

**The Progressive Redistribution of Land in Latin America: Should we lose
our faith in Law?
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The present paper surveys decades of successive legal and constitutional reforms dealing with land distribution in selected Latin American countries. Despite considerable variations on the level of underlying policy justifications, the depth of the proposed instruments, and their resulting outcomes, progressives seem to share a particular sensibility about legal reforms by identifying the change in statutory/constitutional texts as an end in itself. More interestingly, and despite the meager results, progressive reformers seem to insist on keeping faith in law to transform the distribution of wealth and power in society.

I would like to critically engage this progressive reformist sensibility. I am interested in understanding what is left out of the picture when we imagine that the text of the law or the constitution will be able to transform society. I want to take law seriously, and by that I mean trying to understand and internally critique the ways in which law (understood in a complex way that includes the role of the judiciary and the importance of the executive branch) has worked in a way to systematically block progressive transformations in the region.

The paper provides an example of the way in which the idea of law could be unpacked and made more complex in order to determine its gaps and biases. By looking at land reform, I hope to determine the ways in which economic development ideas, the diversity property rights definitions, the role of ministries and agrarian institutes and the adjudicating power of the judges have determined the content and transformative power of the law, way beyond its text.