

Workshop

Structural Transformation of the Countryside

24th and 25th October 2019
Hotel Aquino, Berlin

The workshop aims at examining changes of social structures that shape rural life and livelihoods and the subjectivities of rural people. By social structures, we mean those structuring principles of society, which are, in general, difficult to transform in the short term by individual and collective action. In capitalist societies, these are primarily social relations of capital and labour, i.e. class relations manifested in differentiated positions in the production process and differentiated access to and ownership of resources, e.g. land, technology, seeds, and labour. Class relations, as a matter of course, intersect with manifold other social relations, such as gender, generation, race, ethnicity, etc.

The workshop will discuss the following questions:

- How are dominant social structures in the rural world shaped?
- How have they emerged over time?
- How are they perceived and felt by rural people?
- How are they politically enforced?
- How can they be transformed, and by whom? What are entry points for emancipatory political strategies?

We will discuss these questions in view of the crisis of social and ecological reproduction in the countryside created by a capitalist political economy that ignores the reproduction needs of both humans and nature. Beyond that, structural transformations in the countryside will be discussed amidst the global conjuncture of rising authoritarianism and right-wing populism, both supported and defeated by rural people.

The workshop is organized in four thematic panels:

1. Political Economy of Rural Change
2. Rural Politics in Times of Crisis
3. Rural Policies and Structural Transformation
4. Movements, Subjects and Strategies

Thursday, October 24th 2019

13.30 – 13.45	Welcome and Introduction Kristina Dietz & Bettina Engels (Freie Universität Berlin)
13.45 – 15.45	Panel 1: Political Economy of Rural Change The aim of this panel is to discuss how social relations of production and reproduction are shaped by political-economic forces that penetrate the countryside. Various sectors will be taken into account, such as global food production and agriculture, resource extraction, and energy production. In particular, we want to address the following questions: ➤ How do the commodification of land and labour, the extraction, privatization, and valorisation of resources, the digitalization, mechanization and financialization of rural production shape social relations (e.g. labour, class, gender and society-nature relations)? ➤ How are the effects of these processes felt by rural people? ➤ How are rural lives being transformed with regard to social reproduction? ➤ Who is benefitting, who is losing? Ray Bush (University of Leeds): The Political Economy of a New Food Regime Harriet Friedmann (University of Toronto): Governing Land and Landscapes: Inherited Lock-ins and Emergent Possibilities Cristiano Lanzano (The Nordic Africa Institute Uppsala): Ownership, labour and socio-technical change in the artisanal gold mines of West Africa. Case studies from Guinea Conakry and Burkina Faso
15.45 – 16.15	Coffee & Tea
16.15 – 18.15	Panel 2: Rural politics in times of crises This panel will focus on rural politics in times of multiple crises: The crisis of subsistence in many parts of the global countryside; the financial and economic crisis of global capitalism that has pushed on commodification and enclosure of resources; and the rise of right-wing populism and authoritarian rule both supported and defeated by rural people. Main questions will be: ➤ What are the interconnections between these crises and rural politics? ➤ What are the effects of these crises on rural class struggle? ➤ To what extent do rural people become revolutionary or reactionary in times of crises? Loka Ashwood (Auburn University): When the Protector Fails: Democratic Deliberation in the Regulatory State Rita Calvario (Universidade de Coimbra): Solidarity from below, emancipatory rural politics and food sovereignty struggles in the European countryside

Beatriz Cid Aguayo (Universidad de Concepción):
Building commons and regenerative community economies: learning from rural economic experiences

Facundo Martín (Universidad Nacional de Cuyo):
From on-terrain resistance to occupy for food justice. Recent trends in Argentinean rural politics

18.15

Closing of Day 1

Friday, October 25th 2019

9.15 – 9.30	Welcome to Day 2
9.30 – 11.30	Panel 3: Political Economy of Rural Change Structural transformations in the countryside are not a self-reinforcing or path-dependent process triggered by economic forces. Economic needs require political enforcement. Therefore, rural policies and institutions are crucial. The panel will address the following questions: ➤ What are the relations between rural policies and structural change? ➤ How have rural policies changed against the background of the multiple crises tendencies? ➤ Who are the actors influencing rural policies? ➤ Under what conditions do rural policies foster or hinder structural changes towards emancipation? Gordon Crawford (Coventry University): Appropriation, politics and power: Mining policy and rural transformation in northeast Ghana Elisa Greco (Université Catholique de Lille): Farm workers in the land grab: evidence from Uganda and Tanzania Jens Lerche (SOAS University of London): Post-rurality social relations, policies and structural transformation: policies and strategies for, and against, classes of labour in India and beyond Grasian Mkodzongi (Africa-Land & Natural Resources Research Institute): Agrarian transformation and struggles over access to natural resources in Zimbabwe: The case of artisanal and small-scale gold mining in central Zimbabwe
11.30 – 12.00	Coffee, Tea and Snacks

12.00 – 14.00	Panel 4: Movements, Subjects and Strategies Rural structural transformation might be directed towards different visions of the society and political economy. This panel deals with those actors and their strategies striving for more democratic and egalitarian social relations in the countryside. We wish to discuss the following questions: ➤ How can dominant social structures in the countryside be transformed, and by whom? ➤ What are entry points for emancipatory political strategies? Nicholas Copeland (Virginia Tech): Water and politics of articulation in Guatemala Kristina Dietz & Bettina Engels (Freie Universität Berlin): Creating alternatives to capitalism in the countryside Giuliano Martiniello (American University of Beirut): Agrarian Contestations at the Sugarcane Frontier in Eastern Africa Karine Peschard (Graduate Institute Geneva): The political economy of intellectual property: legal challenges to biotech seed patents in Brazil and India
14.00 – 14.30	Concluding remarks Cristóbal Kay (International Institute of Social Studies ISS, Erasmus University Rotterdam)
14.30	Lunch and Farewell