
Agrarian Political economy and the emerging ‘classes’ of indigenous (rural) agrarian capitalists in the Limpopo Valley of Mozambique

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Abstract

Agrarian Political Economy has long been a central theoretical and analytical approach to the investigation about the nature and trajectories of capitalist agrarian transitions and the overall development of capitalism in the countryside. More specifically, it has been a critical analytical framework to the understanding of the diverse and complex forms, class dynamics, the historical and material conditions that capitalist relations may have emerged, expanded and become relevant in processes of agrarian change and rural transformation, more generally. In Mozambique, with some notable exceptions, we have witnessed an almost absence of interest in classical political economy as a fundamental theoretical and analytical framework for the study of social relations, especially in the countryside. Class analysis (a fundamental aspect in political economy) has almost ceased to be used as an instrument for understanding fundamental processes of agrarian change and rural transformation, especially in a context where new ‘classes’ of rural agrarian capitalists have been emerging and expanding throughout the country. This is understandable as mainstream (neoclassical) theoretical paradigms have dominated current research agendas in the country in almost all areas of the social sciences. This paper seeks to contribute to a renewal of the interest of (classical Marxist) political economy as a fundamental analytical framework in Mozambican research. It does so by discussing, within an agrarian political economy approach, findings from a preliminary research about the emergence of new ‘classes’ of rural agrarian capitalists (the so-called ‘emerging farmers’) and their place in processes of agrarian change and rural transformation in Mozambique. More specifically, it primarily seeks to analyse the contexts and extent to which such ‘classes’ of indigenous (rural) agrarian capitalists have actually emerged and expanded in particular regions around the Limpopo Valley. Secondly, to identify the differing forms these processes may have taken (and be taking) amongst individual or classes of capitalists, the specific historical and material conditions and, thirdly, to analyse the extent to which these processes may have driven or not the development of productive forces in farming and the countryside of the region more generally. Furthermore, given the relatively ‘absence’ of political economy in the study and investigation of capitalist relations of production and reproduction in the countryside, this paper attempts to put forth and defends that political economy is and should be of particular theoretical and empirical relevance in the context of Mozambican studies more generally. The application of this approach and its analytical elements to the study of the dynamics of indigenous rural capitalists (and capitalism) in the Limpopo Valley (and not only) has undoubtedly become a pending assignment in the context of Mozambican rural research more particularly.

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