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SPECIAL ISSUE ARTICLE

Progressive politics and populism: Classes of labour and rural–urban political sociology —An introduction to the special issue

Jonathan Pattenden

School of Global Development, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK

Correspondence
Jonathan Pattenden, School of Global Development, University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK.
Email: j.pattenden@uea.ac.uk

Abstract

This special issue analyses the prospects for a progressive politics against right-wing populism and capitalism. Taken as a whole, its articles underline the need to understand progressive movements as encompassing agrarian, rural, and urban settings and as socially rooted among labourers and petty commodity producers that do not accumulate (classes of labour), which includes the majority of farmers. Most of the world's rural population now reproduce themselves to some degree in towns and cities, which necessitates further development of a rural–urban political sociology. Articles in the special issue discuss existing and potential organizations and networks of classes of labour. They point to the political *potential* of migrant populations to erode the social divisions of race, ethnicity, and nationality that capitalism and right-wing populism construct to defend their interests. They contribute to understanding of why some members of classes of labour support racist nationalist populisms that pit them against fellow members of classes of labour. And they show why national contexts matter. Forms of capitalist government, including varieties of populism, are linked to world-historical dynamics of accumulation and reproduction,

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as well as racialized class relations, and constrain routes to progressive politics in different ways. Analysis of them can inform counter-strategies.

KEYWORDS
agrarian movements, classes of labour, petty commodity producer, political sociology, populism

1 | AGRARIAN MOVEMENTS, CLASSES OF LABOUR, AND PROGRESSIVE POLITICS

This special issue analyses the prospects for a progressive politics, primarily from the perspective of rural regions in the Global South. There have been a number of significant recent contributions on this perennial question—notably in articles by Borras (2020) and Borras et al. (2022), and more generally within the Emancipatory Rural Politics Initiative (e.g. Scoones et al., 2018). This special issue aims to contribute to those discussions. Its core questions, which engage with the work of Henry Bernstein and Jun Borras (see below), concern the actual and potential social bases of a progressive politics and the terrain on which such a politics might be advanced: the agrarian, rural, urban, or all of these. The widening of the terrain from a primarily agrarian focus is pivotal as most rural-basedhouseholds—both farming and non-farminghouseholds—now reproduce themselves, at least in part, in towns and cities as well as the countryside; and most farming households do not survive from farming alone but engage in other forms of petty commodity production (PCP) and wage labour (see, e.g. Ayeb, 2012, p. 78; Ong, 1987, p. 59; Oya & Pontara, 2015; Rigg, 2019; Srivastava, 2020; White, 2018, pp. 1120–1,121; Zhang, 2022, pp. 297–298).[1]

What do pluri-activity and the related spatial fragmentation of social reproduction[2] mean for the social bases and dynamics of a progressive politics? Should perspectives on rural-related progressive politics still give primacy to agrarian settings, or should they be de-centred to take in all the locations through which rural-based populations are reproduced? While agrarian issues such as land, yields, and appropriations by transnational corporations remain important, and especially so in some rural settings, a number of the articles in this special issue point to a broader range of issues and underline the need to see progressive politics as encompassing the agrarian, rural, and urban. The special issue articles on Turkey, Egypt, and Burkina Faso point to existing links between rural and urban organizations, while those on India, Thailand, and Turkey indicate the *potential* for such networks of 'classes of labour'.[3] Another article underlines the need to take up issues that relate to both rural and urban settings (White et al. on Indonesia). Others still—those on Pakistan, Mozambique, and Colombia[4]—focus primarily on agrarian movements, both as long-running processes of collective action and specific mobilizations. In doing so, they raise significant issues about the nature of agrarian alliances and agrarian populism (Aftab & Ali, this issue; Engels, this issue; Monjane, this issue; Pye & Chatuthai, this issue; Sankey, this issue). Some of the special issue articles also assess the contexts that shape possibilities for, and responses to, mobilization—addressing historical and contemporary state violence, or showing how forms of government are linked to dynamics of accumulation, both nationally and internationally (Bush, this issue; Jakobsen & Nielsen, this issue; Karataşli & Kumral, this issue; White et al., this issue). Kalb's article in the Special Issue, meanwhile, explores why significant numbers of people belonging to classes of labour support

[1]These sources mostly relate to Asian countries with a combined population of over 3 billion. In some regions of the world, a smaller percentage of farming households engage in other forms of PCP and wage labour, but the statement still holds for the majority of rural households in the Global South.
[2]This point is taken up in more detail at the start of the section on 'The Political Sociology of Classes of Labour'. It is touched on in a number of the articles in this special issue (especially White et al.; Pye and Chatuthai and Karataşli and Kumral). More broadly, there is a wide range of sources—for example, Jacka, 2018 on China, or Wolf, 1990 on Indonesia.
[3]The special issue articles by Bush, Engels, and Karataşli and Kumral on the first point and Jakobsen and Nielsen, Pye and Chatuthai, and Karataşli and Kumral on the second.
[4]The articles by Aftab and Ali, Monjane, and Sankey.

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right-wingpopulism—a vital political question in the search for a progressive politics, and one of the key mechanisms through which capitalism divides and rules.

The three key themes running through the special issue—the political sociology of classes of labour, the political sociology of agrarian movements and cross-class alliances (or 'agrarian populism'), and national-level populism—are discussed in three different sections below. These are preceded by a section discussing the views of Bernstein and Borras on sites of struggle and cross-class alliances. First though, the introduction briefly outlines how populism relates to the special issue and what is meant here by progressive politics, and sketches the meaning and significance of a number of central categories.

An understanding of what is meant by 'progressive politics' is essential for the analysis of the special issue and the debates it engages with. A progressive politics seeks sustainable shifts to more equal distributions of power and material resources with a view to systemic change. It is both anti-capitalist and concerned with advancing, as rapidly as is politically viable, the material and political conditions of all less powerful sections of global society. Progressive politics is understood in relation to class and other forms of discrimination and differentiation with which class is internally related—above all race and gender (see McNally, 2017 on internal relations vs. intersectionality; also Bernstein, 2010). Racism and patriarchy are intimately bound up with capitalism—in a concrete 'everyday' sense as well as in relation to broader world-historical dynamics[5] (including the dynamics of transitions to capitalism) (Federici, 2004; James, 1938). And so a progressive politics is inherently anti-patriarchal and anti-racist as well as being anti-capitalist. This juxtaposition of race, gender, and class is fundamentally different to identity politics' segmentation of relations of oppression, and consistent with Balibar's formulation, cited by Bernstein (2020, p. 1537), that 'in a capitalist world, class relations are '*one determining* structure, covering *all* social practices, without being the *only* one'.[6]

While individuals negotiate their conditions in a variety of ways (e.g. Carswell & De Neve, 2013), a progressive politics is above all rooted in the collective (self-)organization of classes of labour,[7] including petty commodity producing (PCP) farmers. Better understanding of routes to a progressive politics is sought here not via abstracted theories of change or blueprints for a better society, but through analysis of actually existing social formations, and the political forms through which informal, precarious, and mobile labourers and farmers are/could/might organize themselves as part of a 'politics of classes of labour' that encompasses both the rural and urban and transcends divisions of race/ethnicity,[8] gender, and nationality.

