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# Exploring the dark side of capitalist urbanization in 21st Century: capital's crisis and the emergence of the peripheral condition

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## Résumé

I seek to engage with the debate around Neil Brenner's works on planetary urbanization, exploring its interactions with Marx and Lefebvre. I argue that it is not enough to identify the *revolution urbaine* (as done by Lefebvre) and the extensive urbanization of the *operational landscapes* (as Brenner does), but that it is also crucial to understand the reality what I call as the *peripheral condition*. Brenner's theory puts more light on the variable and unequal urbanization around the globe, which is better understood from a double movement identified by Lefebvre as 'implosion-explosion'. This movement consists of concentration in megacities and gigantic metropolitan areas, but also extensive urbanization over rural and hinterland areas that are integrated and made productive in order to accumulate wealth through mega infrastructures shaped by urban-industrial strategies. However, Brenner and his colleagues lose sight of an important point addressed in Karl Marx's late work. Marx realized that the accumulation of wealth was a form of appropriation of unpaid surplus labor by the owners of the means of production. Still, he was able to capture the dialectic of this process. Pressured by the coercive laws of competition, capitalists seek to increase the exploitation of surplus value that can only be reached through automatization. Although the substance of value is labor itself, capital eliminates human labor from the accumulation circuit undermining the possibility of accumulation and reinforcing an internal crisis in this system. The immediate consequence is the increase of unemployment, poverty, and inequality, I suggest calling this *sui generis* urbanization process as marked by the *peripheral condition* as the predicament that seems to overdetermine the perpetuation of capital in the world. Any analysis of planetary urbanization should consider this internal contradiction of capital accumulation that expels human labor from production.

**Mots-Clés:** urbanization, periphery, production of space, critique of political economy, internal crisis

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