

# Peri-Urban Land Transformation in the Global South: Revisiting Conceptual Vectors and Theoretical Perspectives

Shiwaye M. Tesfay<sup>1,2</sup>, Genet Alem Gebregiorgis<sup>1,\*</sup> and Daniel G. Ayele<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Department of Spatial Planning, TU Dortmund University, 44227 Dortmund, Germany; shiwaye.mersha@tu-dortmund.de

<sup>2</sup> Department of Urban Transport Management, Kotobe University of Education, Addis Ababa P.O. Box 31248, Ethiopia

<sup>3</sup> Department of Geography and Environmental Education, Kotobe University of Education, Addis Ababa P.O. Box 31248, Ethiopia; daniel.gebretsadik@kue.edu.et

\* Correspondence: genet.alem@tu-dortmund.de

## Abstract

Peri-urban areas in the Global South are rapidly transforming due to urban expansion, land commodification, and institutional change. Although diverse theoretical perspectives address these dynamics, existing scholarship remains fragmented. This study systematically reviews how various theoretical frameworks deepen our understanding of peri-urban land transformation, focusing on conceptual and institutional dimensions. Following PRISMA 2020 guidelines, a systematic review was conducted on 120 studies published between 1996 and 2024, sourced from Scopus, Web of Science, ProQuest, and additional unindexed repositories. Eligible studies explicitly addressed peri-urban land issues in the Global South and applied theoretical approaches. Data extraction involved detailed coding of study characteristics, theoretical orientations, and thematic insights. Using open and selective coding, 19 thematic codes were identified. Three overarching themes emerged: (1) conceptualizing peri-urban spaces through territorial, functional, and transitional lenses; (2) institutionalization of place; and (3) theoretical interpretations of land transformation grounded in neoclassical, modernization, neo-Marxist, dependency, structuration, institutionalist, and urban political ecology frameworks. Studies were appraised for theoretical rigor, relevance, and potential conceptual bias. Limitations include the exclusion of non-English studies. Findings highlight the need for pluralistic, context-sensitive frameworks, with political ecology offering a particularly integrative analytical lens to examine global–local power dynamics and socio-natural transformations. This review was funded by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation (Georg Forster Fellowship, grant no. 1233452).

**Keywords:** peri-urban; peri-urbanization; Global South; land transformation; political ecology



Academic Editor: Tao Liu

Received: 13 April 2025

Revised: 3 July 2025

Accepted: 14 July 2025

Published: 17 July 2025

**Citation:** Tesfay, S.M.; Gebregiorgis, G.A.; Ayele, D.G. Peri-Urban Land Transformation in the Global South: Revisiting Conceptual Vectors and Theoretical Perspectives. *Land* **2025**, *14*, 1483. <https://doi.org/10.3390/land14071483>

**Copyright:** © 2025 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

Today, more than half of the world's population lives in cities [1], marking a significant demographic shift, largely driven by unprecedented urban growth over recent decades. The rapid pace of urbanization has made the global population predominantly urban [2]. For example, in 1990, approximately 2.3 billion people—around 43 percent of the global population—lived in urban areas. By 2015, this figure had nearly doubled to 4.0 billion, representing 54 percent of the global population [3]. This trend has been accompanied by a steady increase in the annual urban population, rising from an average of 57 million per year between 1990 and 2000 to 77 million between 2010 and 2015 [4]. The projections indicate

that by 2041, around 6 billion people will live in urban areas [1]. This has led to the rapid expansion of many cities in the Global South, where high population growth, limited planning capacity, and widespread informal development contribute to land consumption that outpaces population growth. Peri-urban areas—zones at the fringe of urban cores—have become key sites of transformation, experiencing some of the most dramatic forms of urban expansion [5]. Acknowledging the dynamic nature of the geographical edges of cities in the modern history of city-building and re-building, Keil [6] asserts that “we live in the age of the urban periphery”.

The Global South is experiencing a rising trend in urbanization, driven by rapid population growth and economic transformation. Urban sprawl, a prevalent consequence of this rapid urbanization, generates peri-urban areas characterized by intensified urban–rural interactions. Various terms have long been employed to describe the urban–rural interface globally, including peri-urban, rurban, urban fringe, urban shadow, and *desakota*, each reflecting different spatial, functional, or cultural interpretations. These terminologies have diverse origins, with some stemming from local contexts and others reflecting traditional academic conceptions [7]. Peri-urban areas at the fringes of rapidly expanding urban centers have become dynamic and are now critical spaces in the contemporary global landscape. Yet, according to [8], peri-urban areas have historically received less scholarly attention, mostly due to the general perception that they are merely short-term transitional areas of minimal lasting interest. This perception persists, and the transitional nature of peri-urban spaces still leads policymakers to see such spaces as “temporary spaces” [9], which in itself contributes to the academic and policy (political) marginality of peri-urban spaces. Peri-urban areas frequently fall under different (urban and rural) jurisdictions, creating an atmosphere of confusion [10,11]. This jurisdictional ambiguity often results in institutional fragmentation, legal pluralism, and overlapping jurisdictions, pushing the gray spaces onto the political margins [12,13]. Ambiguous legal frameworks governing property rights often provoke social and political conflicts and create a context in which planning (re)produces socio-economic inequalities and marginalization [14–16].

As UN-Habitat [17] noted, in recent decades, land has been brought to the fore in scholarship on social dynamics and change. Over the past decades, land has moved to the center of resource conflicts, and conjured new investment vehicles [18]. Cities have expanded, and urban activities have rapidly grown at the urban–rural margins [5]. Consequently, scholars have directed their attention toward the proliferation of frontier spaces that transform the nature of land resources and the processes involved in land transformation, a characteristic feature of peri-urban spaces in the Global South. These emerging studies have created fresh perspectives on the drivers of change and the ecology of actors [19,20] and analyze the multi-scalar processes shaping peri-urban land use; the diversity and complexity of the interactions among actors with different values, interests, and relations of power [21]; the issues of speculation, commodification, financialization, and excessive land transformation in the peri-urban spaces, which have taken center stage in academic debates on land transformation [22]; a growing body of scholarship on competing and conflicting interests in land [23–25]; the continuum of property rights formation [26]; and a growing interest in peri-urban land governance and the roles of different actors [27,28]. These studies argue that peri-urban land transformation is a complex process that occurs on multiple scales and that simplistic accounts of the peri-urban space dynamics are extremely problematic. This body of research also recognizes how the (re)configuration of peri-urban spaces has escalated due to globalization and capitalist urbanization. Shih [29] underscores the long-term structural inequalities embedded in urbanization processes, where peri-urban communities are systematically excluded from economic and infrastructural benefits, reinforcing their vulnerability rather than their integration into urban prosperity, as seen in peri-urban China.

The literature provides significant insights into peri-urbanization and peri-urban land transformation processes in the Global South [28,30]. It demonstrates how emphasis on economic growth, increasing integration into the global economy and “Citiness” [31]—the desire to imitate the status of world cities—leads to rapid peri-urban land transformation, presenting many challenges to the urban future. Nonetheless, the peri-urban literature has been accused of having limited theoretical depth. Despite the extraordinary wealth of urban research and the growing scholarly focus on land transformation dynamics, peri-urban studies, in general, have mainly provided descriptive accounts of land transformations at the fringes of expanding urban spaces [32], with minimal effort being made to delve into the theoretical explanations of drivers of change, power relations, and inherent contradictions (in terms of analytical expectations and material conditions). Notwithstanding the limited attention given to theoretical frameworks that capture peri-urban land transformation and the ecology of actors, this paper aims to situate peri-urban land transformations within the existing relevant theoretical landscape by reviewing the current state of peri-urban literature in the Global South. It draws attention to how various theoretical perspectives inform our understanding of these transformations, particularly in contexts shaped by rapid urbanization, fragmented institutions, and unequal power relations. The article begins by discussing key conceptual vectors that are useful for a meaningful understanding of the concepts of peri-urban and peri-urbanization. It then explores peri-urban land transformation as a dynamic process involving land development -making, and institution-building. Following this, the article examines the fundamental theoretical perspectives on peri-urban land transformation, shedding light on the complex socio-economic and political dynamics in this context. Finally, the article concludes with a summary of the key points discussed.

## 2. Materials and Methods

Methodologically, the study is grounded in a systematic review with meta-analysis. The report of this review adheres to the procedures outlined in the PRISMA statement [33] and is designed to address its stated objectives (see Figure 1). A systematic review is a formalized and iterative approach to the identification, appraisal, and synthesis of existing studies to address broader questions than those addressed by individual studies [26]. To effectively situate peri-urban land transformation and its inherent conflicts and contradictions within both dominant and emerging theoretical frameworks, a comprehensive literature review and synthesis are necessary. The fragmented and inconsistent nature of the literature on peri-urban land transformations further underscores the need for a systematic and integrative method. To meet this need, the study adopts a meta-synthesis research approach—a strategy developed to guide systematic reviews, synthesis, and analysis of the existing literature [34]. This approach allows for a contextual understanding of peri-urban land transformations and their underlying contradictions by embedding them within relevant theoretical landscapes and reviewing the state of scholarly engagement with these transformations.

The review process was structured into four key phases: identification, screening, competence assessment, and inclusion. Purposive sampling was employed at the identification stage to select relevant studies from databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and ProQuest, yielding an initial pool of 254 sources. The initial search employed keywords such as “peri-urban land transformation”, “peri-urbanization”, “rural-urban transition”, “land commodification”, “peri-urban governance”, “land-use change”, “urban expansion”, “urban sprawl”, and “land tenure in peri-urban areas”. This pool was narrowed down to 162 during the screening phase based on specific criteria. These include timeliness of insights captured through a 28-year publication window (1996–2024) to capture both

foundational and contemporary perspectives; a geographic focus on the Global South to ensure diverse viewpoints; and thematic relevance, gauging how closely each study aligns with the research objectives and core themes. The dataset was then refined through the competence stage by means of repeated and in-depth evaluation of abstracts and full texts. Articles were evaluated for relevance to peri-urban land transformation, source credibility, methodological rigor, and engagement with key theoretical frameworks. At the inclusion stage, 120 sources were selected to form the final dataset for analysis. These sources were categorized into core articles on the Global South (74 articles), general but related articles (35 articles), and broad global-context articles (11 articles). This classification ensured both depth in the core area of study and integration of broader scholarly perspectives. The final dataset consisted of journal articles, dissertations, books, book summaries, and research reports (see Table 1).

