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The 'New Scramble' and the 'Politics of Scale' - 'reterritorialisation', regional claims and 'food frontiers' in neo/post-Apartheid Southern Africa

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Geographic regions are a product of social and political contestation. Capital's territorialisation - and reterritorialisation - exerts a powerful claim on our regions, and assertions of a 'new scramble' and Africa as a 'new frontier' frame continental perceptions and realities. Global cycles of capital accumulation have varying impacts on different geographic regions. In the context of Southern Africa, regional geometries of power are shaped at different geographic scales - local, national, regional and global. These "nested hierarchies" (Smith, 1984) are not simply a state-led process of regional integration but are shaped relationally by the regional claims of competing social agents.

This paper examines how 'South African' capital, through its multinational corporations, produces a claim on the region in one of three key sectors of post-Apartheid corporate expansion (finance, telecommunications and retail) in Africa, namely, the *business of 'big food' in Africa*. The case of Walmart and Shoprite is highlighted here, alongside other case study material, to demonstrate the competing regional claims of retail workers and food firms in Southern Africa. The paper aims to demonstrate how a 'politics of scale' is pragmatically utilized in the rhetoric and practice of both multinational firms and labour in the region. Appraising the legitimacy of such claims is helped by the notion of 'regional dispositions', it is argued here. Competing scalar claims may be assessed in terms of how such dispositions and claims deepen or negate uneven regional development. An over-arching question is whether a new cycle of regional Apartheid is upon us, despite the regional expectations created by South Africa's democratisation.