The special issue's analysis extends to the multiple ways through which such a politics is impeded—for example, through state violence (Bush; Karataşli and Kumral, White et al.); the sheer concentration of power among key sections of capital (Jakobsen and Nielsen; Karataşli and Kumral); divisive ideologies (Jakobsen and Nielsen; Kalb); and classes of labour's multiple internal fragmentations, which are often wrought and manipulated by the capitalist class to divide and co-opt its opponents. Likewise, while increased welfare spending and higher wages can improve material conditions, and also expand classes of labour's political space by increasing their material independence from exploiting classes, such state interventions can also *undermine* the potential for collective action due to the often unequal distribution of public resources and its mediation by powerful actors for their own ends (Esping-Andersen, 1990 for the broad discussion; also Karataşli and Kumral; Pye & Chatuthai, this issue).

Populism—both as a type of national government and as a type of political movement—matters for progressive politics. Right-wing populist governments advance capitalist interests and impede progressive politics. Opposing them requires better understanding of the forms they take and the strategies they pursue. Leftist populist *governments*, meanwhile, have a contradictory relationship with progressive politics in that they may contribute to countering or reinforcing capitalism (see final section). Where they are cross-class [encompassing sections of (petty) capital

[5] It is always both in any dialectical analysis.

[6] Bernstein takes Balibar's formulation (l988/l997, p. 242) from Therborn's (2007, p. 88) article in *New Left Review* (emphasis in original).

[7] Self-organization ideally, although 'outsiders' tend to be involved in processes of organising classes of labour. Take, for example, the role of outside activists in organising female garment workers in South Korea in the 1970s (Koo, 2001).

[8] See Mamdani, 2001 for an illuminating account of how the distinction between race and ethnicity can be politically constructed.

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as well as classes of labour], agrarian movements can be termed as ‘agrarian populist’, and agrarian populism may advance or obstruct a progressive politics. History is studded with progressive agrarian movements, but also with reactionary ones from Vietnam to Malaysia and Mexico to India (Alavi, 1973; Edelman & Borras, 2016; Engels, 1894; Gramsci, 1971; Moore, 1966; Nadkarni, 1987; Ong, 1987, pp. 18–34; Wolf, 1999). There is a need to sharpen our understanding of when agrarian populism is progressive in the contemporary context and when it is not, and why. Bernstein and Borras differ somewhat on how likely agrarian populist movements are to be progressive or not (see below). Both would agree, though, that they are more likely to be reactionary than agrarian movements of classes of labour consisting of PCP farmers that do not accumulate, and labourers.

2 | PETTY COMMODITY PRODUCTION AND CLASSES OF LABOUR

The terms classes of labour and petty commodity producer are key as they encompass the social groups seen as forming the social bases of a progressive politics. ‘Classes of labour’ was coined by Bernstein in 2006, while petty commodity production has been discussed by him in some detail (e.g. Bernstein, 1988).[9] Seven of the 10 articles in the special issue use the term classes of labour, to varying degrees (two use it as their central category). Four use the term petty commodity producer. All use categories that would fit within the definitions of classes of labour and petty commodity producer that follow.

Petty commodity production refers to forms of small-scale household commodity production—both agricultural and non- agricultural—that combine the class places of capital and labour because petty commodity producers (PCPs) own some means of production and employ their own labour (Bernstein, 1988, p. 262; Bernstein, 2001, p. 29). PCP can be non-agricultural and agricultural—peasants living under capitalism are understood here as PCP farmers (Bernstein, 1986, 1988; see also Banaji, 2010; Lerche, 2022).[10] PCPs have some of the characteristics of a capitalist enterprise, but, while better-off PCPs tend to be petty capitalists that usually make a surplus and hire some labour, most PCPs do not accumulate and so are not capitalists. Most PCPs do not even meet the costs of simple reproduction, and so also work as wage labourers.[11] Some do one or multiple forms of PCP while neither accumulating nor working as wage labour for additional income. PCP households are themselves subject to internal divisions of labour and forms of exploitation along gendered lines. The latter cannot be seen in isolation from unequal distributions of reproductive labour, through which labourers are nurtured, mostly by women (e.g. Bhattacharya, 2017; Federici, 2004; Stevano et al., 2021). These important aspects of defining classes of labour and thinking through their political implications regrettably cannot be discussed here in any detail.[12]

‘Classes of labour’ refers to all those who share a position as members of directly and indirectly exploited classes. It includes all those who make a living from wage labour, and from PCP in combination with wage labour (Bernstein, 2006, p. 455; Lerche, 2010, p. 65; Pattenden, 2016, p. 23)—a very large but as yet not systematically quantified number that includes most farmers.[13] Classes of labour are understood here as also including all PCPs who do not accumulate and who do not hire labourers.[14] This means that classes of labour include households that

[9]See also Harriss-White (2022).

[10]However, so-called ‘rich peasants’ that usually accumulate and exploit wage labour are seen here as petty capitalist farmers.

[11]While clearly a majority of agricultural PCPs (see footnote 14), the proportion of non-agricultural petty commodity producers this applies to is harder to pin down. There is case study evidence indicating widespread wage labour in non-agricultural PCP households (e.g. Pattenden & Wastuti, 2021), but more work is required.

[12]This includes discussion of whether this is constitutive of intra-household class relations. Gender relations and patriarchy are a notable omission in the special issue as a whole. They are addressed in a forthcoming special issue in the journal.

[13]There are no systematic data on the numbers belonging to classes of labour, but when non-accumulating PCPs and labour are counted together, there is considerable evidence that they form a majority (see, e.g. Rigg, 2019 on Thailand; Zhang, 2022 on China). In India more than 80% of farmers own less than one hectare of land (GoI NSSO, 2013:73; Pattenden, 2016, p. 41), whereas in Java farmers' average landholdings are far smaller than that (Husken & White, 1989, p. 257). See above for additional examples. The amount of land required for a household to make a living cannot be pinned down due to variations in soil quality, irrigation, household size, market access, etc. In some cases, it would require considerably more than a hectare, whereas in some cases (e.g. canal-irrigated villages with at least three paddy crops a year), it would be less than a hectare.

[14]Although some labour may be hired, or done on an exchange basis, during important and often time-sensitivelabour-intensive tasks such as planting.

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farm, combine farming with non-agricultural PCP such as producing and selling street food, or only engage in forms of non-agricultural PCP—in all these cases without accumulating.[15]

The increased social and spatial fragmentation of simple reproduction are obstacles to collective organization. The term classes of labour reflects that, but it also helps to move us beyond more sector or place-bound approaches to progressive politics. By doing so, it links changing forms of simple reproduction to the dynamics of collective action. The fragmentation of social reproduction also multiplies the possible locations of struggle, and often increases the volume of social interactions that can lead to collective ties. As well as sites of production, struggles of classes of labour, which are oriented against both capital and the state, also take place in sites of social reproduction, around issues such as housing (e.g. Bush, this issue). However, the difficulties involved in building a progressive politics among what is a heterogeneous group in many respects should not be underestimated—a point brought home by Kalb's discussion (this issue) of members of classes of labour that support right-wing populism.