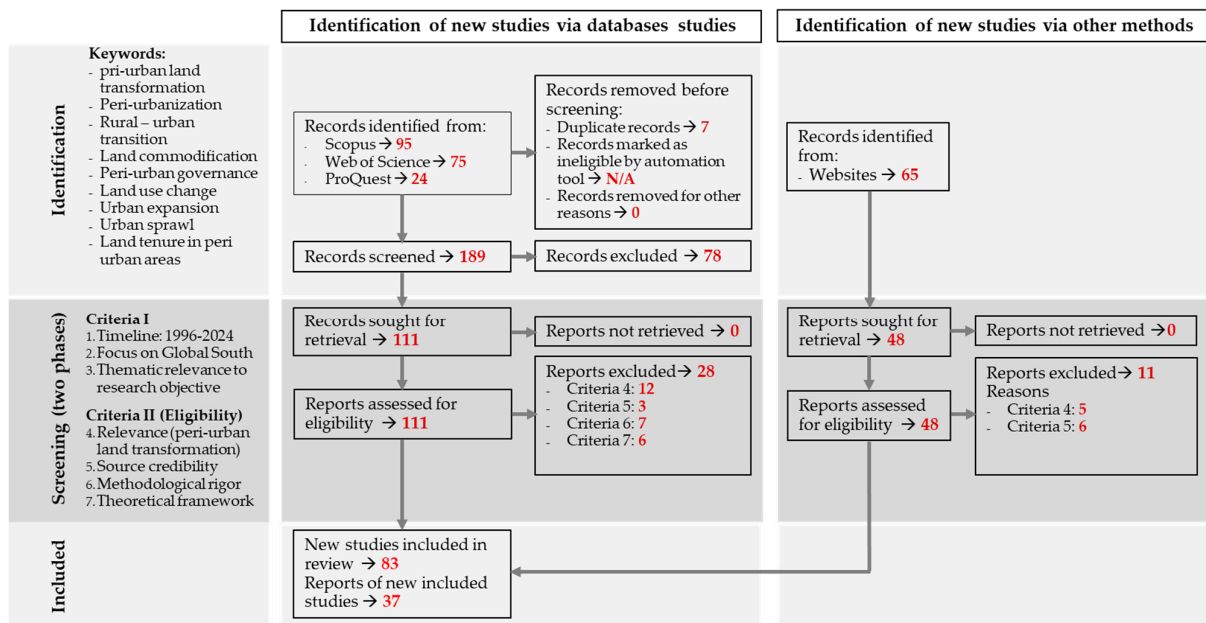


Figure 1. Research process (source: Authors, based on PRISMA 2020 flow diagram [33]).

Three important processes were required in the second phase (survey) following the selection of pertinent sources: (1) reading (to derive significant themes and understanding from the selected sources), (2) establishing conceptual relationships (to grasp the interdependence between extracted concepts), and (3) translation (converting relationships and insights into a coherent narrative pertinent to the study). A detailed analysis of the selected sources was conducted to extract key concepts, conceptual vectors, and theoretical perspectives. During the coding process, an effort was made to enhance theoretical rigor and transparency. Accordingly, the following criteria were applied: (1) each code explicitly traceable to a theoretical lens or conceptual vector were discussed; (2) emergent codes were validated through multiple cycles of comparison with the relevant theoretical perspectives to avoid thematic drift; and (3) the consistency and interpretive coherence of the identified codes were evaluated through investigator triangulation and peer feedback. This ensured that the coding process was not only inductively robust but also theoretically anchored and reflexively monitored.

**Table 1.** Sources and selected categorized data along overarching analytical components.

Overarching Analytical Component	Categories of Data	Main Data Sources
Conceptualizing Peri-Urban Spaces	Territorial, functional, and transitional conceptual vectors; urban–rural interface and spatial in-betweenness; place vs. process framing	Keil, 2020 [6]; Shih, 2017 [29]; McGee, 1991 [35]; Follmann, 2022 [36]; Rajendran et al., 2024 [37]; Friedmann, 2011 [38]; Lerner & Eakin, 2011 [39]
Peri-Urban Land Transformations and Institutionalization of Place	Rural-to-urban land conversion and changing urban forms; informal and formal land developments; legal pluralism and tenure systems; institutional fragmentation and hybridity	Alem, 2021 [14]; Akaateba et al., 2018 [23]; Adam, 2014 [26], 2020 [27]; Nuhu, 2019 [28]; Bhan, 2009 [40]; Fernandes, 2011 [41];
Understanding Land Transformation through Theoretical Lenses	Actor ecology and power relations in land governance; displacement, speculation, and land commodification Neo-classical economics and modernization theory; land market dynamics and commercialization-led growth Neo-Marxist and dependency theory; class conflict, land grabs, and global–local power asymmetries Structuration and institutional theories; structure–agency relations, resistance, institutional hybridity Political ecology and urban political ecology (UPE); socio-natural transformations and socio-ecological inequalities Poststructuralist political ecology and situated perspectives; everyday power practices, plural meanings, and local agency	Lund, 2024 [17]; Marx, 2015 [25]; Lombard & Rakodi, 2016 [42]; Meth et al., 2021 [30]; Bateman, 2024 [43]; Clapp et al., 2017 [18]; Matunhu, 2011 [44]; Mitchell, 2011 [45]; Friedmann, 2011 [38]; Harvey, 2007 [46]; Levien, 2013 [47]; Mazhindu, 2016 [48]; Adam, 2020 [27]; Ouma, 2015 [49]; Sikor & Lund, 2009, [50]; Coburn, 2016 [51]; Mersha et al., 2022 [52,53]; Lang, 2018 [54]; March & Olsen, 2009 [55]; Lawhon et al., 2014 [15] Allen, 2014 [56]; Li, 2018 [57]; Bartels et al., 2020 [58]; Lawhon et al., 2014 [15] Bartels et al., 2020 [58]; Leitner et al., 2023 [59]; Howard, 2018 [20]; Latour, 2018 [60]; Loftus, 2019 [61]

Sources: Authors, 2025.

For analytical purposes, the study text was examined using open coding methodology. This coding process ensured that each concept occupied significant conceptual and semantic space. A total of 19 codes were identified. Some codes represented conceptual vectors (e.g., peri-urban spaces, land tenure, land governance, power relations, conflicts of interest, land development, commodification of land, place-making, urbanization, globalization, and market forces, socio-economic inequality, and environmental sustainability) while others encapsulated theoretical perspectives (e.g., neo-classical urban economic theory, modernization theory, neo-Marxist theory, dependency theory, structuration theory, institutionalism theory, and (urban) political ecology theoretical frameworks). The translation phase involved semantic analysis of the principal codes and the (re)grouping of overlapping ideas. This process enabled the reduction and organization of the dataset while maintaining analytical depth and complexity. Three overarching categories were developed during the final stage of analysis following the creation of subcategories through selective coding: (1) “conceptualizing peri-urban spaces”, (2) “peri-urban land transformations and institutionalization of place”, and (3) “understanding land transformation through theoretical lenses”. By situating the process and driving contradictions within relevant theoretical landscapes, this meta-synthesis yielded a structured yet nuanced understanding of peri-urban land transformations and their theoretical foundations.

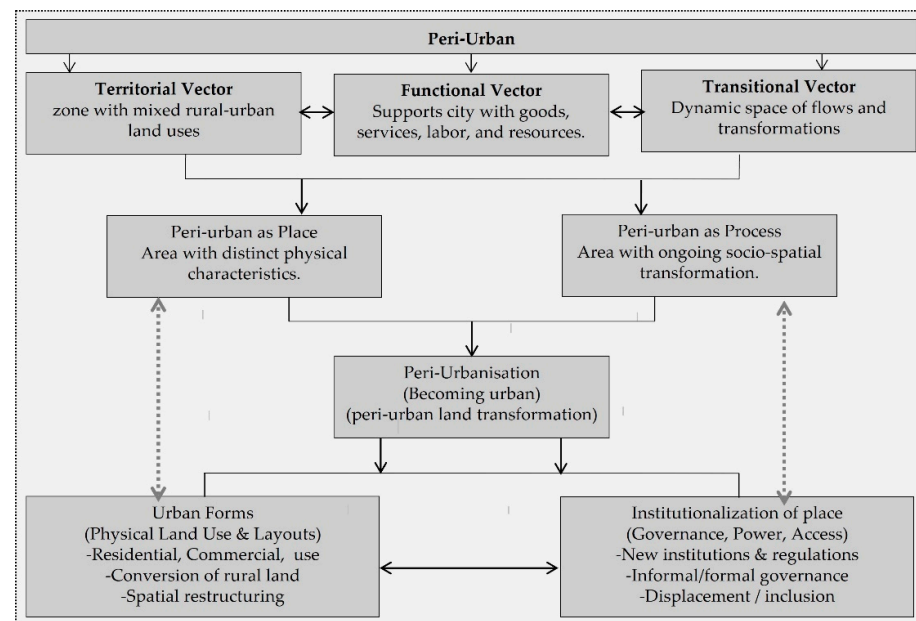
### 3. Understanding the Transformation of Land in Peri-Urban Contexts

#### 3.1. Understanding the Peri-Urban and Peri-Urbanization

Different strands of the literature introduced the concept of the peri-urban to capture the different types of transition zones between city and countryside [62]. Scholars have attempted to conceptualize 'peri-urban' in various geographical and disciplinary contexts. These efforts have informed the following conceptualizations, yet debates continue regarding the peri-urban concept, which remains challenging to define due to the heterogeneity of disciplinary perspectives [63,64] and the varied contexts in which it is applied [65]. Follmann [36] offers three interrelated conceptual vectors to untangle the concept of "peri-urban". Even though these conceptual vectors are ontologically intertwined, this distinction helps to question the concept epistemologically. Previous peri-urban studies focused on the territorial understanding of the concept. Peri-urban is a territorially defined place that surrounds a city and is characterized by urban and rural land uses. According to the functional vector, the peri-urban area is the city's hinterland for resources, goods, and services [40]. The transitional vector drives the territorial and functional vectors. The peri-urban areas are 'transitional spaces' (the city yet to come) and 'in-between areas of fluxes' (people, production, commodities, capital, and resources). Citing the diverse applications of both terms (the area and the process) that defy theorization [66], scholars call for a shift in focus toward understanding the concept of "peri-urban" as a process [67]. However, such "one-sided" conceptualization remains problematic because peri-urban is more complex and multidimensional than an emphasis on the 'unitary' framing implies. Thus, Rajendran et al. [37] offer a 'peri-urban turn', arguing for a 'pluralistic' framing that considers both place and process as "concurrent peri-urban realities".

