



AFRICA IN MOVIMENTO / AFRICA ON THE MOVE

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TITLE: CONTRACT FARMING AND THE LABOUR RESERVE IN CENTRAL MOZAMBIQUE

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ABSTRACT: T

This paper traces historically the trajectory of a colonial labour reserve that today hosts one of Mozambique's largest contract farming schemes. While in the colonial period, men in this part of Mozambique engaged in periodic long-distance migration to the centres of colonial accumulation where they were employed in mines and plantations, today capital – in the form of agribusiness firms- comes to the old labour reserve and appropriates surplus-value in production contracts with the same labour force, that now produces on their own land. The paper interrogates the extent to which merchant capital deploys contract farming -which manages to mobilize labour without presupposing land dispossession- as a way to appropriate value in old labour reserves. By exploring the historical transformation of agrarian classes of labour and the changing face of capital in the era of globalized agriculture, this case illustrates the complicated agrarian class structures that emerged at the end of the migrant-labour system and in aftermath of liberalization. The paper reflects on the challenges of organizing a labour force in a context in which the workplace is fragmented and class interests are complicated: part of the labour force combines the class positions of labour and capital; another segment is composed of semi-proletarian labour migrants and for the most part, there was no separation of producers from the means of production.

AUTHOR'S ACADEMIC PROFILE:

Helena Pérez-Niño a PhD candidate in the political economy of development. Her dissertation looks at long term processes of agrarian change and the post-conflict transformation of systems of production in the Mozambique-Malawi borderland. Since 2010 she is the Editorial Assistant of the *Journal of Agrarian Change*.