3 | BERNSTEIN AND BORRAS ON SITES OF STRUGGLE AND CROSS-CLASS ALLIANCES

Henry Bernstein (editor of the *Journal of Peasant Studies* and then *Journal of Agrarian Change* for a combined 22 years) and Jun Borras (editor of *the Journal of Peasant Studies* for 14 years) are prominent figures in these debates, and this special issue's authors were asked to engage with their recent articles (Bernstein, 2020; Borras, 2020). Their positions have overlaps, but there are differences of emphasis, which are important because they have strategic implications. This brief outline of the overlaps and differences in their perspectives will draw on their wider work, taking in (here and elsewhere in the text) several other of Bernstein's (1988, 2001, 2006, 2010, 2018) papers, as well as Borras's (2001) earlier work on agrarian movements in the Philippines, his co-authored book on transnational agrarian movements (Edelman & Borras, 2016), and recent co-authored work on Myanmar, which focuses primarily on rural-based migrant labour (Borras et al., 2022).

Both Borras and Bernstein recognize processes of class-based differentiation in the countryside and neither view the peasantry as a unified social actor. In addition, neither sees proletarianization as a complete or linear process (e.g. Bernstein, 2001), and both recognize that land continues to play a key role in social reproduction (e.g. Bernstein, 2006, p. 456). Both also recognize that social reproduction increasingly transcends the agrarian, rural, and urban and that the search for a progressive politics must do likewise (Bernstein, 2006; Borras et al., 2022). This is clearly not a debate reducible to Leninist or populist perspectives on agrarian change,[16] within which the former focuses on differentiation in the countryside and the latter on a stable base of middle peasants or family farmers—with related implications for political strategies and class alliances.

In recent work focusing on migrant workers in Myanmar, Borras et al. (2022, pp. 330–334) push against the widespread exclusion of labour from agrarian movements and call on proponents of food sovereignty to engage with issues of class and power relations within communities and households. Significantly, they also suggest reframing food sovereignty and agroecology from the perspective of classes of labour. Agrarian movements are key, but they are also not a sufficient basis for a 'social justice framing' (Borras, 2020, p. 23). There is a need to 'think in terms of

[15]The inclusion of 'non-accumulating PCPs' among classes of labour is not made explicit in Bernstein's (2006) formulation (p. 455), but it is implied in his reference to the 'direct' and 'indirect' sale of labour power for daily reproduction (citing Panitch and Leys 2001, p. ix). A systematic treatment of this point requires an entire paper, but one way of interpreting the 'indirect' sale of labour power as incorporating PCPs that do not accumulate is through linking it to a concrete example such as the PCP farmer- cum-street-food maker/seller who does not accumulate herself, but nevertheless contributes to the broader process of capitalist accumulation by providing cheap services (street food) and commodities that lower the costs of reproduction across society and thereby allow capitalists to pay lower wages, lower their overall costs and increase their rate of surplus-value extraction (Pattenden, 2022, p. 6). Banaji (2010, p. 98), meanwhile, has cast 'the simple-commodity enterprise articulated to capital' not as 'an independent unit of production, but as a quasi-enterprise with the specific function of wage-labour (in the strict sense, value-producing labour)… behind the superficial "surface" sale of products, peasants under this form of domination sell their labour-power'.

[16]The texts that many of these debates refer to are Lenin's (1964) *The Development of Capitalism in Russia* and Chayanov's (1986) *A Theory of Peasant Economy*.

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geographic and political sites of organizing and mobilizing not as a question of either 'factories or fields, dormitories or homes, land or labour, class or community; rather, it is all of the above, simultaneously' (Borras et al., 2022, p. 331). For Borras (2020, pp. 29–30), classes of labour is an important conceptual basis for an internationalist 'class-based' or 'class-consciousleft-wing populism'.

That said, there are differences between Bernstein and Borras, especially in relation to how much they emphasize the agrarian within a progressive politics, and on how likely they think it is for cross-class alliances to be progressive. While calling for alliances 'far broader than the agrarian or the rural' (Borras, 2020, p. 24), in a recent rich and important discussion of how to advance a progressive politics, Borras et al. (2022) focus mostly on the agrarian bases of progressive politics, highlighting struggles over land and for food sovereignty and agroecology (pp. 330–334). Borras (2020) suggests elsewhere (p. 15) that transnational agrarian movements, particularly *La Via Campesina* and the food sovereignty 'platform for action' 'are perhaps the most significant political processes in the social justice movement's global front because neoliberalism took a hold in the early 1980s and subsequently debilitated conventional workers' trade unions and movements'. This seems to overlook the majority of workers who are informally employed and in some cases are engaged in 'new' forms of organizing (Chun & Agarwala, 2015).

Bernstein (2006), meanwhile, as indicated above, outlines the social and spatial fragmentation of pluri-active labouring and petty commodity producing households. While fragmentation—socially, spatially, and sectorally—is a constraint on collective action, Bernstein's term 'classes of labour' indicates a broad terrain of collective action, which reflects movement across places and sectors in search of simple reproduction. The 'political struggles of classes of labour', he states (Bernstein, 2006, p. 456), 'range across far wider terrains than issues of land, important as these are in particular places to particular groups of the "labouring poor"'. A number of articles in the special issue argue for alliances that encompass the rural and urban and focus, implicitly or explicitly, on the broader category of classes of labour (Engels, this issue; Karataşli & Kumral, this issue; Pye & Chatuthai, this issue) (see next section).

Bernstein (1988) engages with the history and complexities of struggles (pp. 68–69), but his engagement with the concrete struggles of contemporary classes of labour is limited. He seems more concerned with shaping how they are analysed, stating that 'a materialist political economy has the intellectual means to confront contemporary realities and to take on the challenges of recognizing and assessing new forms of struggles' (Bernstein, 2006, p. 458). For Bernstein (2006), the development of a 'politics of classes of labour' is fraught with difficulty in various ways. Even on the question of land, which can draw together all those who occupy a particular threatened territory, he says (pp. 456–457) that 'popular struggles … are more likely to embody uneasy and erratic, contradictory and shifting, alliances of different class elements and tendencies than to express the interests of some (notionally) unambiguous and unitary class subject, be it proletarian, "peasant", semi-proletarian or "worker-peasant"'. It is important to underline fragmentation, but without obscuring the possibilities. As Borras (2020, p. 5) says, and Aftab and Ali echo in this special issue, a progressive politics is 'absurdly difficult but not impossible'.

There is also some difference in their approach to cross-class alliances and agrarian populism, with Bernstein being less open to either than Borras. Bernstein (2006) recognizes that struggles over land may 'manifest an agrarian question of (increasingly fragmented) classes of labour' (p. 449). He expresses support for land struggles and recognizes that cross-class alliances are sometimes part and parcel of a progressive politics (Bernstein, 2006, p. 459). That said, 'the contradictory sources and impulses—and typically multi-classcharacter—of such struggles' need to be recognized 'in ways that can inform a realistic and politically responsible assessment of them' (Bernstein, 2006, p. 459). So, for Bernstein (2018), broad agrarian fronts may sometimes be progressive, but their contradictory nature means that he only brooks 'critical engagement with the most progressive (anti-capitalist) of today's agrarian populis[t]' movements (p. 1146; see also Bernstein, 2001, pp. 44–45).

Borras is more open to cross-class agrarian alliances, especially where petty capital might join with 'peasants' and workers against larger capital. Such broad-based coalitions are seen as sometimes being necessary to counter right-wing populism and capitalism. Hence, the call for the 'deliberate political act of aggregating disparate and even competing and contradictory class and group interests and demands into a relatively homogenized voice … for tactical and strategic purposes' (Borras, 2020, p. 5).