Accelerated urbanization, especially in the Global South, has been a notable phenomenon in recent decades. Peri-urbanization gained currency as a concept to describe the multifaceted processes of transformation and development occurring on the periphery of urban areas. The oversimplified concept of sub-urbanization fails to adequately represent the complex "spatially and temporally contingent process of urbanization" [58,68], which is evident in the fast-growing cities of Africa and Asia over the last decades. The idea of peri-urbanization, which was originally developed for fast-growing African and Asian cities, has lately been extended globally, as researchers have demonstrated that many regions of the Global North also exhibit (re)new(ed) processes of change and complexity. Reviewing definitions of 'peri-urbanization' from earlier studies helps to ground this concern. It is defined in many ways, including "a process whereby rural areas on the periphery of established cities increasingly adopt urban attributes—physically, economically, and socially—often in a fragmented manner" [69]; "specific forms of urbanization that lead to the emergence of 'mixed spaces' situated between urban centers and rural areas" [70]; and "a process that generates a peri-urban gradient between the urban fringe and the rural hinterland of cities in a spatially and temporally non-linear and non-uniform manner" [58]. As the definitions suggested, peri-urbanization is fundamentally a process of 'becoming urban,' whereby peri-urban areas undergo a physical transformation, social mobilization, and economic commodification to support the process [38,71]. Scholars position open-endedness—marked by spontaneous land development and fluid institutional transformations—as a defining feature of peri-urbanization in the Global South [68] and conceptually dissociate "peri-urbanization" from the northern-derived concept of suburbanization—characterized by planned land development and established governance and regulations. This raises concerns about the transferability of global urban frameworks that are often grounded in northern experiences. As such, scholars have called for a re-thinking of dominant development paradigms to better reflect the hybrid, contested nature of peri-urban realities. However, Bartels et al. [58] suggest the use of both concepts for a

more nuanced understanding of the complexity and diversity of urbanization processes along the urban outskirts of cities in the Global South (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Conceptual map of peri-urban and peri-urbanization (source: Authors, 2025).

### 3.2. Peri-Urban Land Transformations: Urban Forms and Institutionalization

Within academia and beyond, understandings of peri-urban land are too often shaped by the idea of perceived space [72]. According to the theory of the production of space, perceived space—or spatial practice—shapes the physical configuration of space, and contributes to the process by which materiality is produced. Peri-urban land transformation processes commonly generate patterns of new urban forms [73] or spatial configurations [74]. In many African cities, these processes are primarily linked to the use of peri-urban space for residential, commercial, and other economic purposes [63]. However, a new paradigm suggests that urbanism has been driven by the desire to imitate the status of world cities—what Gastrow [31] referred to as ‘cittiness’—which drives the demand for land to increase and changes peri-urban spaces into land transformation hotspots. In peri-urban spaces, it is a common phenomenon to witness the appropriation of land by a diverse array of actors with vested interests in land development. This process, as described by Friedmann, Mersha et al., Simon, and Wubneh [8,38,52,75], highlights the intricate and multifaceted nature of land-use dynamics and the competing interests that influence the evolution of peri-urban spaces. When cities are set to grow in size, peri-urban spaces experience changes in land use [28,76]. Urbanization occurs through land conversion, with predominantly rural areas constantly converting into more urban areas [77], resulting in a mosaic of rural and urban land-use patterns. These peri-urban areas evolve into new economic spaces that nurture land transformations with rapidly changing ecological characteristics and functions [78]. Thus, land transformations in peri-urban spaces entail access to new land, and a shift in land use [58], thereby cultivating a unique sense of place within peri-urban contexts.

The obvious path-dependent aspect of the peri-urbanization process is “the production of peri-urban form” [79]. From this perspective, scholars conceive peri-urban land transformation as processes rooted in the transformation of nature, encompassing its material aspects, such as land. Becoming urban is a formation of new physical spaces (new urban layouts)—a reconfiguration of peri-urban spaces into new patterns and physical structures. However, this unitary view of peri-urban land transformation provides no more than a

one-sided view of what is undoubtedly a far more complex picture. Land transformation is not all about the transformation of physical space or spatial layout. Equally important to the urban form is the institutionalization of place—those less visible aspects that shape the nature of peri-urban spaces during their transition to becoming urban. In addition to the emphasis on land-use and economic change, peri-urbanization-induced land transformations should be viewed as a powerfully institution-generative process that produces dense matrices of new institutional structures and relationships [79]. To put it another way, what is being created during peri-urban land transformation is not just new urban forms, but also new social, political, and economic institutions. These dynamics manifest differently across regional contexts. In Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), state-led expropriation for housing and industrial zones marginalizes farmers and disrupts customary land systems [80]. In Delhi (India), informal settlements thrive due to political patronage and legal ambiguities [40]. Meanwhile, in Lima (Peru) and São Paulo (Brazil), urban expansion involves informal land occupations and gradual state regularization, driven by grassroots struggles and housing needs [41,81]. These cases show how national policies, legal systems, and local power dynamics shape peri-urban transformations. In the process, new urban forms are produced, bringing with them new distributions of wealth, property, and political power as well as changing social and political institutions. Land transformations involves complex changes in peri-urban areas, leading to the emergence of distinctive urban structures and new institutional landscapes [58,79]. Together, these processes are deeply interconnected, mutually reinforcing and integral to the broader dynamics of ‘becoming urban’ [78].

## 4. Understanding Land Transformation Through Theoretical Lenses

### 4.1. Neo-Classical Economics of Urban Structure and Modernization Theories

To understand the political economy of land (capitalist political economy), Harvey [46] notes that political economists have historically relied on concepts such as land rent and land value. According to the postulates of urban land market theory, land prices are usually high near the city center and decrease gradually towards the city’s edge, where the lowest prices are found [82]. This logic underlies the high levels of land speculation and competition in peri-urban spaces. According to Mersha et al. [53], this phenomenon—referred to as “inflation-proof investments on land”—underscores the attractiveness of land as a secure asset during times of economic uncertainty, making it an appealing option for long-term investment strategies. The conflicts and contradictions that accompany such peri-urban developments are seen, at least implicitly, as inevitable outcomes of global market-driven peri-urban change. From a disciplinary perspective, this economic theory informs modernization theory. Modernization theory addresses social growth and societal development. Central to this theory is the interplay among political culture, societal change, and economic development, and for developing countries to be transformed, they have to apply “growth-oriented strategies” [83]. This theory sees commercialization of agriculture, industrialization, capitalist urbanization, and related land transformations as beneficial processes that contribute to the development of the local economy [44]. The processes of modernization are influenced by a multitude of perspectives on modernity and the explicit or implicit interests tied to them. Sippel and Visser [84] refer to these varied perspectives as “land imaginaries”, which illustrate the diverse ways in which notions of modernity and progress intersect with societal and cultural contexts related to land. For example, discourses on (peri-urban) land investment often draw on narratives of land as “empty yet full of investment potential” [57], and they are used to perpetuate and sustain Western cultural and economic hegemony [45,85,86] and (re)shape policy toward the “new states” (less developed countries), as the dependence theory would argue.

In most parts of the Global South, capital flows enable rapid peri-urbanization, resulting in the reconfiguration of peri-urban land use. Over the years, the changing approaches

to capital accumulation have strengthened the integration of land into investment circuits. The relationship between financialization and the transformation of (peri-urban) land (in the form of urban land, extractive resources, agricultural production, or ecological services) has been at the forefront of financialized accumulation strategies. Land is often viewed as a vehicle for capital accumulation, contributing to the increasingly unequal competition for valuable land [87]. More than merely an economic revaluation of land, the integration of land into investment circuits involves an iterative rearrangement of the social and natural processes that determine the material and symbolic qualities of land [88]. Investment processes unfold within different ontologies, valuations, and land uses [57]. This involves more than simply changing the perception of land in peri-urban areas through the narration of what land is, can, and should be. It is also about reforming institutional and regulatory configurations and enrolling agricultural and extractive production systems that have transformative effects on the land [42,49,88]. The agricultural sector often leverages global food security narratives to promote incentives for poor communities to engage in productivity-enhancing investments in their land. Similarly, the extractive sectors are shaped by discourses emphasizing national financial prosperity—often misrepresenting investments as public revenues—and compensation for the disrupted livelihoods of local, peri-urban communities. These sectors aim to create land markets to stimulate increased agricultural production [43] while concurrently intensifying the struggle over land and its transformation.

Land has long played a crucial role in sustaining the expanded circulation of capital and driving capitalist accumulation dynamics. Modernization theory-oriented change is associated with land tenure systems, particularly those rooted in the possession of private individual land titles [43]. In the context of contemporary peri-urban land in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, global financial institutions often view communal land tenure systems as inefficient, outdated, and obstructive to entrepreneurial initiatives. As modernization theory suggests, these ‘structural defects’ must be addressed to unlock growth. The theory posits that poor households can benefit significantly when their activities on land change from subsistence to modern, market-oriented ones. Emerging markets, characterized by a market-based economy, are expected to expand the tax and revenue base for local governments, enabling greater access to resources for improved service delivery and infrastructure development. Over time, this dynamic suggests that individual, family, and corporate benefits can translate to community and national benefits. Capitalism promotes profit accumulation and free enterprise, further integrating land into investment circuits, and is the main driving force behind “agrarian urbanism” [89]. Such transitions have been witnessed in Brazil, where land reforms have facilitated global agricultural integration but at the expense of widening rural inequality. Communal land privatization in Kenya has boosted commercialization while also encouraging speculation. Urbanization in India has turned land into real estate, enhancing economic gains but also commodifying land. These examples illustrate that modernization is not without downsides, as it has generated increasing pressure on land [36,39,90] and driven farmers out of agriculture, clearing the way for spatial restructuring and leaving surviving farmers vulnerable to market fluctuations, which are key drivers of land speculation and commodification. While modernization theory emphasizes linear progress through state-led development and market expansion, it contrasts with neo-Marxist perspectives that frame such transformations as reinforcing class-based inequalities. This difference underscores the importance of critically examining whose interests are advanced in peri-urban land transformation.

