

## Neoliberalism, Rural Workers & the Food Crisis

### Situating Mexico Within the Food Crisis

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This paper will examine Mexico's food system within the context of what is currently being termed the global food crisis. Much mainstream focus has placed the blame for the food crisis on increased consumption in both China and India, and investment in biofuel production. This focus draws attention to shortages, and a need for increased production. Accordingly, both governments and international organizations are proposing to increase credit availability that make a variety of input intensive technologies – including genetically modified seeds - available to small producers. Intensive agriculture, however, poses problems both in terms of high costs and ecological sustainability.

Instead, this paper focuses on the implications of monopolistic control of the food industry by large agribusiness. To do this I draw heavily from the work of Harriet Friedmann and Philip McMichael. Their insights are set against historical quantitative data within the Mexican context. By viewing Mexico within the larger global political economy of food I challenge views that 'saving the world from starvation' must necessarily follow the path of intensive, genetically modified production. The end of the paper draws from Mexican organizations that seek alternative, ecologically sustainable food production that is rooted in localities and culture.

### Reversing Neoliberalism at the Grassroots: The Case of the Guatemalan Campesino Movement

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The recent election of left-leaning leaders across Latin America has led many analysts to identify challenges to neoliberal orthodoxy and even to speak of a "post-neoliberal era." Largely missing from the debate, however, has been a discussion of the potential held by non-state actors for reversing the impact of neoliberalism and constructing alternative systems of economic and political governance. In this presentation, I will argue that despite the persistence of the neoliberal model within the Guatemalan political system, that country's diverse campesino movement is well on its way to creating alternative models in the rural setting.

The presentation will consist of two sections. First, the context will be outlined, identifying the main stages of the neoliberal incursion into rural Guatemala and pointing to land concentration and increased state repression as the its two main consequences. Secondly, I will point to two categories of alternatives generated by rural social movements. In one, proposals for the reform of agricultural policy delivered to the Guatemalan government by large-scale campesino organizations are being simultaneously implemented at the community level. A second form of

alternatives consists of break-away enclaves of communities that have intentionally created non-capitalist systems of production and trade in order to bypass the neoliberal condition.

By identifying these two sets of alternatives, I hope to show that the Guatemalan campesino movement is engaged in more than resistance to particular policies; instead, the foundations are being laid for community-level agricultural production that would offer an alternative to the detrimental development model associated with neoliberalism.

Beyond the model. Policy and social construction of efficiency

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This work represents a summary of my research fieldwork at DICONSA, within the Programa de Apoyo Alimentario (Alimentary Aid Program), A governmental social policy program which seeks to reduce alimentary poverty in Mexico either in rural or in urban areas. On reference this program helps to understand the contradictions between a dominant policy model, based on a rational logic, and operational and administrative choices made within this alimentary policy. With this paper I offer a critical view of the dominant model by highlighting its inflexibility to adapt to the contextual diversity hidden behind a supposedly objectivity of effectiveness and efficiency indicators (which are part of the model). These indicators have a more ideological bias behind them than the reality. In order to understand the Programa de Apoyo Alimentario (PAL by its acronym in Spanish) I created a concept (Practical Narrative) that gives us enough support to understand some of the administrative and practical choices that the member of the PAL made on daily activities by the bureaucracy structure in charge of administrative direction.

Migration as a Development Strategy for the Mexican State: Mexican Seasonal Agricultural Workers under a Period of Neoliberal Governmentality

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Foucault's analytics of governmentality is a valuable tool for assessing how states of the Global South utilize outward migration of nationals as a development strategy, exuding their power to maintain control over the national population from afar. By analyzing neoliberalism as governmentality, it is made evident that the state grasps the diffusion of neoliberal truths, policies, practices as a socially accepted avenue towards economic development. Labour-sending countries have developed a variety of technologies (techniques, theories, and strategies) to ensure that national subjects elicit certain skills and attitude, creating the ideal marketable migrant worker for receiving countries. States now look beyond their national borders when cultivating strategies to bolster their country's economic development.

The Mexican government is a strong example of how labour-sending states stimulate the outward migration of national subjects, disciplining them through the use of neoliberal technologies of power and self in order to achieve results that are argued to be beneficial for the individual, the collective, and the state. A case study on the temporary migration of Mexican unskilled workers through the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program (SAWP) illustrates how the state is able to produce ideal migrant workers who are made more marketable abroad through the application of technologies of servitude. By employing outward migration as a strategy for economic development that state is able to utilize globalizing forces and neoliberal truths and practices to their benefit. Under the current mode of neoliberal governmentality, the Mexican state has implemented certain techniques of power and domination to construct self-regulated migrant workers who are more marketable abroad. Acknowledged as a strategy of development, the Mexican state is finding ways to utilize the same neoliberal truth and knowledge that creates an environment of marginalization to advance their nation state, but more importantly allows them to govern from abroad.