



The land question and the debates about agrarian and rural transformation in Mozambique

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Outline

- The land question and capital(ism) in the countryside
- The land and agrarian question
- The land question and options of agrarian policy in the past and the present
- Current debates over the land question in Mozambique
- Some concluding remarks

The land question and capital(ism) in the countryside

- The land question and its possible resolution became more complex, given the current dynamics of the penetration and expansion of capital(ism) in the countryside,
- New dynamics of land concentration and capitalist accumulation and the transformation of the conditions of production and reproduction in the countryside
- Changes on the nature of land based social relations, including patterns of access, possession and use of land

Land and the agrarian question

- The resolution (or not) of the land question as a central element of the still unresolved agrarian question in Mozambique
 - **the agrarian question** understood as “the continuing existence in the countryside of a poor countryside of substantive obstacles to the unleashing of the forces capable of generating economic development both inside and outside agriculture” (Byres, 1995)
 - The role of the land in processes of agrarian transition (the development of capitalism in agriculture and in the countryside more generally and its role in processes of industrialization)

The land question and agrarian policy options in the past and present

- The land question as a fundamental element for different economic options and trajectories of agrarian transformation and rural change
- Land and the migrant labour regimes in Southern Africa
 - The role of migrant labour wages as an important source of capital for agriculture and the reproduction of the peasantry

The land question and agrarian policy options in the past and present (cont.)

- Land and the state (agriculture) sector (1975-80s)
 - Frelimo's agrarian policy in post independency
 - The rejection of the distribution of land and the abolition of the system of traditional chiefs;
 - Large state farms and the colectivization of the countryside
- The land question and the transition to a market economy (from mid-1980s)
 - The paradigmatic change of Frelimo agrarian policy and the “retoric” support of the family (peasant) sector

The land question and agrarian policy options in the past and present (cont.)

- New processes of land acquisition and distribution:
 - Alienation of state farm assets and land distribution to commercial private companies and farmers, including former public servants
 - Privatization and the penetration of multinational capital in agriculture and other extractive activities

The current debate over land in Mozambique

- The 1997 Land Law and the need to promote private investment (particularly in rural areas) and the “productive” use of land, while protecting the rights of “local communities”
- The question of “otiosity” of the land, in the context of the penetration of multinational (agrarian and mining) capital
 - “Land grabbing” and agriculture modernization narrative
 - Small vs. Large-scale (“agribusiness” and value chains)
 - Resettlements, land dispossession and conflicts over compensation

The current debate over land in Mozambique

- The question of rights of ownership and the legitimacy of belonging” (O’Laughlin, 2013)
 - Interest on land rights, how these are defined and protected in a context in which land has become a central element of the expansion of global capitalism
 - the state ownership of the land and the question of the identity of the state as a central element?
 - The question of the transmission of land rights between private owners through market transactions

Some concluding remarks

- The complexity of the land question requires new analytical elements to better understand it and it is important to consider that, as in the past, there are questions of structural transformation that should be faced for its resolution
- The necessity of going back and understanding some of the questions of the past is useful in order to form a more informed analytical framework and a more rigorous debate over the land question and its resolution.
- The focus on the question of “rights of ownership and the legitimacy of belonging” is very important but we need to situate the land question within a more general analytical framework of the historical processes of accumulation and class formation and their implications for social production and reproduction



Thank you!