#### 4.2. Neo-Marxist and Dependency Theories

Central to neo-Marxist thought is the belief that inequality stems from capitalist economic structures. The neo-Marxist adds the broader understanding of power to Marxist philosophy and focuses on capitalism, its struggle over land, and the associated inequalities, contradictions, and conflicts. The theory directs our attention to the forces that drive the transformation of land in peri-urban spaces. It emphasizes the existence of competing and conflicting interests, reflecting the various ways in which peri-urban land is appropriated. The significant effect of how power is constituted, exercised, legitimated, controlled, and redistributed influences how decisions are made [55]. From the neo-Marxist perspective, powerful neoliberal forces use their economic power (financial capital) to pressure governments into seizing land for themselves and pursuing their interests (profit maximization) [91], translating economic power into political influence [28]. For instance, in countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya, and Tanzania, peri-urban and rural communities often lose access to their land due to large-scale acquisitions by multinational corporations or local elites. These acquisitions are justified under the guise of development, agricultural investments, or infrastructure projects, but frequently lead to landlessness and poverty for local populations—reflecting the exploitative nature of capital [28,53,76]. This condition is worsened by the commodification of land and neoliberal economic policies, wherein the state is also more interested in the economic gain from private investment. Global structural inequities inherent in capitalism are replicated at the local level—particularly in peri-urban areas—displacing locals in the spirit of urbanization, investment, and local economic growth. Building on the neo-Marxist basics, dependency theory demonstrates how urbanization and commercialization of land markets and activities in the Global South transform pre-existing local institutional frameworks, divisions of labor, social relations, ways of life, and attachments to the land [46].

Dependency theory recognizes the key role of power in the land transformation process. How power is constituted, exercised, legitimated, controlled, and redistributed affects decision-making at different levels [55]. As Nuhu [28] observed, land transformation and governance, and the processes that create, sustain, and transform it in the dynamic peri-urban spaces are influenced by power and authority in terms of political power, economic muscle, or both. This conceptualization draws attention to processes of disputing and bargaining between interest groups over land. In the structural political economy analysis, focusing on processes of peri-urban land transformation highlights cooperation, dispute, negotiation, compromise, and exit as different ways actors can interact [26]. Overlapping and complementary roles, multifaceted relationships, including inclusive and exclusive power relations, hidden and revealed interests, and competing and conflicting claims shape how land is used, policies are made, and who benefits from land transformation [68]. In the context of structural inequalities and the selectivity of globalization, local peri-urban communities are poorly mobilized, lack financial resources, and do not influence most land governance decisions. Hence, their participation in the local economy is hindered. Central governments are either complicit or weakened by the logic of globalization forces, such that the peri-urban disenfranchised have no one to protect their land rights [28]. Neoliberalized globalization and associated economic adjustment programs result in the weakening of governance structures, a surge in corrupt practices, and the systematic exclusion of peri-urban communities from accessing the ostensive ‘new economic opportunities’, leading to increased inequality and social tensions [92]. Dependency theory reveals these unequal economic relations, whose origins are global and are reproduced at the local level.

Institutions characterized by private property rights, free markets, and free trade contribute to improving human welfare, as postulated by neoliberal theory. Yet in the context of city-making processes in the Global South, global restructuring breeds widespread

poverty, inequality, contradictions, conflicts, and the informalization of the economy at all levels [48]. Fang and Pal [19] demonstrate these multi-scalar contradictions, whereby gains accrue to globally linked actors at the expense of local communities. As experiences from most parts of Africa show, farmers face revocation of their agricultural use rights as new actors move into peri-urban areas to compete for land for residential, commercial, and speculative purposes [28]. The more peri-urban land that state agents expropriate and acquire, the more peri-urban land developers develop, the more tax the government collects, and the more profit developers and dealers make. “The natural community”, whose usufruct rights to land are stolen by the state, experiences decreased security and opportunities [28,52]. This contradicts the human welfare assumptions asserted by neo-Marxist theory. The creation of the neoliberal capitalist system, the process of economic integration, and the informalization of the economy drive large-scale development induce land grabs, dispossession, and displacement [11,47,59]. This demonstrates the adversities of ‘extractive imaginaries’: global restructuring has extended into new geographies with the development of commodification and more recently “assetization” of land and other natural resources within the larger development of the capitalization of everything [93]. Thus, peri-urban areas remain sites of ‘speculative urbanism’ [30], with land transformation primarily driven by the capitalist logic of exploitation and commoditization [73]. This perspective challenges modernization theory, suggesting that urban expansion is driven more by economic forces rather than the extension of “civilization” into so-called “barbarian” territories. Both neo-Marxism and dependency theory foreground structural inequalities, but the latter places greater emphasis on global asymmetries and the historical subordination of peripheral regions. Together, they challenge the market optimism of modernization theory and highlight the embeddedness of peri-urban land transformation in global capitalist systems.

#### *4.3. Human Agency, Structuration, and Institutionalism Theories*

Understanding the development process requires understanding the relationship between how actors behave in deploying resources to realize specific investments, and the broader processes that drive the strategies and interests of the various actors involved. In discussing structure and agency relations, earlier Marxist and neo-Marxist writings emphasized global structural economic determinism over human agency. A similar pattern of structural determinism can be found in modernization theory. However, over the last four decades, there has been a greater emphasis on the importance of human agency and how people choose to align or not align with particular structures. Dialectically, power is the capacity of actors to achieve outcomes within the existing structures [60,94,95]. This theoretical conception draws our attention to the issues of decision-making, action, and power relations between various actors involved in land transformation [52] and how actors influence each other in achieving diverging interests by challenging and reinforcing existing power structures [51]—a setting within which peri-urban land transformation occurs and gains meaning. Structure refers to the recurrent patterned arrangements that influence access to land. It could be understood as a set of rules and resources needed for a land transaction and transformation to function [51]. Such a structure could be enabling and constraining and, together, governs actors’ behavior and structures their everyday land access and development practices. Land transformation is negotiated by the interplay between structure—in terms of the peri-urban land that different actors may be able to access and the rules governing their behavior—and agency—in terms of the power that individual actors hold and exercise to gain access to peri-urban land. It is the dynamic interaction between these structural constraints and individual or collective agency that ultimately drives land transformation in peri-urban regions [52]. While earlier economic

models emphasize the importance of ‘structure’ over ‘agency,’ the socio-cultural model argues for a non-deterministic understanding of structures. Scholars are invariably engaged in this ongoing debate.

Experiences in the Global South reveal that land delivery in urban areas is not as adequate as the structural perspective assumes. It is challenged by supply inefficiencies (mainly due to increasing private sector investment) and contradictory institutional and legal frameworks [26,96]. In this context, actors exercise their agency and find their way to access land that would otherwise remain beyond their reach. “Imaginaries of land”—such as land-as-livelihood narratives—play a critical role in enabling human agency to challenge existing structures. Prescriptive expropriation decisions, weak land governance, and diverging interests between investors—who see land as an inflation-proof investment—and farming communities—who see land as a source of livelihood—as well as the emergence of negative trickle-down effects offer a rallying point for the peri-urban community to challenge structural determinism. The peri-urban agricultural community may fiercely resist urban growth plans used as justification for annexing more peri-urban land, and these plans may even be reversed [52]. The resistance of farmers in Addis Ababa against the city’s master plan in 2014, culminating in its eventual withdrawal [14], demonstrates the power of collective agency. It highlights the de facto power of the peri-urban voiceless and reveals the existence of “competing power structures”, as implied in structuration theory. Capitalism is the predominant mode of production in Africa, yet it has not completely replaced the pre-capitalist social and cultural formations. Thus, in the African setting, structural forces arising from neo-globalization processes and the socio-cultural structures that are already in place influence agency—what land transformation actors do [97,98].

Institutional theory provides insights that are complementary to structuration theory. It shares the premise with structuration theory that action is largely organized by structure (i.e., institutions). As emphasized by “old” institutional theory, institutions highlight the role of legal orders (formal codes of conduct) in shaping the daily practice of actors involved in the land transformation process. In the Global South, peri-urbanization-induced land transformation has long been premised on compliance with formal institutions regulating actors’ behavior—formally acknowledged as the “rules of the game”. “New” institutional theory, on the other hand, is used to understand actors’ behavior as situated in and influenced by social orders (broader informal codes of conduct) as documented by recent peri-urban scholarship [53]. In this way, there has been a shift in focus from formal and material institutions (such as laws, rules, and regulations) to informal and immaterial institutions (such as norms, values, and traditions), following the move from “old” to “new” institutionalism. Yet, this “theoretical singularism” provides no more than a one-sided view of what is undoubtedly a far more complex picture [53]. Formal laws and rules play a significant role in shaping land transformation in peri-urban spaces. But social orders (socially embedded rules) are also important in guiding practices and relations concerning land transformation. In the context of path dependency, the role of actors in the process of transforming land is often overlooked, and actors may simply be perceived as victims of the deterministic character of land governance institutions. This is because institutions are often used to explain persistence rather than change, as the logic of institutionalism is institutional reproduction rather than transformation [54,99]. Yet institutions governing land are created, transformed, and dissolved by agency (the actions of actors), making way for new institutions of land access and development—a topic that institutional theorists have largely overlooked. These approaches shift focus from macro-structural forces to the interplay of human agency and institutional norms. In contrast to deterministic readings in earlier theories, they allow for a more nuanced understanding of how actors negotiate and reshape land governance frameworks on the ground.

#### 4.4. Political Ecology and Urban Political Ecology Theoretical Frameworks

Political ecology takes a contextual approach to examine ecological systems while emphasizing the broader political and economic structures that shape these dynamics. The global political economy perspective addresses the global–local dynamics that transform peri-urban spaces through urbanization and globalization. The concept of “accumulation by dispossession” has been used in exploring general drivers and outcomes of the phenomenon known as the “peri-urban land rush”. However, it fails to adequately capture the geographic outcomes of land transformations [84], as well as the complex, multi-layered relationships with land that influence these processes [100–102]. In contrast, political ecology offers a holistic perspective, theorizing political economy of land transformations centering upon social relations and processes as drivers of peri-urban land transformation—broadly conceptualized as “social constructions of nature” [103]. Its analytical entry points are material and discursive struggles over land access, development, and management, and these struggles are politically, economically, culturally, and socially mediated. The interactions and power relations among actors are heavily influenced by political power, economic strength, or both [55,104]. Political ecology problematizes land transformation as spaces within which socio-economic processes and power relations play out [105]. It enables new space for analysis of a system of power relations and the status of powerful actors in peri-urban land transformation, as well as the dynamics of social marginalization [105]. Despite critiques that it leans either toward politics without ecology [106] or ecology without politics [107], political ecology theory remains valuable for its problematization of land transformation (the social construction of nature) as a politically contested terrain.

