
Rural labour struggles, class dynamics and authoritarian populism in Uganda and Tanzania

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Abstract

Given their localised character, rural labour struggles in Uganda and Tanzania tend to receive limited attention in public debate. However, these have both a political import on the class politics at the national level in ways that often go unrecognised; and consequences on how capital reorganises labour. The paper builds on evidence of collective action and wildcat strikes in Uganda and Tanzania to argue that rural labour struggles are more common and widespread than what currently acknowledged. Interrogating past and present rural labour struggles in the region is key to understand both the hegemony of authoritarian populist regimes, which aim at defusing class dynamics and class struggles in the countryside and prevent rural/urban class mobilisation; and the persistence of small scale farming - including contract farming - as a way of organising rural labour while preventing large-scale collective action and organised labour struggles.

Keywords: labour struggles, rural, class, Uganda, Tanzania

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