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But these contradictions have limits. In line with a politics of classes of labour, Borras (2020) has argued that such alliances should not be dominated by petty capital. Instead, they should be anti-capitalist,left-oriented, and rooted among the landless and those who make a living from the land but not a profit. He has foregrounded left agrarian populist fronts dominated by PCP farmers and classes of labour such as the Kilusang Magbubukid ng Pilipinas (KMP or Philippine Peasant Movement) and the Movimiento de Trabalhadores Sem Terra (MST or Movement of Landless Workers in Brazil) (Borras, 2001, pp. 559–560; also Petras, 1998). And he has criticized capitalist farmer-dominated Indian Farmers Movements within *La Via Campesina* for sidelining the interests of their poorest members (Edelman & Borras, 2016, pp. 46–47). Although unequivocal in their critique of these dominant caste capitalist farmer-led agrarian populist organizations, Edelman and Borras (2016) still seemed in their book to have a strategic preference for broad agrarian alliances in India rather than labour-dominated rural coalitions that might marginalize 'middle peasants' and small farmers (p. 55). In that particular moment, the commitment to leftist anti-capitalist alliances seemed less clear-cut. The same might be said of the progressively oriented *La Via Campesina* global network of small farmers' organizations keeping reactionary petty-capitalist dominated New Farmers Movements like the Karnataka State Farmers Association as members.

As shown below, a number of this special issue's authors argue specifically for Borras's left populist peasant-led-*agrarian* movements. For agrarian movements to be progressive, they, like Borras, think they should be based among PCP farmers, farmer-workers, tenant farmers, and the landless, as part of a broader set of movements against capitalism (Aftab & Ali, this issue; Bush, this issue; Monjane, this issue). They also show the contradictions within contemporary cross-class alliances (Aftab & Ali, this issue; Sankey, this issue). These movements often primarily benefit better-off petty capitalist farmers (see also Nadkarni, 1987), although they may still be progressive where the contradictions with large-scale capital loom large, for example, or where less powerful social groups are otherwise too weak to make collective claims (e.g. Sankey, this issue).

To summarize, then, Borras seeks a progressive politics rooted among PCP farmers and classes of labour in rural and urban settings, but has primarily focused so far on broad agrarian alliances. These might sometimes include petty capitalists but should always be anti-capitalist and advance the interests of PCP farmers and classes of labour. Bernstein is less open to cross-class alliances and indicates a rural, agrarian, and urban progressive politics rooted among classes of labour including PCP farmers. Borras has increased his focus on rural and migrant labour and moved towards an approach to progressive politics that is less rooted in the agrarian. This has taken him closer to the position of Bernstein, whose classes of labour concept still needs to be further developed through detailed analyses of concrete struggles in rural and urban settings.

4 | THE POLITICAL SOCIOLOGY OF CLASSES OF LABOUR IN THE SPECIAL ISSUE[17]

The scale of contemporary migration is more rapidly eroding boundaries between the rural and the urban, politically as well as materially. China and India between them have hundreds of millions of internal migrants (e.g. Srivastava, 2020), let alone 'the vast number of people' who work 'in the informal sector … in nearby small towns' (Borras, 2020, p. 4). Multi-locational'pluri-activity' is the norm in much of the Global South (White et al.; Sankey, this issue; also Gill, 2016). Social reproduction is increasingly stretched spatially, and the contributions to this special issue reflect that. Most of the articles point to daily, temporary, and longer-term movement between the countryside and the city for work, and most outline a progressive politics that is neither rural nor urban, but both simultaneously (Bush, this issue; Engels, this issue; Jakobsen & Nielsen, this issue; Karataşli & Kumral, this issue; Pye & Chatuthai, this issue; White et al., this issue).

In their search for a progressive politics in rural Indonesia, White et al. (this issue) underline the need to link the agrarian, rural, and urban politically and argue for the take-up of 'wider issues of economic, environmental, gender

[17]The term 'politics of classes of labour' is used here to denote agrarian, rural, and urban organizations and networks of classes of labour, while the term 'political sociology of classes of labour' is used to denote analysis of the 'politics of classes of labour'.

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and generational justice'. Although agrarian issues remain significant for the simple reproduction of rural-based households, there is no longer a sufficient social basis for purely agrarian demands given the sheer numbers of rural households making a living across the rural–urban divide. Despite this, agrarian movements in Indonesia remain focused on their sector, largely 'disconnected from contemporary rural issues of mass appeal, especially for young people' whose concerns are more likely to centre on accessing decent jobs and welfare programmes (White et al., this issue). Land remains important, but most 'do not live in the shadow of dispossession' (White et al., this issue). Prominent agrarian organizations in Indonesia like the Serikat Petani Indonesia, long the regional convenor of Via Campesina, largely overlook the issues of sharecropping shares and agricultural wages even though the former are still often lower than what 1960 legislation stipulates and the latter are still usually far below official minimum wages. These remain key issues for many of Indonesia's rural labouring households whose members work as share tenants and farm workers as well as putting-out workers, petty traders, motorbike taxi drivers, and in micro and mass factories.

White et al. see agrarian populism as one part of a broader struggle in Indonesia. For Pye and Chatuthai (this issue), though, agrarian populism in Thailand 'stifles' effective organization for a progressive politics anchored among 'the new working-class realities of rural society and of agrarian production'. They suggest that there is no longer a social base for the kind of broad agrarian front in the mould of Thailand's Assembly of the Poor, which peaked in the late 1990s and early 2000s and was primarily rooted among PCP farmers. Rather than cross-class rural alliances, they argue (pp. 2, 17) for 'a transnational, multi-ethnic, and rural–urban alliance of the working class' and 'a discourse which puts labour and labour rights at its centre' and 'embrace[s] the rural–urban linkages that already define the social fabric'.[18] This would include migrants from the Thai countryside working in Bangkok and those from Myanmar, Cambodia, and Laos who work in labour-intensive sectors like construction, garment and textiles, agriculture, seafood processing, and fisheries.[19]

Migrants of a short-term, cyclical, periodic, or permanent nature are widely seen as 'docile' (i.e. politically marginalized due to precarity, violence, fragmentation, etc.), but have also historically been a key political actor in progressive struggles—be it those who returned to northern Mexico from the United States in the run-up to the Mexican revolution (Wolf, 1999), or Russian labourers in the opening decades of the 20th century who worked and lived in the city but kept a foothold in their home villages (Bonnell, 1983; see also Gill et al., 2020, p. 60). And while capitalism constructs racist divisions that divide migrants from other sections of classes of labour, migrants are also uniquely placed to break down those same divisions. The sheer scale of movement today coupled with many migrants' enduring social links across the rural–urban divide makes their political role more pertinent, and render a privileging of agrarian, rural, or urban movements both limited and limiting. This is widely recognized: Borras (2020), and the ERPI initiative more generally (Scoones et al., 2018), point to the significance for progressive politics of migration, rural–urban links, processes of 'depeasantisation' (Bello, 2018, p. 55), the 'fracturing of classes of labour' (Scoones et al., 2018), and the entry of rural PCPs into precarious forms of wage labour (Adaman et al., 2021, p. 163).

Rural–urban linkages and migration loom large in Karataşli and Kumral's analysis of the social bases of a potential progressive politics in Turkey. They underline the potential of alliances centred on Kurdish migrants who link the 'poor peasant' social bases of their villages in the east of the country with the informal labouring populations of western Turkey cities where they work. They have experienced 'increasing exploitation … food insecurity' as well as 'the loss of access to and control over land and natural resources'—part of the ruling party's extractivist policies that have generated waves of protest.