There is a significant amount of research in political ecology addressing the struggle for access to and control over peri-urban land and the power relations that create inequalities [50,108–110]. However, much of this research has traditionally centered on rural contexts within the Global South [50,108]. In response to this thematic singularity, scholars have directed themselves toward urban contexts, leading to the emergence of the urban school of political ecology. This school of thought seeks to transcend the society-versus-nature binary, which frames the urban as the antithesis of nature. Instead, it conceptualizes the city as a socio-nature—a unity of social and environmental processes [71]. With its roots in radical geography, urban political ecology draws inspiration from neo-Marxist critiques of structural inequality, especially the capitalist production of nature (land in this case) [111,112]. It focuses on how the processes of global economic liberalization, capital accumulation, private capital inflows, and private sector-led development drive land transformation and shape the structure and function of cities. While urban political ecology has been criticized for its ‘nature in the city’ approach [58,113], which places disproportionate analytical and empirical focus on the city [114], it nonetheless provides valuable insights into the complex interactions whereby urban–nature relations are continually made and unmade. To address such critiques, UPE scholarship has recently re-engaged with ecological materialities—such as socio-natural hybridity and environmental imaginaries—thereby expanding the framework beyond its earlier anthropocentric focus [115–117]. It is these relational processes of flux that drive land transformation, fostering an evolving landscape of competing and conflicting peri-urban land uses. Cities like Addis Ababa, Jakarta, and São Paulo exemplify these dynamics [118,119]. Consequently, peri-urban spaces emerge as critical hotspots where dynamic conflicts converge with systemic inequalities, bringing to the fore the contested socio-ecological tensions inherent in these transition spaces—an interplay that encapsulates the essence of “peri-urban political ecology”.

Recently, scholars have gone beyond the “global imaginary of land transformations” [84], moving past ‘dualistic framings of victimization or beneficiation’ [88] to understand the situatedness of the current peri-urbanization processes and the “ecology of

actors” [19] in the processes of peri-urban land transformations, along with their various positions of power, interests, and constraints. Scholarly contributions to poststructuralist political ecology, in particular, emphasize the significance of examining everyday practices [61] and advocate for a more detailed analysis of power as diffused and relational [15,61,111,120]. Recent proposals for more “situated” research [58] on the peri-urban land transformation dynamics echo this call. In contrast to the reductionist analysis of “all things political”, which often disregards the urbanization of nature [21], poststructuralist political ecology moves beyond structural determinism by acknowledging the diverse land transformations and corresponding socio-economic changes [121]. It analyzes land transformation—in urban centers, peri-urban spaces, and rural areas—by centering power relations and their distributional effects. Social inequalities resulting from land-use changes are critical issues and addressing these concerns necessitates collaboration between urban political ecology and peri-urban scholarship [122]. Ekers and Prudham [123] theorize the ‘socio-ecological fix,’ which challenges the reductionist approach to urbanization and invalidates the bounded notions of ‘urban’ and ‘rural’ [124]. For Lerup [125] and Newell and Cousins [126], there is no outside to the more-than-urban continuum, and according to [39], there is no escape from it, conceptually or materially. Political ecology and UPE extend the conversation by integrating ecological concerns with power relations. Unlike the other theories, they highlight how material and environmental processes are politically charged and unevenly experienced.

## 5. Discussion

This paper explains how land transformations are influenced by a combination of socio-political and economic factors, particularly in the dynamic and transitional peri-urban areas of the Global South. These spaces—situated at the margins of fast-growing cities—are deeply shaped by urban expansion processes that are often unregulated, informally governed, and marked by high socio-ecological vulnerabilities. As intermediary zones between urban and rural areas, they are uniquely vulnerable to the influences of capitalism and modernization. Through its incorporation into investment circuits, these ideologies reconfigure the value and use of peri-urban land, aligning it with the demands and priorities of global financial systems [65]. This process often entails the commodification of land, turning an area meant for community use or ecological preservation into a target for speculative development. Harvey [46] examines the political economy of land and illustrating how rent and land value serve as tools for socio-economic control and capital accumulation. The concept of ‘extractive imaginaries’ in this context aligns with the economic and political logics that justify resource exploitation, serving to legitimize neoliberal economic models. In a world where the economy is often unpredictable, land is increasingly viewed as a safe investment [53]. It plays a key role in investment decisions because it is both a tangible resource (something one can physically own) and a speculative financial instrument (a way to potentially increase wealth). This dual functionality drives significant interest in peri-urban spaces, turning them into hubs of market- and speculation-driven property development [36]. In the Global South, this is especially visible where land transitions are accelerated by weak tenure security, speculative pressures, and externally imposed development logics. Consequently, these areas often experience rapid transformation and emerge as new accumulation nodes, as they attract a mix of local and global actors aiming to capitalize on their growth potential. Modernization theory often celebrates land transformation—such as the commercialization of agriculture and commodification of land rights—as a positive trajectory for local economic transformation, frequently aligning with capitalist imperatives for global market integration. However, dependency theory offers a more critical perspective, exposing how market- and speculation-driven property

development perpetuates structural inequality and injustice on multiple scales. In Global South cities, where institutions are often weak or contested, these inequalities are more acute and persistent. In peri-urban spaces, local communities can be left out, worsening social and economic inequalities. Yet these changes disproportionately benefit local elites and global economic actors and institutions—further reinforcing economic dependency and inequity [28].

Land transformation is power-laden [55,104], spotting light on the interaction between structure and agency. Earlier theories, like those from Marxist and neo-Marxist perspectives, claimed that large global systems control everything [93]. Modernization theory also puts a lot of emphasis on global structural determinism. However, more recent scholarship highlights the significance of human agency [51,127], reflecting the shift from deterministic views of global systems to a more nuanced understanding of how both structural forces (globalization and economic systems) and individual or collective agency (the actions and decisions of local actors) interact and shape peri-urban land transformations [60,95]. This shift is highly relevant in the Global South, where bottom-up resistance, informal land practices, and customary governance models play significant roles in shaping outcomes. Actors operate within the constraints of broader societal structures, such as economic systems, urban policies, and planning regulations, but also hold power to drive the trajectory of land transformation through their decisions and actions. Institutional theory further highlights the influence of legal and social orders on land governance. Governance is not just about economic forces, but is deeply rooted in broader socio-legal processes and distributional politics. In many Global South contexts, institutional pluralism prevails: formal state institutions coexist—and often contend—with informal institutions, customary tenure systems, and politically negotiated land access. This concept is part of a larger urban political ecology framework, examining the social constructions of nature—how economic and political processes shape ecological transformations [36]. It sheds light on how power imbalances influence land governance and transformation processes [104]. As discussed, the idea of land becoming a commodity is important. This means land is increasingly viewed as a commodity [38,69,71], becoming part of global investment circuits [88]. This shift brings economic benefits but also changes traditional relationships with the land—how we see, value, and manage land in peri—urban contexts. This is particularly critical in the Global South, where land is not only an economic asset but also a social and cultural resource. It often places market demands above community and environmental needs, increasing socio—ecological tensions—the driving forces behind nature politics (see Table 2).

**Table 2.** Conceptual map of theoretical approaches to peri-urban land transformation.

Theoretical Lens	Core Assumptions	Relevance to Peri-Urban Land Transformation
Neo-Classical Economics	Land use is shaped by market competition and rational choices.	Explains land conversion through market-led, demand-driven dynamics.
Modernization Theory	Development follows a linear path toward modernity.	Frames peri-urban change as modernization and progress.
Neo-Marxist Theory	Capital accumulation restructures land use and society.	Highlights class conflict and land grabs in capitalist urbanization.
Dependency Theory	Global structures create unequal development.	Reveals how global interests shape land transformation in the South.
Structuration Theory	Social structures and agency are co-constitutive.	Explains how land actors reproduce or resist institutional norms.

Table 2. Cont.

Theoretical Lens	Core Assumptions	Relevance to Peri-Urban Land Transformation
Institutional Theory	Institutions shape actor behavior and outcomes.	Shows how institutional arrangements mediate land use.
Political Ecology	Land issues are rooted in historical and political struggles.	Exposes land-use conflict as outcome of socio-political tensions.
Urban Political Ecology	Urban land is produced through socio-natural processes.	Demonstrates how peri-urban land reflects unequal flows of capital and power.

Source: Authors, 2025.

## 6. Conclusions

Regardless of its origins, peri-urbanism is now a global phenomenon. However, its features and processes are particularly distinctive in the Global South, where peri-urban expansion often occurs informally and under weak institutional control [27]. Growing evidence underscores the dynamic nature of peri-urban areas in the Global South. The term ‘peri-urbanization’ is used to capture socio-spatial processes occurring on the outer edges of cities in these contexts. As peri-urban scholarship often highlights, the term ‘peri-urban’ is fraught with conceptual difficulties and exists within a landscape of theoretical ambiguity [38]. Multiple conceptual vectors exist to define the peri-urban as a ‘space’ and a ‘process’, yet the term’s diverse applications defy elaborate theorization. This theoretical ambiguity is shaped by the overlapping lenses of neo-classical economics, dependency theory, and urban political ecology, each of which frame peri-urban change differently—either as a function of market-led growth, global capitalist restructuring, or socio-ecological contestation. Peri-urban phenomena are inevitably place-specific, generating specific dynamics, and there is a need for a pluralistic interpretation of the peri-urban that is flexible enough to accommodate its diverse local realities. This is especially true in the Global South, where urban–rural interactions, informal institutions, and spontaneous development make peri-urbanism a uniquely complex and context-dependent process. The concept of peri-urban identifies different types of transitional zones between city and countryside—between what is unambiguously ‘urban’ and supposedly typically ‘rural’. Researchers should not be constrained by the urban–rural dichotomy and static–dynamic conceptualizations of peri-urban spaces. Peri-urban spaces are ‘in-between spaces’ with multiple processes that produce ‘in-betweenness’. Beyond spatial reconfigurations, peri-urbanization involves institutional transformations, creating new social, political, and economic structures. Structuration and institutional theories help illuminate how these transformations are mediated through actor interactions, power asymmetries, and evolving governance frameworks. Fundamentally, peri-urbanization is a process of “becoming urban”, wherein peri-urban areas are socially mobilized, economically commodified, and physically transformed to support this transition. New urban forms emerge, and new sets of institutions evolve to shape and regulate these processes [85]. In the Global South, these institutional changes are often contested, overlapping, and heavily influenced by informal networks and customary norms [64]. Importantly, peri-urbanization reflects a gradual shift from rural to increasingly urban characteristics, rather than predefined rural-to-urban transformations. Acknowledging the need for multiple context-specific conceptualizations, the concept “suburbanization”, often associated with planned land development and established governance and regulations, may offer additional insights into the empirical variations in the geographies of peri-urbanization. These variations are

often marked by spontaneous land development and fluid institutional transformations, which are especially common in the Global South.

