

The Agrofuels Project in Ukraine

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Agrofuels are considered to contribute to energy security, local development and to mitigate climate change, in other words to solve the multiple crisis. As a consequence, their production and consumption have evoked controversial discussions, which question the sustainable character of agrofuels. Worldwide, the agrofuels project is part of the agroindustry. In Ukraine, it gains of importance since the mid-2000s. According to McMichael the agrofuels project can be described as a state-capital nexus. In order to understand this tie as well as the project's possible unfolding I examine social forces in Ukraine. By drawing on a neo-Poulantzian understanding of the state I address state-economy relations on different scales taking society-nature relations into account.

Thus, I show that the oligarchs understood as an increasingly financialised inner bourgeoisie play a crucial role in shaping the agricultural and energy economic sector and policies since the 1990ies. They get increasingly engaged in agribusiness and therefore also foster the hidden privatisation of farmland as well as amongst other things the production of agrofuels feedstock (rapeseed and maize) for export. On the other hand, their attempts to enhance the production of agrofuels in Ukraine failed so far due to the fossil energy-driven conflicts among the oligarchs. Although several laws and programmes got adopted, there is no important production of agrofuels taking place in the country at the moment. Instead, other forms of "renewable energies", especially solar and wind, find more support in form of centralised large-scale projects though they represent at the same time a marginal part of the country's energy mix. The paper concludes that the field of renewable energy is highly contested in Ukraine and difficult to develop on a community level. Simultaneously, by supporting the export of cash crops Ukraine's role as a resource exporting country is fostered.