Highlighting an example of class-based multi-ethnic movements,[20] Karataşli and Kumral (p. 21) point out historical links between leftist and Kurdish movements and pinpoint a pro-Kurdish political party, the HDP, as the most likely vehicle for a broad progressive political front. The HDP emerged in 2012 from the 'People's Democratic Congress', a broad 'Kurdish/left/green' platform that sought to challenge neoliberal authoritarianism by linking 'working-class',

[18]The second of the three quotes here is itself a citation from Bhattacharya (2014, p. 960).

[19]They made up an estimated 10% of the workforce in 2008 (Arnold and Pickles 2011, p. 1608 cited in Pye and Chatuthai).

[20]See also Campbell, 2012.

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'rural', 'feminist', 'minority', 'ecological', 'human rights', and LGBT+ struggles. There are echoes here of the broad fronts alluded to in the articles on Egypt and Burkina Faso, Indonesia, India, and Thailand, which, in the latter's case, is youth-led and similarly incorporates feminist and LGBTIQ movements. This proliferation of issues does not equate to identity politics's atomizing and de-materializing of the political or of intersectionality's tendency to gloss over internal relations between axes of domination and oppression (McNally, 2017). Rather, the articles in the special issue view racism and patriarchy and ecocide as core features of capitalism, internally related to class and the material dynamics of simple and expanded reproduction in their antagonistic mutual relations (e.g. Baglioni & Campling, 2017; Federici, 2004, James, 1938; also Bernstein, 2020 for an overlapping point).

The linking of rural and urban issues continues in other articles in the special issue. On Egypt, Bush talks of the rural and urban 'disaffected' combining struggles—increasingly so in the context of a broadening and deepening of neoliberal privatization in the 2000s. Movements mobilizing in the run-up to the mass action at Tahrir Square (a prominent episode of the 'Arab Spring') spanned land and agricultural issues as well as conditions of work and social reproduction more broadly—access to food, healthcare, housing, public infrastructure, and drinking water. Less directly contentious rural–urban struggles relating to social reproduction have become more common in the face of increasing state violence. These can help to sustain more contentious struggles by establishing networks and memories of solidarity that foster collective action in moments and places where it can take place.

Interestingly, Bush says that a sense that farmer protests might be successful was encouraged by 'proximity to urban centres of working-class resistance'—a lived rural–urban political sociology in places where the rural and urban are most densely connected. In 2019, a wave of protests by urban and rural populations further strengthened links between farmers and industrial workers and the urban poor, bringing into view, Bush suggests, 'the possibility for a class-consciousleft-wing populism' of 'peasants', 'classes of labour', or 'working people'.[21]

Based on a study of cotton farmers and cotton workers in Burkina Faso, Engels (this issue) outlines processes of self-organization by classes of labour across the rural–urban divide. Rejecting cross-class agrarian fronts centred on the main cotton farmers' organization that is dominated by male capitalist farmers, Engels points to organizations of classes of labour: the *Collectif des Paysans*, which is an organization of poor farmers, and the *Organisation Democratique de la Jeunesse*, which brings together poor farmers and precarious workers in rural and urban areas. Both organizations were involved in a cotton boycott in pursuit of a better deal for poorer farmers. Meanwhile, precarious workers in the cotton mills, often from the *same* farming families, also organize but through wildcat strikes rather than through large trade unions. The implication is that precarity and fragmentation across workplaces renders organization more fluid. This makes them less akin to traditional forms of unionism and more similar to the cell-like organizations that have played a role in recent waves of mass action by predominantly migrant labour forces—for example, the mass walk-outs and road blockades by predominantly female garment workers in the 'global city' of Bangalore (Shridar, 2016).

There are clear links between Engels's article and labour studies' flagging of new forms of mobilization by precarious and informal workers (Chun & Agarwala, 2015). Indeed, many of the authors in this special issue underline the links between labour and agrarian studies. Struggles do not only take place in production sites, as Engels also indicates, but along commodity chains into trade, logistics, and finance (as Arboleda, 2020 [p. 360] has recently highlighted).

4.1 | Labouring class support for right-wing populism

Labouring class support for right-wing populism is a major obstacle to progressive politics and requires careful analysis. In this special issue, the papers on India, Turkey, Thailand, and Indonesia provide insights, while Don Kalb's article addresses this head-on in relation to Europe. He suggests that the poorest quintile are less responsive to

[21] Bush takes the last two terms from Bernstein (2010) and Shivji (2017).

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right-wing populist appeals than those immediately above them: the upper working classes or lower middle classes who may have some property and more autonomy in their daily work—artisans, small farmers, retailers, and some petty capitalists (on this point, see also Bernstein, 1988, p. 268). They have more to lose, fear being 'just workers' and position themselves as socially superior and more 'deserving' (Kalb, this issue, drawing on Neumann 1942). This is so especially in 'provincial spaces of neoliberal abandonment rather than dynamic metropolitan ones' (Kalb, this issue). That abandonment relates to physical infrastructures, to social protection, and to political representation when social democratic parties drift to the right, reneguing on established social compromises.

Spaces of neoliberal abandonment have different everyday social schisms too: while classes of labour in the metropolis encounter the well-heeled on a daily basis, underlining a sense of socio-economic inequality that may make them more likely to look left politically, those living in neglected suburbs and provincial towns are more likely to encounter other members of classes of labour, perhaps of different skin colours and nationalities, whom they seek to distinguish themselves from in a context of falling incomes and racist propaganda, seemingly unconscious of how capital manipulates the levers of migration for its own ends. Racialized divisions of the working class, which tend to become more entrenched when material conditions worsen, are an old strategy of domination and exploitation (Du Bois, 2006 [1906]; James, 1938), and 'egalitarianism as a practical structure of feeling is not randomly distributed' (Kalb, drawing on Neumann)—a critical point for any committed anti-racist leftist political sociology.

Attachment to right-wing racist or communal ideologies is also prevalent in the Global South from Brazil to India to Myanmar (e.g. Jakobsen and Nielsen, this volume). In rural Turkey, agrarian petty capitalists have fused frustrations with deteriorating terms of trade to right-wing nationalist populist sentiments (Karataşli & Kumral, this issue). Indonesia also has an array of right-wing populist parties, linked in this case to Islam rather than to Hinduism or Buddhism as in India and Myanmar. In many cases the right benefits from the absence of broad-based socially embedded left movements. This is the case in both Turkey and Indonesia, in part due to historical ruling class violence. Clientelistic political parties undermine progressive politics (e.g. White et al. on Indonesia, this issue), and sections of civil society can similarly draw people into individualized market-oriented activities and entangle non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in competition for limited funds—all part of the broader dynamics of neoliberalism (White et al., this issue; Ismail & Kamat, 2018 more generally).

And so resistance to right-wing populism is itself always being resisted—by violence, by the construction of 'vertical' social solidarities built around political parties who at a local level play a key role in distributing public funds, by vertical patron–client relations linked to employment and credit, by the injection of neoliberal logics into civil societies, and through the ideological subterfuge of the dominant and its generation of discourses that divide classes of labour along lines of religion and race.