In recent years, there has been a marked increase in scholarly attention to processes of land transformation in peri-urban spaces across the Global South. Most of this research predominantly draws on neo-classical economic and modernization theories, allowing for engagement with economic and political dimensions of growth processes in peri-urban spaces, and their connections to broader phenomena such as urbanization, globalization, and economic integration. While addressing land transformation in peri-urban spaces, neo-Marxist and dependency theories shift focus to the global political economy of capitalism as a wider process that reshapes the peri-urban spaces, creating ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ [62]. On the other hand, land transformation can be understood as a direct result of agency operating within the structure–agency relationship, highlighting how global and local actors access land and contribute to the creation of new peri-urban forms, and institutions, as emphasized by in theories of structuration and institutionalism. Studies have addressed the global–local forces, processes, and power relations that transform nature (land) under the logics of urbanization, investment, and economic growth [43]. Concepts from urban political ecology guide much of this research. Political and urban political ecology offer an integrated approach to understanding land transformations as a function of interconnected global–local forces, processes, and complex power relations, which have transformative effects on nature (land). In Global South contexts—where environmental governance is often highly fragmented and exclusionary—this perspective is particularly powerful in revealing who benefits from and who is marginalized by land transformation. It also provides an interdisciplinary theoretical framework for multi-scalar analysis of land transformation processes from a political economy perspective. This paper emphasizes the critical importance of urban political ecology, showcasing its intertwined focus on political and ecological dimensions of land transformation—a useful perspective for meaningful engagement with the diversity of southern urbanism. Integrating insights from these multiple theoretical approaches—especially those rooted in Global South realities—strengthens our understanding of peri-urban transformations as deeply political, historically embedded, and uneven. Future research must therefore continue to prioritize Global South perspectives—acknowledging their empirical richness and theoretical contributions—while working to bridge the global knowledge divide. To deepen this engagement, future research needs to go beyond macro-level theory construction and adopt comparative case studies, longitudinal research, and participatory approaches that are grounded in the spatial and temporal dynamics of peri-urban land transformation, and the everyday lived experiences of peri-urban communities.

**Author Contributions:** The original draft is written by S.M.T., with substantial contributions from G.A.G. and D.G.A., who were instrumental in drafting sections of the manuscript and providing critical reviews. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** Shiwaye Mersha Tesfay S. is a Georg Forster Postdoctoral Research Fellow (Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, grant number 1233452) at TU Dortmund University, Germany.

**Data Availability Statement:** This study is based on a systematic review of the literature. All the studies are listed in the References Section.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors wish to express their sincere gratitude to the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation for awarding the Georg Forster Postdoctoral Research Fellowship to Shiwaye Mersha Tesfay, which supported her research stay at TU Dortmund University. We are also very thankful for all reviewers for their thoughtful comments and interest in reviewing our article.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

## References

- United Nations. *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2018 Revision*; United Nations: New York, NY, USA, 2019.
- De Sherbinin, A.; Schiller, A.; Pulsipher, A. The Vulnerability of Global Cities to Climate Hazards. *Environ. Urban.* **2007**, *19*, 39–64. [[CrossRef](#)]
- United Nations. *World Urbanization Prospects: 2014 Revision*; United Nations: New York, NY, USA, 2014.
- UN-Habitat. *The State of African Cities 2010: Governance, Inequality and Urban Land Markets*; HS/190/10E; UN-Habitat: Nairobi, Kenya, 2010; p. 279. Available online: <https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/download-manager-files/State%20of%20African%20Cities%202010.pdf> (accessed on 11 May 2024).
- Angel, S.; Parent, J.; Civco, D.L.; Blei, A.; Potere, D. The Dimensions of Global Urban Expansion: Estimates and Projections for All Countries, 2000–2050. *Prog. Plan.* **2011**, *75*, 53–107. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Keil, R. After Suburbia: Research and Action in the Suburban Century. *Urban Geogr.* **2020**, *41*, 1–20. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Simon, D. Peri-Urbanization. In *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Futures*; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2021; pp. 1–5. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Simon, D. Urban Environments: Issues on the Peri-Urban Fringe. *Annu. Rev. Environ. Resour.* **2008**, *33*, 167–185. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Mehta, K.K. Ageing Societies, Age-Inclusive Spaces and Community Bonding. In *Navigating Differences: Integration in Singapore*; Chong, T., Ed.; ISEAS Publishing: Singapore, 2020; pp. 248–258. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Mohamed, A.; Worku, H.; Lika, T. Urban and Regional Planning Approaches for Sustainable Governance: The Case of Addis Ababa and the Surrounding Area Changing Landscape. *City Environ. Interact.* **2020**, *8*, 100050. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Steel, G.; Abukashawa, S.; Hussein, M.O. Urban Transformations and Land Governance in Peri-Urban Khartoum: The Case of Soba. *Tijdschr. Voor Econ. Soc. Geogr.* **2020**, *111*, 45–59. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Yiftachel, O. Theoretical Notes On ‘Gray Cities’: The Coming of Urban Apartheid? *Plan. Theory* **2009**, *8*, 88–100. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Simon, D.; McGregor, D.; Nsiah-Gyabaah, K. The Changing Urban-Rural Interface of African Cities: Definitional Issues and an Application to Kumasi, Ghana. *Environ. Urban.* **2004**, *16*, 235–248. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Alem, G. Urban Plans and Conflicting Interests in Sustainable Cross-Boundary Land Governance, the Case of National Urban and Regional Plans in Ethiopia. *Sustainability* **2021**, *13*, 3081. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Lawhon, M.; Ernstson, H.; Silver, J. Provincializing Urban Political Ecology: Towards a Situated UPE Through African Urbanism: Provincialising Urban Political Ecology. *Antipode* **2014**, *46*, 497–516. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Vij, S.; Narain, V. Land, Water & Power: The Demise of Common Property Resources in Periurban Gurgaon, India. *Land Use Policy* **2016**, *50*, 59–66. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Lund, C. Coding Regimes of Possession. An Essay on Land, Property, and Law. *Globalizations* **2024**, 1–16. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Clapp, J.; Isakson, S.R.; Visser, O. The Complex Dynamics of Agriculture as a Financial Asset: Introduction to Symposium. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2017**, *34*, 179–183. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Fang, Y.; Pal, A. Drivers of Urban Sprawl in Urbanizing China—A Political Ecology Analysis. *Environ. Urban.* **2016**, *28*, 599–616. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Howard, P.M. The Anthropology of Human-Environment Relations. *Focaal* **2018**, *2018*, 64–79. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Kaika, M.; Swyngedouw, E. The Urbanization of Nature: Great Promises, Impasse, and New Beginnings. In *The New Blackwell Companion to the City*; Bridge, G., Watson, S., Eds.; Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2011; pp. 96–107. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Christophers, B. The State and Financialization of Public Land in the United Kingdom: Financialization of Public Land in the UK. *Antipode* **2017**, *49*, 62–85. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Akaateba, M.A.; Huang, H.; Adumpe, E.A. Between Co-Production and Institutional Hybridity in Land Delivery: Insights from Local Planning Practice in Peri-Urban Tamale, Ghana. *Land Use Policy* **2018**, *72*, 215–226. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Lees, L.; Shin, H.B.; López-Morales, E. (Eds.) *Global Gentrifications: Uneven Development and Displacement*; Policy Press: Bristol, UK, 2015. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Marx, C. Extending the Analysis of Urban Land Conflict: An Example from Johannesburg. *Urban Stud.* **2016**, *53*, 2779–2795. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Adam, A.G. Land Tenure in the Changing Peri-Urban Areas of E Thiopia: The Case of Bahir Dar City. *Int. J. Urban Reg. Res.* **2014**, *38*, 1970–1984. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Adam, A.G. Understanding Competing and Conflicting Interests for Peri-Urban Land in Ethiopia’s Era of Urbanization. *Environ. Urban.* **2020**, *32*, 55–68. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Nuhu, S. Peri-Urban Land Governance in Developing Countries: Understanding the Role, Interaction and Power Relation Among Actors in Tanzania. *Urban Forum* **2019**, *30*, 1–16. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Shih, M. Rethinking Displacement in Peri-Urban Transformation in China. *Environ. Plan. Econ. Space* **2017**, *49*, 389–406. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Meth, M.; Todes, A.; Charlton, S.; Mukwedeya, T.; Houghton, J.; Goodfellow, T.; Belihu, M.S.; Huang, Z.; Asafo, D.M.; Buthelezi, S.; et al. At the City Edge: Situating Peripheries Research in South Africa and Ethiopia. In *African Cities and Collaborative Futures*; Keith, M., De Souza Santos, A.A., Eds.; Manchester University Press: Manchester, UK, 2021. [[CrossRef](#)]

