

The politics of self-help:

The Rockefeller Foundation, philanthropy and the 'long' Green Revolution

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ABSTRACT

While scholars of contemporary philanthropy have observed a concerted interest in the promotion of 'self-help,' little has been said about the political history of this investment and its significance in determining both domestic and international development priorities. We locate this modern conceptualisation of self-help in early twentieth-century philanthropic practice that sought to 'gift' to individuals and communities the precious habit of self-reliance and social autonomy. The Rockefeller Foundation promoted rural development projects that deliberately sought to 'emancipate' the tradition-bound peasant, transforming him or her into a productive, enterprising subject. We begin by documenting their early agricultural extension work, which attempted to spark agrarian change in the US South through the inculcation of modern habits and aspirations among farmers and their families. These agrarian schemes illustrate the newfound faith that 'rural up-lift' could only be sustained if farming communities were trained to 'help themselves' by investing physically and psychologically in the process of modernisation. We then locate subsequent attempts to incentivise and accelerate international agricultural development within the broader geopolitical imperatives of the Green Revolution and the Cold War. While US technical assistance undoubtedly sought to prevent political upheaval in the Third World, we argue that Rockefeller-led modernisation projects, based on insights gleaned from behavioural economics, championed a model of human capital – and the idea of 'revolution within' – in order to contain the threat of 'revolution without'. Approaching agricultural development through this problematisation of the farmer reveals the 'long history' of the Green Revolution – unfolding from the domestic to the international and from the late nineteenth century to the present – as well as the continuing role of philanthropy in forging a new global order.

KEYWORDS

Agricultural Development; Governmentality; Modernisation; Philanthropy; Political Economy; Rockefeller Foundation.

ABBREVIATED TITLE

The politics of self-help

[I]t might be said that the first commandment of the entrepreneur's ethics is 'help thyself' and that in this sense it is an ethic of 'self-help.' It will rightly be said that this ethic is not new; that it forms part of the spirit of capitalism from the start.

- Dardot & Laval, 2013, 264

This after all is the basic question. Not how is society organized, but what stimulates change? Not who visits whom but what makes communication evocative? Not how is stability maintained, but how can constructive instability be provoked? Not what is the norm, but how can the deviant be more effective? How can aspirations and self-confidence be heightened? How can the creativity of persons be unleashed? What can make society sing and ring with zest and power?

- Mosher, 1976, 348

FIND THE MAN, RIGHT THE WORLD

On June 5 1958, venture capitalist and philanthropist, Laurance Spelman Rockefeller (1910-2004) arrived at The Buckley School, New York, where he had been invited to deliver a commencement address. Rockefeller, a scion of the influential industrial family and trustee of numerous subsidiary philanthropies of the family-led Rockefeller Foundation (see Fosdick, 1952; Harr & Johnson, 1988; Harr & Johnson, 1991), was keen for his young audience to understand that the next step in their careers would be challenging and potentially life-defining. As young adults the students assembled in the room had now to decide what sort of person they wanted to become, what core values they stood for, and how they would personally contribute to building a better future. With his audience's attention secured Rockefeller reinforced his point by recounting the story of a 'harassed father' attempting to read his newspaper despite the distracting antics of his son.

In desperation to get a few moments of peace and quiet, the father grabbed a map of the world lying near at hand and with a pair of scissors cut it up into a number of odd shaped pieces. Turning to the boy he said, "Here, see how long it takes you to put this together." In an incredibly short time the youngster was back with the map properly pieced together. The father was amazed and none too pleased. He said, "How could you have possibly done it so fast?" The boy replied, "Dad,

I found that there was a picture of a man on the back side of the map which made it easy to put together. You see when the man was right, the world was right.”
(Rockefeller, 1958, 2)

To a room full of precocious young scholars this allegory must have made a striking impression. It certainly epitomised a newfound faith at the Rockefeller Foundation that before philanthropy could accomplish its bold objective of ‘reforming the world’ it would first have to convince people that the patterns of change it championed were both necessary and desirable (Sealander, 1997; Tyrrell, 2010; Zunz, 2012). In short, to improve the world one had first to mould the man. This conviction derived in part from ideas articulated by the industrialist and pioneer philanthropist Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919). In an article titled ‘Wealth,’ first published in the *North American Review* in 1889, Carnegie argued for a new way of thinking about the ‘proper administration’ of capital. Beginning with the assumption that the ‘laws of competition’ were natural and overwhelmingly beneficial to society, Carnegie nevertheless claimed that capitalist societies had to undertake some redistribution of wealth if they are to avoid enormous, polarising inequality and the likelihood of a socialist revolution. For Carnegie (1900, 23) the difficulty lay in the fact that ‘most of the forms in vogue to-day for benefiting mankind only tend to spread among the poor a spirit of dependence upon alms, when what is essential for progress is that *they should be inspired to depend upon their own exertions*’. Faced with such problems ‘the best means of benefiting the community,’ Carnegie (1900, 18) concluded, ‘is to place within its reach the ladders upon which the aspiring can rise’. As Carnegie saw it, the objective of philanthropy was to thoroughly restructure free-market capitalism, not in order to destroy it, but rather to save it from itself (see Dardot & Laval, 2013, 37). For capitalism to survive, it must embrace the strategic practice of gift giving.

