

The Department of Geography presents:

Efficient or Dependent? Maize Diversity and the Political Economy of Agricultural Restructuring in Guatemala



The neoliberal restructuring of agriculture is often predicated on the promise of a more efficient food system; other objectives such as access to food, the environmental sustainability of production practices, the nutritional composition of diets, and the rights of food producers are largely ignored. In this paper I document how the liberalization of trade and agricultural policies in Guatemala has undermined the latter set of objectives, thereby compromising domestic food sovereignty and global food security. In particular, I demonstrate how neoliberal policies have undermined maize agriculture and contributed to the loss of crop genetic resources in the Guatemalan ‘megacentre’ of agricultural biodiversity. In its place, small-scale farmers have been encouraged to conform to the country’s purported comparative advantage in non-traditional export crops. The results have been a growing dependence upon imported grain and agrochemicals, environmental degradation, and decreased food security.



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Ryan Isakson received his Ph.D. in 2007 from the University of Massachusetts. He is an Assistant Professor of International Development Studies and Geography at UTSC. His research interests lie at the intersection of rural livelihood strategies, poverty alleviation, and the sustainable management of environmental assets. Isakson recently received the 2011 Krishna Bharadwaj /Eric Wolf Prize for an Outstanding Article by a Young Scholar.

Friday, February 10th, 2012 @ 3 PM
Social Science Centre, Room 2333



Serving Complimentary Fair Trade Coffee, refreshments and light snacks.

The Department of Geography gratefully acknowledges funding received from the Faculty of Social Science Student Donation in support of this series.

Undergraduate Students Welcome!

For more information or notice of upcoming presentations, please contact Dr. Jeff Hopkins (jhopkins@uwo.ca)

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