31. Gastrow, C. Aesthetic Dissent: Urban Redevelopment and Political Belonging in Luanda, Angola: Aesthetic Dissent. *Antipode* **2017**, *49*, 377–396. [[CrossRef](#)]
32. McGee, T.G. The Sustainability of Extended Urban Spaces in Asia in the Twenty-First Century: Policy and Research Challenges. In *Sustainable Landscape Planning in Selected Urban Regions*; Yokohari, M., Murakami, A., Hara, Y., Tsuchiya, K., Eds.; Science for Sustainable Societies; Springer: Tokyo, Japan, 2017; pp. 17–26. [[CrossRef](#)]
33. Haddaway, N.R.; Page, M.J.; Pritchard, C.C.; McGuinness, L.A. PRISMA2020: An R Package and Shiny App. for Producing PRISMA 2020-Compliant Flow Diagrams, with Interactivity for Optimised Digital Transparency and Open Synthesis. *Campbell Syst. Rev.* **2022**, *18*, e1230. [[CrossRef](#)]
34. Dadashpoor, H.; Ahani, S. Land Tenure-Related Conflicts in Peri-Urban Areas: A Review. *Land Use Policy* **2019**, *85*, 218–229. [[CrossRef](#)]
35. The Extended Metropolis: Settlement Transition in Asia. In *The Emergence of Desakota Regions in Asia: Expanding a Hypothesis*; McGee, T.G., Ed.; University of Hawaii Press: Honolulu, Hawaii, 1991; pp. 3–25.
36. Follmann, A. Geographies of Peri-urbanization in the Global South. *Geogr. Compass* **2022**, *16*, e12650. [[CrossRef](#)]
37. Rajendran, L.P.; Raúl, L.; Chen, M.; Guerrero Andrade, J.C.; Akhtar, R.; Mngumi, L.E.; Chander, S.; Srinivas, S.; Roy, M.R. The ‘Peri-Urban Turn’: A Systems Thinking Approach for a Paradigm Shift in Reconceptualising Urban-Rural Futures in the Global South. *Habitat Int.* **2024**, *146*, 103041. [[CrossRef](#)]
38. Friedmann, J. Becoming Urban: Periurban Dynamics in Vietnam and China—Introduction. *Pac. Aff.* **2011**, *84*, 425–434. [[CrossRef](#)]
39. Lerner, A.M.; Eakin, H. An Obsolete Dichotomy? Rethinking the Rural-Urban Interface in Terms of Food Security and Production in the Global South. *Geogr. J.* **2011**, *177*, 311–320. [[CrossRef](#)]
40. Bhan, G. “This Is No Longer the City I Once Knew”. Evictions, the Urban Poor and the Right to the City in Millennial Delhi. *Environ. Urban.* **2009**, *21*, 127–142. [[CrossRef](#)]
41. Fernandes, E. *Regularization of Informal Settlements in Latin America*; Lincoln Institute of Land Policy: Cambridge, MA, USA, 2011.
42. Lombard, M.; Rakodi, C. Urban Land Conflict in the Global South: Towards an Analytical Framework. *Urban Stud.* **2016**, *53*, 2683–2699. [[CrossRef](#)]
43. Bateman, M. Land Titling and Microcredit in Cambodia: Examining the Reality of Hernando de Soto’s ‘Three Steps to Heaven’. *Land* **2024**, *13*, 502. [[CrossRef](#)]
44. Matunhu, J. A Critique of Modernization and Dependency Theories in Africa: Critical Assessment. *Afr. J. Hist. Cult.* **2011**, *3*, 65–72.
45. Mitchell, T. Afterword: Are Environmental Imaginaries Culturally Constructed? In *Environmental Imaginaries of the Middle East and North Africa*; Davis, D.K., Burke, E., Eds.; Ohio University Press: Athens, GA, USA, 2011; pp. 265–274.
46. Harvey, D. Neoliberalism as Creative Destruction. *Ann. Am. Acad. Pol. Soc. Sci.* **2007**, *610*, 21–44. [[CrossRef](#)]
47. Levien, M. Regimes of Dispossession: From Steel Towns to Special Economic Zones. *Dev. Change* **2013**, *44*, 381–407. [[CrossRef](#)]
48. Mazhindu, E. Political Economy of Peri-Urban Transformations in Conditions of Neoliberalism in Zimbabwe. In *Peri-Urban Developments and Processes in Africa with Special Reference to Zimbabwe*; Springer Briefs in Geography; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2016; pp. 13–24. [[CrossRef](#)]
49. Ouma, S. *Assembling Export Markets: The Making and Unmaking of Global Food Connections in West Africa*, 1st ed.; Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2015. [[CrossRef](#)]
50. Sikor, T.; Lund, C. Access and Property: A Question of Power and Authority. *Dev. Change* **2009**, *40*, 1–22. [[CrossRef](#)]
51. Coburn, C.E. What’s Policy Got to Do with It? How the Structure-Agency Debate Can Illuminate Policy Implementation. *Am. J. Educ.* **2016**, *122*, 465–475. [[CrossRef](#)]
52. Mersha, S.; Gebremariam, E.; Gebretsadik, D. Drivers of Informal Land Transformation: Perspective from Peri-Urban Area of Addis Ababa. *GeoJournal* **2022**, *87*, 3541–3554. [[CrossRef](#)]
53. Mersha, S.; Mulugeta, S.; Gebremariam, E. Process of Informal Land Transaction: A Case Study in the Peri-Urban Area of Addis Ababa. *GeoJournal* **2022**, *87*, 2067–2080. [[CrossRef](#)]
54. Lang, T. Institutional Theory, New. In *The Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*; Ritzer, G., Ed.; Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2018; pp. 1–3. [[CrossRef](#)]
55. March, J.G.; Olsen, J.P. Elaborating the “New Institutionalism”. In *The Oxford Handbook of Political Institutions*; Binder, S.A., Rhodes, R.A.W., Rockman, B.A., Eds.; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2009; pp. 3–20. [[CrossRef](#)]
56. Allen, A. Peri-Urbanization and the Political Ecology of Differential Sustainability. In *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South*; Parnell, S., Oldfield, S., Eds.; Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group: London, UK; New York, NY, USA, 2014; pp. 522–538.
57. Li, T.M. After the Land Grab: Infrastructural Violence and the “Mafia System” in Indonesia’s Oil Palm Plantation Zones. *Geoforum* **2018**, *96*, 328–337. [[CrossRef](#)]
58. Bartels, L.E.; Bruns, A.; Simon, D. Towards Situated Analyses of Uneven Peri-Urbanisation: An (Urban) Political Ecology Perspective. *Antipode* **2020**, *52*, 1237–1258. [[CrossRef](#)]

59. Leitner, H.; Nowak, S.; Sheppard, E. Everyday Speculation in the Remaking of Peri-Urban Livelihoods and Landscapes. *Environ. Plan. Econ. Space* **2023**, *55*, 388–406. [CrossRef]
60. Latour, B. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*; Oxford University Press: Oxford, UK, 2005. [CrossRef]
61. Loftus, A. Political Ecology I: Where Is Political Ecology? *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* **2019**, *43*, 172–182. [CrossRef]
62. Simon, D.; McGregor, D.; Donald, T. Contemporary Perspectives on the Peri-Urban Zones of Cities in Developing Countries. In *The Peri-Urban Interface: Approaches to Sustainable Natural and Human Resource Use*; Earthscan: London, UK; Sterling, VA, USA, 2012; pp. 1–15.
63. Parnell, S.; Robinson, J. (Re)Theorizing Cities from the Global South: Looking Beyond Neoliberalism. *Urban Geogr.* **2012**, *33*, 593–617. [CrossRef]
64. Sitzman, K.; Watson, J. *Caring Science, Mindful Practice: Implementing Watson's Human Caring Theory*, 2nd ed.; Springer Publishing Company: New York, NY, USA, 2018; p. 978-0-8261-3556-3558. [CrossRef]
65. Ravetz, J.; Fertner, C.; Nielsen, T.S. The Dynamics of Peri-Urbanization. In *Peri-Urban Futures: Scenarios and Models for Land Use Change in Europe*; Nilsson, K., Pauleit, S., Bell, S., Aalbers, C., Sick Nielsen, T.A., Eds.; Springer: Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany, 2013; pp. 13–44. [CrossRef]
66. Simon, D. Peri-Urbanization. In *The Palgrave Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Futures*; Brears, R.C., Ed.; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2022; pp. 1250–1254. [CrossRef]
67. Narain, V.; Prakash, A. (Eds.) *Water Security in Peri-Urban South Asia: Adapting to Climate Change and Urbanization*; Oxford University Press: New Delhi, India, 2016. [CrossRef]
68. Butsch, C.; Chakraborty, S.; Gomes, S.L.; Kumar, S.; Hermans, L.M. Changing Hydrosocial Cycles in Periurban India. *Land* **2021**, *10*, 263. [CrossRef]
69. Webster, D. On the Edge: Shaping the Future of Peri-Urban East Asia. 2002. Available online: <https://fsi9-prod.s3.us-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/Webster2002.pdf> (accessed on 15 May 2025).
70. Dupont, V. Conflicting Stakes and Governance in the Peripheries of Large Indian Metropolises—An Introduction. *Cities* **2007**, *24*, 89–94. [CrossRef]
71. Swyngedouw, E.; Kaika, M. Urban Political Ecology. Great Promises, Deadlock. . . and New Beginnings? *Doc. Anàl. Geogr.* **2014**, *60*, 459–481. [CrossRef]
72. Lefebvre, H. *The Production of Space*; Blackwell: Oxford, UK; Cambridge, MA, USA, 1991.
73. Larkham, P.J. The Study of Urban Form in Great Britain. *Urban Morphol.* **2006**, *10*, 117–141. [CrossRef]
74. Shen, Y.; Karimi, K. Urban Function Connectivity: Characterisation of Functional Urban Streets with Social Media Check-in Data. *Cities* **2016**, *55*, 9–21. [CrossRef]
75. Wubneh, M. Policies and Praxis of Land Acquisition, Use, and Development in Ethiopia. *Land Use Policy* **2018**, *73*, 170–183. [CrossRef]
76. Kombe, W.J. Land Use Dynamics in Peri-Urban Areas and Their Implications on the Urban Growth and Form: The Case of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. *Habitat Int.* **2005**, *29*, 113–135. [CrossRef]
77. Buehler, Y. Mapping Urban and Peri-Urban Agriculture Using High Spatial Resolution Satellite Data. *J. Appl. Remote Sens.* **2009**, *3*, 033523. [CrossRef]
78. Sahana, M.; Ravetz, J.; Patel, P.P.; Dadashpoor, H.; Follmann, A. Where Is the Peri-Urban? A Systematic Review of Peri-Urban Research and Approaches for Its Identification and Demarcation Worldwide. *Remote Sens.* **2023**, *15*, 1316. [CrossRef]
79. Sorensen, A. Periurbanization as the Institutionalization of Place: The Case of Japan. *Cities* **2016**, *53*, 134–140. [CrossRef]
80. Hailu, T.; Assefa, E.; Zeleke, T. Land Use Transformation by Urban Informal Settlements and Ecosystem Impact. *Environ. Syst. Res.* **2024**, *13*, 32. [CrossRef]
81. Alonso Ferreira, M. The Bureaucratic Politics of Urban Land Rights: (Non)Programmatic Distribution in São Paulo's Land Regularization Policy. *Lat. Am. Polit. Soc.* **2024**, *66*, 52–78. [CrossRef]
82. Abdulai, I.A.; Enu-kwesi, F.; Agyenim, J.B. Peri-Urbanisation: A Blessing or Scourge? *J. Plan. Land Manag.* **2020**, *1*, 12–22. [CrossRef]
83. Power, M. Modernization Theories of Development. In *The International Encyclopedia of Anthropology*; Callan, H., Ed.; Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2018; pp. 1–8. [CrossRef]
84. Sippel, S.R.; Visser, O. Introduction to Symposium 'Reimagining Land: Materiality, Affect and the Uneven Trajectories of Land Transformation'. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2021**, *38*, 271–282. [CrossRef]
85. Davis, D.K. *Resurrecting the Granary of Rome: Environmental History and French Colonial Expansion in North Africa*; Ohio University Press: Athens, GA, USA, 2007.
86. Shetler, J. *Imagining Serengeti*; Ohio University Press: Athens, GA, USA, 2007. [CrossRef]
87. Hu, X.; Li, H.; Zhang, X.; Yuan, Y.; Jia, K. How Rent Facilitates Capital Accumulation: A Case Study of Rural Land Capitalization in Suzhou, China. *Land Use Policy* **2024**, *139*, 107063. [CrossRef]

