	Alpha
220,000	Brazil	Soybean	Chongqing Grain Group	Chongqing	High sufficiency
220,000	Liberia	Oil palm	Sime Darby	Kuala Lumpur	Alpha
220,000	Liberia	Oil palm	Golden Agri Resources	Singapore	Alpha+
216,000	Australia	Cattle, goats, sheep	Ho Myoung Farm/Young An	Seoul	Alpha-
202,400	Pakistan	Fruit, vegetables, wheat	Saudi Arabia Government	Mecca	None
200,000	Argentina	Crops	Al-Khorayef Group	Riyadh	Beta
200,000	Brazil	Cotton, soybean	Penxing Group	Shanghai	Alpha+
200,000	Cameroon	Oil palm	Biopalm Energy	Singapore	Alpha+
200,000	The Gambia	Fodder, maize, palm oil, rice, soy beans, sugar cane	Mercatalonia	Barcelona	Alpha-
200,000	Indonesia	Sugar cane	Wilmar international	Singapore	Alpha+
200,000	Laos	Rice	Kuwaiti Government	Kuwait City	Beta-

200,000	Madagascar	Beef cattle	Madabeef	UK	Insufficient information
200,000	Russia	Cereals, vegetables	North Korean government	Pyongyang	None
200,000	Sierra Leone	Rice	Long Van 28 Company	Ho Chi Minh City	Beta

Caption:
 Data on size, location, uses, and purchaser are from the GRAIN database (2012). The author researched urban locations using corporate websites and news reports.

Table 6

Location strategies for major commodities trading conglomerates

Conglomerate	Key indexes	Major commodities contracted	Reported annual value of contracts handled	Global office locations	<i>GaWC world city status (2012)</i>
CME Group	-Chicago Mercantile Exchange -Chicago Board of Trade -New York Mercantile Exchange	Agricultural, metals, energy, weather blocks among other products	\$1 quadrillion annually, on average	Chicago (headquarters) New York Singapore London Beijing Belfast Calgary Hong Kong Houston Sao Paulo Seoul Tokyo Washington DC	Alpha Alpha++ Alpha+ Alpha++ Alpha+ Gamma Beta- Alpha+ Beta+ Alpha Alpha- Alpha+ Alpha-
HKex Group	London Metal Exchange	Metals	\$14.6 trillion annually (LME only)	Hong Kong (headquarters) London	Alpha+ Alpha++

Caption:

Data as reported by conglomerates and their affiliates. Compiled by author.

FIGURES

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

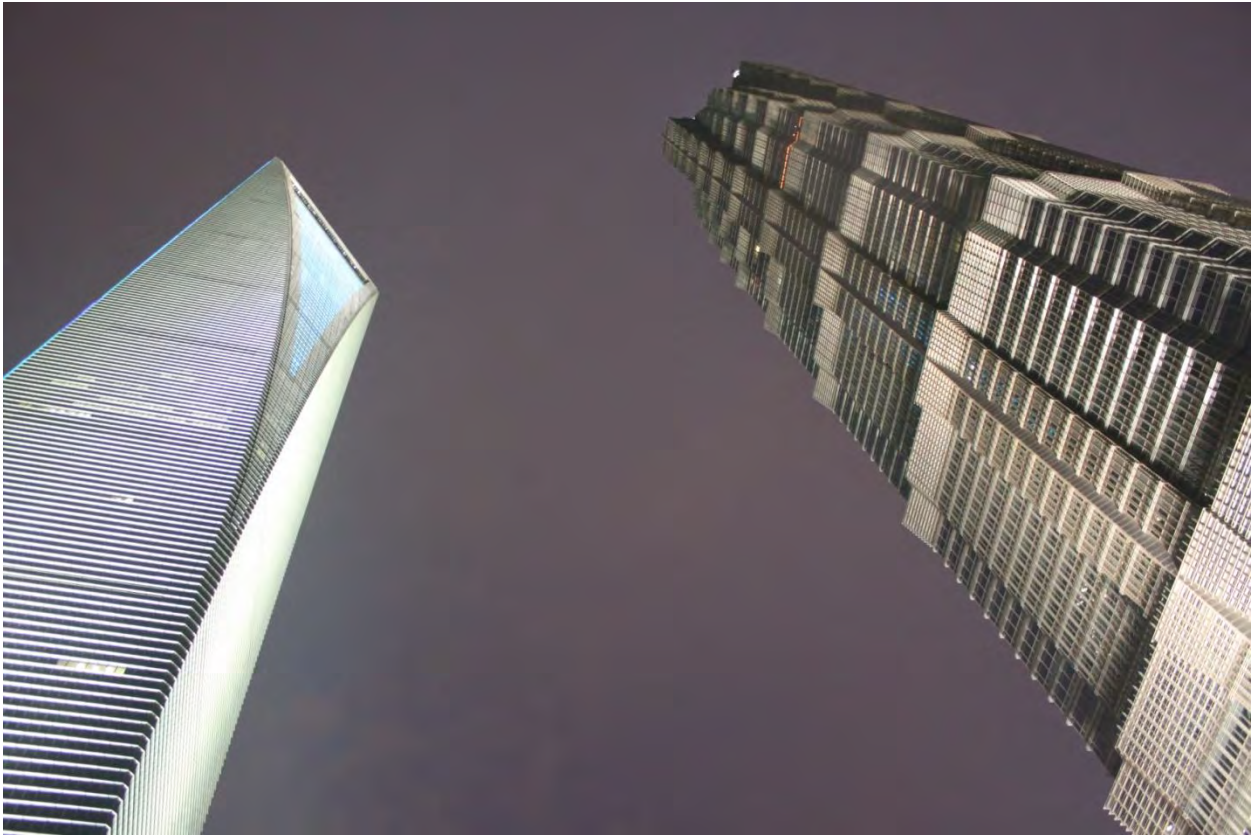


Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



¹ These include Globalization and World Cities (GaWC), The Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI), Cities of Opportunity (CO), Global Cities Index (GCI), Global Power City Index (GPCI), and City Competitiveness Index (CCI). See table 2 for an overview.

² GaWC's first index using a revised methodology appeared in 2000, for which it produced comparable indexes for 2000, 2004, 2008, 2010 and 2012.

³ I have excluded a number of specialized indexes here, such as UN Habitat's (2013) innovative Urban Prosperity Index, on the grounds that they do not specifically measure power.

⁴ FSIs, in some places referred to as Floor Area Ratios (FARs), compare the amount of built floor space with the size of the underlying plot of land. The greater the FSI ratio allowed in a city, the greater the building density.

⁵ This is the most comprehensive public data on land grabs. GRAIN, a rural watchdog NGO, found approximately 400 cases of land grabs since 2006, releasing its study in 2012. The GRAIN study relies on cases reported in the news media, meaning that it is very likely does not document all cases (particularly as many of these purchases happen with great secrecy). These land grabs range from a few thousand hectares in size to well over a million hectares. Table 3 documents the 42 largest cases of at least 200,000 hectares. The author located the metropolitan area locations of all but one of the firms behind these land purchases, Madabeef, which is managed by UK investors. AgriSA is located between Pretoria and Johannesburg, hence the dual designations. Also, this study omits purchases categorized by GRAIN as "suspended."

⁶ This is not to suggest that local factors are not of great significance to these locations. Of the firms in table 4, Shenhua primarily operates in China, extracting coal for local use. Suncor formed to extract the tar sands supply in Canada.