



Vortrag im Rahmen des Afrikakolloquiums

20. Mai 2015

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Dispossession, Capitalist Development, and the Case for Land Repossession in South Africa

Africa, a continent rich in land and natural resources but poor in population and strong governments, is today held out as the final frontier for the last great land grab of the global capitalist era. South Africa stands apart from this expectation for good reason: after over 400 years of white rule, the process of “primitive accumulation” or “accumulation by dispossession” has come close to being completed in the countryside. Over a hundred years ago the white settler government of South Africa passed the infamous Land Act, reserving all but 13% of the country’s land for whites only. A century of industrialization and urbanization since then has progressively eliminated, in almost all accounts, the possibility of peasant or small holder agriculture. The collapse of nationwide land movements and the abject failure of land reform under ANC rule offer further confirmation that capitalist development, in this richest of African countries, has left little if any prospect for land reform. If capitalist development inexorably leads to dispossession, South Africa would seem to confirm the end of the “agrarian question” as many have contended.

This essay, following lines of research and debate emanating from South Africa and Zimbabwe, argues that these conclusions are mistaken. Rethinking both the history of capitalist development and current land struggles undermines the linear conceptions that currently dominate studies of land dispossession/land grabs and the possibilities of capitalist development and land struggles in the current period. At the same time debates over alternative approaches (e.g. “the new agrarian question” and “repeasantization”) are recast, calling for closer attention to Africa’s relationships with the North and Asia on the one hand, and racial and class differentiation within land reform and land struggles themselves. Seen from this perspective, the future is marked not by neoliberal dispossession and proletarianization as is commonly charted, but post-liberal struggles for land and labor repossession.

**Ort: Institut für Asien- und Afrikawissenschaften,
Invalidenstr. 118, Raum 410**

Zeit: 18.00 Uhr s.t.

Alle Interessierten sind herzlich eingeladen!