88. Le Billon, P.; Sommerville, M. Landing Capital and Assembling ‘Investable Land’ in the Extractive and Agricultural Sectors. *Geoforum* **2017**, *82*, 212–224. [CrossRef]
89. Gururani, S. Cities in a World of Villages: Agrarian Urbanism and the Making of India’s Urbanizing Frontiers. *Urban Geogr.* **2020**, *41*, 971–989. [CrossRef]
90. Hussain, Z.; Hanisch, M. Dynamics of Peri-Urban Agricultural Development and Farmers’ Adaptive Behaviour in the Emerging Megacity of Hyderabad, India. *J. Environ. Plan. Manag.* **2014**, *57*, 495–515. [CrossRef]
91. Rahman, K. *Overview of Corruption and Anti-Corruption in Tanzania*; Transparency International Anti-Corruption Helpdesk Answer; Transparency International: Berlin, Germany, 2019; p. 29. Available online: [https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/helpdesk/Country-profile-Tanzania-2019\\_PR.pdf](https://knowledgehub.transparency.org/assets/uploads/helpdesk/Country-profile-Tanzania-2019_PR.pdf) (accessed on 23 April 2025).
92. Potts, D. Urban Economies, Urban Livelihoods and Natural Resource-Based Economic Growth in Sub-Saharan Africa: The Constraints of a Liberalized World Economy. *Local Econ. J. Local Econ. Policy Unit* **2013**, *28*, 170–187. [CrossRef]
93. Leys, A.; Thrift, N. The Capitalization of Almost Everything: The Future of Finance and Capitalism. *Theory Cult. Soc.* **2007**, *24*, 97–115. [CrossRef]
94. Dépelteau, F. Relational Thinking in Sociology: Relevance, Concurrence and Dissonance. In *The Palgrave Handbook of Relational Sociology*; Dépelteau, F., Ed.; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2018; pp. 3–33. [CrossRef]
95. Avelino, F. Theories of Power and Social Change. Power Contestations and Their Implications for Research on Social Change and Innovation. *J. Polit. Power* **2021**, *14*, 425–448. [CrossRef]
96. Melkamu, B.; Aytenfisu, S. Facing the Challenges in Building Sustainable Land Administration Capacity in Ethiopia. In *Facing the Challenges—Building the Capacity*; FIG Congress: Sydney, Australia, 2010; p. 20.
97. Chitonge, H. Capitalism in Africa: Mutating Capitalist Relations and Social Formations. *Rev. Afr. Polit. Econ.* **2018**, *45*, 158–167. [CrossRef]
98. Ouma, S. The Difference That ‘Capitalism’ Makes: On the Merits and Limits of Critical Political Economy in African Studies. *Rev. Afr. Polit. Econ.* **2017**, *44*, 499–509. [CrossRef]
99. Lecours, A. 1. New Institutionalism: Issues and Questions. In *New Institutionalism*; Lecours, A., Ed.; University of Toronto Press: Toronto, ON, Canada, 2005; pp. 1–26. [CrossRef]
100. Goldstein, J.E.; Yates, J.S. Introduction: Rendering Land Investable. *Geoforum* **2017**, *82*, 209–211. [CrossRef]
101. Pedersen, R.H.; Buur, L. Beyond Land Grabbing. Old Morals and New Perspectives on Contemporary Investments. *Geoforum* **2016**, *72*, 77–81. [CrossRef]
102. Schoenberger, L.; Beban, A. Rupturing Violent Land Imaginaries: Finding Hope through a Land Titling Campaign in Cambodia. *Agric. Hum. Values* **2021**, *38*, 301–312. [CrossRef]
103. Tzaninis, Y. Cosmopolitanism beyond the City: Discourses and Experiences of Young Migrants in Post-Suburban Netherlands. *Urban Geogr.* **2020**, *41*, 143–161. [CrossRef]
104. Robbins, P. *Political Ecology: A Critical Introduction*, 3rd ed.; Critical Introductions to Geography; Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA; Chichester, UK, 2020.
105. Neumann, R. *Making Political Ecology*; Human Geography in the Making; Taylor and Francis: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2014.
106. Walker, P.A. Political Ecology: Where Is the Ecology? *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* **2005**, *29*, 73–82. [CrossRef]
107. Vayda, A.P.; Walters, B.B. Against Political Ecology. *Hum. Ecol.* **1999**, *27*, 167–179. [CrossRef]
108. Li, T.M. *Land’s End: Capitalist Relations on an Indigenous Frontier*; Duke University Press: Durham, NC, USA, 2014. [CrossRef]
109. Agarwal, B. Gender Equality, Food Security and the Sustainable Development Goals. *Curr. Opin. Environ. Sustain.* **2018**, *34*, 26–32. [CrossRef]
110. Nightingale, A.J. Bounding Difference: Intersectionality and the Material Production of Gender, Caste, Class and Environment in Nepal. *Geoforum* **2011**, *42*, 153–162. [CrossRef]
111. Lawhon, M. Relational Power in the Governance of a South African E-Waste Transition. *Environ. Plan. Econ. Space* **2012**, *44*, 954–971. [CrossRef]
112. Zimmer, A. Urban Political Ecology. Theoretical Concepts, Challenges, and Suggested Future Directions. *ERDKUNDE* **2010**, *64*, 343–354. [CrossRef]
113. Keil, R. Transnational Urban Political Ecology: Health and Infrastructure in the Unbounded City. In *The New Blackwell Companion to the City*; Bridge, G., Watson, S., Eds.; Wiley: Hoboken, NJ, USA, 2011; pp. 713–725. [CrossRef]
114. Angelo, H.; Wachsmuth, D. Urbanizing Urban Political Ecology: A Critique of Methodological Cityism. *Int. J. Urban Reg. Res.* **2015**, *39*, 16–27. [CrossRef]
115. Gandy, M. Urban Political Ecology: A Critical Reconfiguration. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* **2022**, *46*, 21–43. [CrossRef]
116. Silva, R.H.; Zwartveen, M.; Stead, D.; Bacchin, T.K. Bringing Ecological Urbanism and Urban Political Ecology to Transformative Visions of Water Sensitivity in Cities. *Cities* **2024**, *145*, 104685. [CrossRef]
117. Tzaninis, Y.; Mandler, T.; Kaika, M.; Keil, R. Moving Urban Political Ecology beyond the ‘Urbanization of Nature’. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* **2021**, *45*, 229–252. [CrossRef]

118. Marques, A.L.; Alvim, A.B.; Pereira, I.A.; Leite, C. Nature-Based Solutions in Peri-Urban Areas of Latin American Cities: Lessons from São Paulo, Brazil. In *Design for Climate Adaptation*; Faircloth, B., Pedersen Zari, M., Thomsen, M.R., Tamke, M., Eds.; Sustainable Development Goals Series; Springer International Publishing: Cham, Switzerland, 2023; pp. 535–547. [[CrossRef](#)]
119. Pauleit, S.; Andersson, E.; Anton, B.; Buijs, A.; Haase, D.; Hansen, R.; Kowarik, I.; Stahl Olafsson, A.; Van Der Jagt, S. Urban Green Infrastructure—Connecting People and Nature for Sustainable Cities. *Urban For. Urban Green*. **2019**, *40*, 1–3. [[CrossRef](#)]
120. Wu, F. Scripting Indian and Chinese Urban Spatial Transformation: Adding New Narratives to Gentrification and Suburbanisation Research. *Environ. Plan. C Polit. Space* **2020**, *38*, 980–997. [[CrossRef](#)]
121. Roberts, J. Political Ecology. *Camb. Encycl. Anthropol.* **2020**. [[CrossRef](#)]
122. Karpouzoglou, T.; Marshall, F.; Mehta, L. Towards a Peri-Urban Political Ecology of Water Quality Decline. *Land Use Policy* **2018**, *70*, 485–493. [[CrossRef](#)]
123. Ekers, M.; Prudham, S. The Socioecological Fix: Fixed Capital, Metabolism, and Hegemony. *Ann. Am. Assoc. Geogr.* **2018**, *108*, 17–34. [[CrossRef](#)]
124. Andreucci, D.; García-Lamarca, M.; Wedekind, J.; Swyngedouw, E. “Value Grabbing”: A Political Ecology of Rent. *Capital. Nat. Social.* **2017**, *28*, 28–47. [[CrossRef](#)]
125. Lerup, L.; Vassallo, J. *The Continuous City: Fourteen Essays on Architecture and Urbanization*; Architecture at Rice; Park Books: Zurich, Switzerland, 2017.
126. Newell, J.P.; Cousins, J.J. The Boundaries of Urban Metabolism: Towards a Political–Industrial Ecology. *Prog. Hum. Geogr.* **2015**, *39*, 702–728. [[CrossRef](#)]
127. Mahiteme, Y. Manipulating Ambiguous Rules: Informal Actors in Urban Land Management, a Case Study in Kolfe-Keranio Sub-City. In *Proceedings of the 16th International Conference of Ethiopian Studies*; NTNU-trykk: Trondheim, Norway, 2009.

**Disclaimer/Publisher’s Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.