In order to understand the social and spatial geographies of rightward political drifts, Kalb (this issue, p.3) proposes the notion of double devaluations that encompasses the 'economic as well as discursive, cultural as well as material (and political, social, etc.), driven both by capital and its valorization and by state hegemonies and their selective biases and outright exclusions'. Alongside this, he urges a 'deep sense of processual structured contingency if we want to grasp how "double devaluations" become aggregated and articulated in the new right-wing political alliances'.

5 | AGRARIAN POPULIST MOVEMENTS IN THE SPECIAL ISSUE

While agrarian movements cannot be privileged in approaches to progressive politics in the countrysides of the Global South, they still have a significant role to play. Like Borras, a number of authors in this special issue seek out bases for agrarian fronts led by PCP farmers and rural classes of labour (Aftab and Ali, Bush, Monjane and Sankey). Aftab and Ali, for example, suggest that 'progressive agrarian populism must hinge on the interests of rural labourers and peasant farmers, and … on increasingly alienated peasant farmers being incorporated into a political project that … also prioritizes the interests of rural semi-proletarians and landless labourers'. This fits quite closely with Sankey's sketching of a movement of rural classes of labour in Colombia (the MIA; see below) and with Bush's outline of agrarian movements in Egypt, as well as smaller organizations in Burkina Faso and Pakistan that are briefly discussed.

Such organizations contrast with the more prominent agrarian movements that are analysed in this special issue. Analysis of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad, Dignidades Agrarias in Colombia, and the UNPCB in Burkina Faso highlights internal social contradictions, with all three organizations seeming to marginalize classes of labour and primarily advance the interests of petty capitalist farmers (Aftab & Ali, this issue; Engels, this issue; Sankey, this issue; see also Tilzey, 2019, p. 637).

Aftab and Ali's study of the Pakistan Kissan Ittehad (Pakistan Farmers Movement or PKI) reveals a movement of both capitalist and PCP farmers who responded collectively to the material threats posed by liberalization and transnational agribusiness. An 'ideology of kisan populism' helped to paper over the cracks within and unite all farmers against the state and large capital. But the PKI primarily defended and advanced the interests of petty capital against larger capital, with contradictory implications for PCP farmers, and the sidelining of wage-labourers' concerns.

Meanwhile, the Colombian coffee farmers' organization, Dignidades Agrarias (DA) (Sankey, this issue), was a cross-class farmers' movement concerned with terms of trade and threats from larger capital due to liberalization. Like the PKI, the DA's demands marginalized the majority of their members who also depended on wage labour to make a living.

Sankey's article also highlights a temporary alliance between two quite different organizations from distinct regions: the DA's coffee farmers and another organization, the MIA (National Agricultural and Popular Roundtable) of landless workers and 'poor peasant settlers' in 'frontier zones'—more a rural movement than an agrarian one. MIA members combined subsistence agriculture with wage labour and were concerned with land issues, the right to organize, wages, and an end to state and paramilitary violence. The MIA joined forces with the DA, in part because it was too weak on its own. But when the government offered the DA concessions, the DA quit the alliance and left the MIA's social bases to face government oppression. So, while the cross-class agrarian front of the DA and MIA might have strengthened the MIA's political platform for a time, its social bases did not benefit from the alliance.

In addition, Sankey's article demonstrates how the food sovereignty agenda can be shaped to reflect different interests. The Agrarian Strike, the broad-based mobilization around which the DA–MIA alliance had coalesced, was associated with the struggle for food sovereignty. But food sovereignty meant different things to different groups within the alliance. For DA's coffee farmers, it primarily meant better terms of trade, whereas for the MIA's farmer-workers whose pluri-active household members were also street vendors, moto-taxi drivers, coca leaf pickers, and construction workers, it related more to issues of exploitation, structural change, and the distribution of land and power. The smaller coffee farmers- cum-labourers might have found common ground with both versions of 'food sovereignty' given that all these issues mattered to them. Greater analytical and political precision could better locate elements of progressive politics within calls for food sovereignty, but it is often projected as a reflection of broad peasant unity against large capital, and morphs into demands for better terms of trade, reflecting the interests of petty capitalist farmers more than those of classes of labour.

As mentioned, the authors of the Pakistan and Colombia articles, like those on Egypt and Burkina Faso, are clearly inclined to organizations that represent PCP farmers, farmer-workers, and the landless. Aftab and Ali refer back to former left-wing agrarian populisms in Pakistan centred on land- to-the-tiller tenant movements, to the rural Brick-kiln Workers Front, the *Dehātī Mazdūr Tanẓīm* (Rural Labourer Organization) that linked anti-casteism with the struggles of the landless and, in the present, to *Kisan Ekath* (Peasant Unity), an organization that has mobilized poor farmers against traders. The latter, like the MIA in Colombia, has struggled to gain ground due to a lack of social or political power, and its leaders have stated that they cannot organize landless workers as they cannot afford to alienate petty agrarian capital. At the same time, *Kisan Ekath*, like the *Collectif des Paysans* in Burkina Faso (see above) and the MIA in Colombia, have taken steps towards a progressive politics rooted in rural classes of labour and in some cases with links to urban organizations.

5.1 | Differentiation and progressive agrarian fronts

The question of whether processes of socio-economic differentiation in the countryside—however incomplete and non-linear—undermine the bases for progressive agrarian movements cannot be answered in the pages of a single

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special issue given the diversity of social formations in the Global South. Nevertheless, analysis of particular countries may indicate broader patterns. Two contrasting examples emerge from the special issue—the first in the Thai countryside where socio-economic differentiation and rural–urban migration appears to have made a progressive front less feasible, and the second in the more violent context of Egypt where Bush suggests that rural PCPs operating up to around a hectare of land, including tenant farmers and farmer-workers, can still provide a social basis for a progressive politics along with the 'near landless' and agricultural workers, especially so when broader networks of classes of labour organize across the rural–urban divide (see above).

This is in marked contrast to Thailand. In their analysis of changing forms of populism over three decades from the 1990s to the 2010s, Pye and Chatuthai argue that structural change has made progressive agrarian fronts less likely (see also, e.g. Bello, 2019, p. 113). The Assembly of the Poor social movement peaked in the 1990s with a primarily PCP farmer social base, but by the mid-2000s the number of rural PCPs had declined and most rural households depended largely on 'off-farm activities' (Rigg, 2019, p. 168). Migration had increased alongside some deepening of socio-economic differentiation.

Progressive agrarian movements have been largely absent from Thailand's subsequent competing populisms in the 2000s and early 2010s. The first of these was what Pye and Chatuthai call the 'capitalist populism' of globalizing capitalists led by Thaksin Shinawatra, with support from petty capitalists and classes of labour who benefitted from expanded social programmes, especially healthcare. Pitted against this 'reluctant populist's[22] social and political alliance was the 'reactionary populism' of the long-established[23] ruling class coalition of capitalists, monarchy, and military. The 'reactionary populists' drew sections of the largely defunct Assembly of the Poor (AoP) into their fold. The disproportionate focus on agrarian issues and the failure to build a progressive politics among classes of labour *across* rural and urban locations helps to explain why some PCP farmers who had supported the AoP joined forces with Thailand's reactionary populists in the 2000s (Pye & Chatuthai, this issue). They were drawn in by nationalist and anti-globalization discourses linked to an 'autonomous' and self-sufficient agriculture.

