

Neoliberalism, Left-wing Governments, and Food Sovereignty: Exploring the Contradictions

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Left-wing parties or politicians supported by rural or indigenous movements have been elected to government in Venezuela (1998), Brazil (2003) Bolivia (2006), Ecuador (2006), Nicaragua (2006), and El Salvador (2009). Most of these governing parties have promised substantial reforms in agrarian policies during their race to power, but they have not significantly altered the model of rural development inherited from the process of neoliberal globalisation once in power. At the source of this apparent paradox lies a contradiction: while emerging from social movements, concepts like food sovereignty and *Buen Vivir* require and depend on an interventionist state. However, the developmental state was dismantled by neoliberalism and decentralization. Even where the state has begun to regain some of its capacities, the class configurations that sustain these governments have not lead toward fulfilling these objectives and social movements have not been able to substantially influence the state. This paradox will be examined through the debate on new agrarian question and we will sketch out a theoretical framework that will draw on (a) Marx's distinction between formal and real subsumption of land and labour to capital; (b) Ellen Wood's distinction between market-orientation and market-dependence; and c) Marx's understanding of ground-rent and capitalist accumulation.