Why farm the city? Theorizing urban agriculture through a lens of metabolic rift

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**Abstract**

Urban agriculture (UA) is spreading across vacant and marginal land worldwide, embraced by government and civil society as source of food,
ecosystems services and jobs, particularly in times of economic crisis. ‘Metabolic rift’ is an effective framework for differentiating UA's multiple origins and functions across the Global North and South. I examine how UA arises from three interrelated dimensions of metabolic rift—ecological, social and individual. By rescaling production, reclaiming vacant land and ‘de-alienating’ urban dwellers from their food, UA also attempts to overcome these forms of rift. Considering all three dimensions is valuable both for theory and practice.

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