And so in Thailand some parts of a broad agrarian populist-led front morphed into right-wing nationalist populism, which has undermined progressive politics in Thailand until the present day. It was the 'reactionary populists' who ultimately came out on top, via a military coup and a subversion of democracy, which has been resisted recently by a wave of peaceful student-led protests. Similar patterns of some social bases of agrarian populism sliding towards right-wing populism have been identified in northern India (e.g. Lerche, 2021) and in parts of Karnataka in southern India where petty capitalist farmers who a generation ago led resistance to corporate agribusiness as part of the Via Campesina-affiliated Karnataka State Farmers' Association (KRRS) now support the Hindu nationalist right-wing populist Bharatiya Janata Party.

There is a need to better understand why agrarian populism might support a progressive politics in one case and undermine it in the other. The contrast between the Thailand and Egypt examples in this special issue indicates a need for comparative analysis that assesses relations among and between classes of labour and classes of capital, as well as distributions of land and bases of social reproduction. According to the accounts in this special issue, antagonisms with large capital seem more pronounced in rural Egypt, whereas socio-economic differentiation among smaller agricultural producers seems to be less marked than in Thailand.

6 | POPULISM AND NATIONAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXTS

Seeking out possible routes to a more progressive politics also requires analysis of the constraints and possibilities posed by national governments and how these change over time (e.g. Gramsci, 1971). As well as relatively more

[22]This is the term used by Kevin Hewison to describe Thaksin (Hewison, 2017) and implies that his populist pro-poor policies were driven above all by the need for a successful electoral alliance.

[23]In part by US post-war governments (often violent) interventions against nationalist and leftist governments in the Global South (e.g. Glassman, 2018).

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endogenous aspects of class relations and dynamics of accumulation and reproduction (e.g. Jakobsen & Nielsen, this issue), the articles in the special issue also analyse countries' locations in broader world-historical dynamics. For example, forms of populist and authoritarian national government are linked to dynamics of accumulation (Karataşli and Kumral; Jacobsen and Nielsen; also Bush; White et al.)—just as, more generally, increased numbers of populist governments have been linked to crises of accumulation, such as those of 2008 and 1929, during which ruling blocs tend to be destabilized and re-formed. And so in this section, the focus moves from agrarian movements and agrarian populism to populism as a national-level political strategy. The brief discussion is inevitably schematic, outlining understandings of populist government in general as well as its right and left-wing forms before discussing more specific examples of changing forms of populist government in Turkey and Thailand (Karataşli & Kumral, this issue).

Hall's (1979, p. 15; 1985) definition of populism as an expression of political and ideological relationships between the ruling bloc, the state, and the dominated classes was written with right-wing populism in mind. Right-wing populism denotes regimes primarily shaped by and for the interests of sections of capital and capitalism in general. Like all forms of capitalist government, it mediates the distribution of surplus value, shapes perceptions of what constitutes socially necessary labour time, and tends to maintain or increase class, gender, and race-based inequalities (e.g. Jakobsen & Nielsen, this issue). Racist nationalist populisms, and their coercion and violence, are not isolated phenomena but 'are systemically rooted, interlinked, produced by an uneven bundle of global, scaled, social and historical forces … incorporated within a variegated and therefore differentiating terrain of national political theatres' (Kalb, this issue; see also Hart, 2019, p. 310). Their racism, misogyny, and ecocide are driven above all by competitive accumulation, which extracts surplus value from nature, the workplace, and society as a whole.[24]

Populism's varied forms reflect the different strategies used to mediate struggles between and among the ranks of capital and labour. Authoritarian populism is seen here simply as a coercive form of populism that contrasts with more hegemonic forms that use ideological and material strategies to build a broad basis of support (see below).[25] Hall's (1979) definition of authoritarian populism, which drew primarily on his analysis of the political foundations of Thatcherite neoliberalism, and was explicitly intended to address hegemonic forms of politics (Hall, 1985, p. 115), is understood here to be more akin to what Karataşli and Kumral (this issue) call hegemonic right-wing populism.[26]

In its most general sense, populism refers to a political strategy for obtaining or maintaining power. Usually based on broad social alliances that go beyond their core social bases, sometimes akin to Gramsci's 'historic blocs', populist regimes use a variety of strategies to build support and construct consent. These include social programmes, which are especially useful for garnering labouring class support (Karataşli and Kumral; Pye and Chatuthai),[27] the use of class-denying nationalist rhetoric to strengthen a sense of internal unity and external hostility, and the propagation of racist and misogynistic discourses intended to divide less powerful social groups and deflect resentment away from exploiting classes (e.g. Desai, 2016). Populism incorporates a notion of 'the people' as an ideological construction that generates unity and distracts from social divisions. In other words, populists use ideological and material strategies, which modify distributions of resources as well as power, and bring certain sections of society into the dominant's fold, while excluding others.

Left-wing populist governments, meanwhile, have a more contradictory relationship with capitalism: They may seek to reproduce it or transcend it. Left populism has been notably promoted by Laclau (2005) and Mouffe (2018), by some 'pink tide' Latin American governments, and further back by the likes of Peron and Indira Gandhi (e.g. Frankel, 2004). It draws support from broad, often cross-class social coalitions and intends a degree of redistribution. The distinction between right and left populism is not as simple as the ascendance of a dominant minority or of a 'subaltern' majority. Left-wing populism can seek to reduce inequality without challenging its underlying causes (e.g. Saad-Filho & Boffo, 2021), and it can be used to keep a particular section of the ruling class in power (e.g.

[24]See Baglioni et al., 2022 for an outline of a broad approach to exploitation.

[25]The literature is too vast to cover here. Gramsci (1971), Hall (1985), Laclau (2005), Poulantzas (2014), and Jessop (1990) are all important to the more theoretical discussions, along with more recent articles such as Hart (2019) and Scoones et al. (2018).

[26]See also Akram-Lodhi (2022) for a salient discussion of Hall and authoritarian populism.

[27]See also Esping-Anderson for a more theoretical and historical approach.

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Chacko, 2018, p. 546 on 1970s India). Some have even cast certain Latin American 'pink tide' governments as primarily serving the interests of extractive capital and undermining possibilities for structural change (e.g. Tilzey, 2019 on Bolivia). Unsurprisingly, there are debates as to whether 'left populism is adequate to confront and counter increasingly virulent and racist forms of right-wing populisms' (Hart, 2019, p. 308).

6.1 | Hegemonic and coercive national regimes in the special issue

Articles in this special issue outline different forms and strategies of populist and authoritarian government, their links to global capitalist dynamics, intra-capitalist relations within countries, and the contradictions of neoliberalism. In relation to Turkey, Karataşli and Kumral show how and why populism can change its form over time. They illustrate how right-wing populism can become more or less neoliberal and take more hegemonic and authoritarian forms—something that is linked to changing dynamics of accumulation both nationally and internationally. Pye and Chatuthai, meanwhile, indicate how hegemonic populism shifted to authoritarianism in Thailand through a long-running battle between competing capitalist blocs. Bush discusses authoritarianism without populism in Egypt, which is a form of government pursued where intimidation and violence are easier than forging a broad social coalition of support through populism. Monjane highlights the role of neoliberal policies in furthering the agenda of Mozambique's authoritarian populist government. Jakobsen and Nielsen explore links between forms of accumulation and India's authoritarian populism. White et al. point to how the legacy of mass US-backed violence in Indonesia in the 1960s continues to cast a shadow on the search for a more progressive politics today. Karataşli and Kumral similarly argue that Turkey's left remains weakened by historical state oppression in the 1980s. Bush is the most explicit in signalling how these forms of violence relate to geopolitical tussles within and beyond the Cold War,[28] as well as pointing out the Egyptian regime's links to arms and fossil fuel mafias—two of the most powerful sections of global capital that extract high rents and profits while exacting an immense material cost on the poor through violence and climate change.

