

Abstract

Since the 2000s, driven by multiple crises such as the financial, energy and climate crises, a global increase in land investment, or *land grabbing*, can be observed. These large-scale investments in land are often linked to an industrial transformation of agriculture: so-called agro-industrial transformations. Agro-industrial transformations are characterized by an increasing concentration of production by a few companies, the increased use of modern technologies and cultivation methods, and a deeper integration into global markets.

The literature on *land grabbing* and agro-industrial transformations has so far focused on forms of land appropriation and struggles of land users against expropriation. Little research has been done on the impact of agro-industrial transformations in the context of *land grabbing* on labor, class relations, and struggles of agricultural workers. In my work I therefore ask: How does the industrial transformation of agriculture affect class relations and class struggles of agricultural workers?

The objective of my research is to develop empirically-based knowledge about the relationship between agro-industrial transformations and class relations and class struggles of agricultural workers. Empirically, I analyze the question by means of a qualitative case study on the transformation of the sugarcane sector in the Brazilian state of São Paulo in the period from 2002 to 2016. For the analysis, I develop a theoretical framework consisting of the concept of class analysis according to Erik Olin Wright, the labor process theory and the power resources approach.

Based on my empirical analysis, I show that agro-industrial transformations create few winners and many losers among agricultural workers. Furthermore, power shifts in favor of capitalists, changing the power resources of workers and trade unions. As a result, forms of class struggle that workers and their unions use to advance their interests are changing. Through my research,

I am advancing the literature on *land grabbing* and agro-industrial transformations to include insights on labor and the agency of agricultural workers and unions in conflicts. Additionally, I am further developing concepts for analyzing class, class relations, and class struggles in the wake of agro-industrial transformations.