Social programmes often play a prominent role in more hegemonic forms of populism, as in the early years of the Erdogan government in Turkey and under Shinawatra in Thailand (Karataşli and Kumral; Pye and Chatuthai), but they can also contribute to legitimation crises when cuts in social spending undermine 'subaltern' consent, as Bush (this issue) shows indirectly in relation to Egypt (see also Chacko, 2018).

Discussion of populism's different forms links to broader debates on neoliberal government: Populism can be used as a means of preserving the interests of capitalism contra neoliberalism,[29] or it can seek to sustain neoliberalism despite the damage it wreaks on classes of labour. For example, India's BJP government uses nationalist and communal rhetoric as a counter-weight to 'jobless growth' and low social spending, trying to advance neoliberalism while drawing in cross-class Hindu support by targeting a 'corrupt elite' linked to competing ruling class interests, and through ideological and violent attacks on religious minorities (Chacko, 2018, p. 544; Jakobsen & Nielsen, this issue). Saad-Filho and Boffo (2021), meanwhile, argue in relation to Brazil that neoliberalism, as populism, can be more or less authoritarian.

To finish this section, and illustrate some of its central points, an example from the special issue is outlined in more detail in order to illustrate how populism's shifting gears of persuasion and coercion relate to the broader dynamics of accumulation. The rise of Thaksin and the ensuing battle between competing capitalist blocs in Thailand related to the Asia Crash of 1997–1998. Turkey's ruling party of the last two decades, meanwhile, shifted its form

[28] And on this point, there are many other potential examples. In Guatemala, for example, tens of thousands of Mayan peasants were machine-gunned in village squares by US-backed forces in the early 1980s (Chomsky, 1985). More recently, Russian 'mercenaries' have killed for cash and the strengthening of national interests in Africa (e.g. Human Rights Watch, 2022), while Russia and China (following in the footsteps of European capitalists) have seemingly struck deals with Myanmar's violent government (e.g. IISS, 2022).

[29] And in such cases, the political pendulum of intra-capitalist competition may swing in favour of forms of capitalist accumulation that are less dependent on liberalising policies. For example, see Partington, 2018 for a brief discussion of intra-capitalist competition related to support for and opposition to Brexit.

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of rule from a more hegemonic to a more coercive form of populism as national and global economic conditions deteriorated. Karataşli and Kumral's (this issue) analysis of Turkey begins in the 1970s when the global dynamics of capitalist accumulation entered a moment of crisis and tilted towards neoliberalism. The unravelling of Turkey's secular nationalist regime was followed by a period of relative instability before Erdogan came to power and built a populist neoliberal regime, with a social base of Islamic conservatives, sections of capital, and parts of the working class. Between 2002 and 2013, while privatizing widely, it used a favourable macro-economic context to shore up its support through cash transfers to the poor, agricultural subsidies, extended social security in the informal sector, and infrastructure projects that consolidated the support of powerful sections of capital. This period of 'hegemonic right-wing populism' transformed into authoritarian populism as the global macro-economic context deteriorated, squeezing the flows of patronage and increasing economic hardship. Unable to 'buy' a broad social base to support its populism, the ruling party had started to enforce it instead.

7 | CONCLUSION

There does not seem to be any disagreement about the importance of migration and commuting among rural classes of labour (e.g. Borras et al., 2022; Scoones et al., 2018 etc.). And yet so much discussion of a progressive politics in the literature remains primarily focused on the agrarian. The articles in this special issue indicate that PCPs (those that do not accumulate), farmer-workers, and wage labourers within and beyond the countryside all have a key role to play in building a progressive politics. Some articles analyse how agrarian and rural movements contribute to a progressive politics, and where they impede it due to their being dominated by petty capital, and all of the contradictions that that entails. But, as well as the pitfalls, cross-class alliances may have temporary strategic value in broader anti-capitalist struggles, especially where class-based oppressions are primarily driven by larger capital such as agribusiness TNCs, and where social structures allow classes of labour to be the primary political actor. Nevertheless, in some contexts, processes of differentiation within the countryside have made broad agrarian fronts less likely. And given that most rural households make a living in both rural *and* urban locations, a primarily agrarian-focused approach to progressive politics is increasingly inadequate.

A number of articles in this special issue advocate a progressive politics that transcends the rural and urban and is far broader than the agrarian (Bush, Engels, Jakobsen and Nielsen, Karataşli and Kumral, Pye and Chatuthai; White et al.). The examples of existing rural–urban organizations of classes of labour that are mentioned, as well as the potential alliances indicated, provide a starting point for further detailed empirical studies of how and why such forms of progressive politics can endure in some contexts, why they are never even initiated in others, and how they are strengthened and weakened. In relation to all of this, the articles in this special issue show the importance of patterns of simple and expanded reproduction, social structures, and historical national and global dynamics of competitive capitalist accumulation. And all of this relates to the forms of capitalist government that mediate class struggle, including the more coercive and hegemonic forms of populism discussed here.

The potential role of migrants in linking together different parts of classes of labour is a theme running through several of the articles (Karataşli and Kumral; Pye and Chatuthai; also Bush). Migrant classes of labour are socially fragmented and often endure the most oppressive forms of exploitation, but movement between locations also multiplies the possible locations of collective struggle. And whereas capitalist ideology uses racist propaganda to ferment division, migrants also have the potential to erode those very same divisions. The uprisings in Cochabamba and in Oaxaca in the early and mid-2000s were part of broader historical movements that encompassed workplaces and living spaces and fought against racism and sexism as well as capitalist exploitation and accumulation by dispossession—part of what has been termed a 'combined oppositional consciousness' (e.g. McNally, 2013).

A rural–urban political sociology, as any political sociology, requires analysis of the social bases of collective organizations, of 'real and known people' in a variety of urban neighbourhoods and villages. Without such work, analysis of social relations remains reified, and the unevenness of political consciousness and engagement is flattened

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out, weakening comprehension of routes to change and impediments to it. A rural–urban sociology also requires a deeply relational approach to class understood as 'a dynamic and uneven set of social and spatial relations of social reproduction under capitalism, involving dependency, autonomy, sociality, extraction, exploitation, valuation and valorization, relations anchored in but going beyond labour and property' (Kalb, this issue).

A progressive politics opposed to racism, patriarchy, right-wing populism, and capitalism can arise from classes of labour organizing in agrarian, rural, and urban settings and in the movement between all three. It can arise in sites of production and of social reproduction. To focus solely on any one of these risks forestalling broader alliances, and undermining potential links across the divisions of gender, generation, race, and nation shaped by the world-historical political economy of capitalism. A 'politics of classes of labour', then, does not privilege agrarian, rural, or urban locations of struggle. It is rooted among classes of labour and does not accommodate sustained agrarian populist cross-class alliances. Whether this amounts to a reformulated left populism or something different is left to readers to decide.

ORCID

Jonathan Pattenden https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5493-9775

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