Carnegie’s enormously popular essay stated two principles that have guided philanthropic practice ever since. The first is the conviction that charity is not the answer to poverty; indeed it is *the* problem. This principle is neither original nor specific to philanthropic practice (Bornstein 2009). In fact, the idea may be traced back to classical liberal thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) and Thomas Robert Malthus (1766-1834) who believed that the primary purpose of poor relief was to rehabilitate the poor, returning them to society minus the ‘vices’ that caused their indigence in the first place (see Nally, 2011). The second conviction follows from this pathologization of poverty; namely, to achieve progressive and lasting change, personal as well as political transformation is required. New laws, powers and rationalities of rule in themselves will not suffice. To truly tackle poverty it is necessary to rouse the poor and entice them to better standards of living.

Both principles were to become cardinal features of American philanthropic practice. ‘The best philanthropy,’ commented Standard Oil magnate John D. Rockefeller Sr. (1839-1937), ‘is constantly in search of the finalities – a search for cause, an attempt to cure evils at their source’ (cited in Rockefeller Foundation, 1968, n.p.). This quest for ‘the finalities’ went hand in hand with a hardened belief that ‘lasting gains come not from help but from self-help,’ as Rockefeller Foundation Vice-President Will M. Myers remarked (Harrar, 1967, vii). The recipients of philanthropic largesse had to be actively enrolled in the process of securing their own salvation. Whereas charity addressed only the symptoms of social problems – and therefore tended to promote dependency – philanthropy would tackle *root causes* and inspire *social autonomy*. In short, philanthropy’s greatest ‘gift’ was to provide a means of lifting communities out of squalor, whilst at the same time instilling in them feelings of ‘usefulness’ and habits of self-reliance (traits that Carnegie [1900, ix] termed ‘the germ of true manhood’).

Philanthropists such as Carnegie and Rockefeller also shared an enduring faith in progress and a belief that human nature is malleable and thus people can be worked on and nurtured to greater accomplishments. No doubt this ‘modernization of the idea of helping,’ to borrow a phrase from philosopher Marianne Gronemeyer (2010, 57), drew from, and was validated by, historical patterns of thought (Lambert & Lester, 2004). However, drawing on research on the emerging geographies of philanthropy (Hay & Muller, 2014; see also McGoey, 2011), we suggest that it is just as important to recognise how the impulse to give was, and indeed is, shaped by the vagaries of contemporary politics. We noted above, for instance, that Carnegie’s desire to delve beyond charity was driven by his fear that massive concentrated wealth, if administered unwisely, might inspire dangerous and destabilising class tensions. Significantly, the Rockefeller Foundation’s philanthropy was also motivated by fears of population growth, dwindling resources, peasant insurgency and communism (see Kay, 1993; Cueto, 2007; Cullather, 2014). To control and contain these emergent threats – that is, to prevent them from spiralling into large-scale existential crises – it was necessary to manage the pace and direction of national and global social change. At this point we argue that philanthropic strategies begin to dovetail with wider security imperatives – often to the point that it becomes difficult to tease apart geopolitical objectives from philanthropic values (Parmar, 2012; Birn, 2006; Cullather, 2010). Drawing inspiration from Gronemeyer (2010) once more, one might say that the modernization of ‘helping’ involved converting a mode of assistance (philanthropy) into an instrument of securitisation (see also Fassin, 2012).

It is not, of course, novel to point to the ‘hidden,’ strategic dimension of giving. Jonathan Benthall notes, for example, that ‘[g]iving is a form of exchange. The types of reciprocity that reimburse the charitable donor are not necessarily material, but may consist in

prestige, or of the blessings for the recipient, or of spiritual merit' (2010, xiv). At the beginning of the twentieth century, Georg Simmel (1965 [1908], 122) put the matter baldly when he argued that the ministration of aid, far from being the solution to poverty, was part of its perpetuation: 'The goal of assistance,' he wrote, 'is precisely to mitigate certain extreme manifestations of social differentiation, so that the social structure may continue to be based on this differentiation.' Our aim in this paper is not to recapitulate Carnegie's earlier point, or indeed subsequent theorisation of that argument (Žižek, 2009; Morvaridi, 2012), but to develop a clearer picture of how 'help' – or, more precisely, 'self-help' – enters into the sphere of strategic calculation. To this end, we take seriously the tactics deployed by agents of the Rockefeller Foundation in pioneering domestic and international agricultural reform during the twentieth century. Intersecting with, and indeed adding to, technical and institutional accounts of the Green Revolution (Pearse, 1990; Yapa, 1993; Jarosz, 2009), this paper argues that the pursuit of agricultural modernisation generated novel strategies of 'life adjustment' whose objective was to align rural values with market relations. By reaching out to the farmer and moulding 'his' behaviour (we will have more to say about the gendering of those efforts momentarily), Rockefeller agents sought to manage and direct change on the farm. We explore, in other words, how the modification of farmer conduct becomes a proxy for reforming wider agrarian practices (we fully acknowledge that such powers of intervention also target *non-humans*, but this practice is beyond the purview of the present paper). In our view, the deployment of philanthropic strategies to 'end hunger' and accelerate agrarian change invokes, and makes use of, forms of power that act on the physical and psychological components that shape human subject formation. By imparting to farmers the desire to behave as enterprising and prudential subjects – forward thinking, task-oriented, utility maximising, risk-taking, and so on – this mode of power incites desirable behaviour, and, just as crucially, the means for its perpetuation. As one experienced Rockefeller employee put it: 'The aim of those who help should be to make their help unnecessary' (Calkins, 1951, 10).

Drawing on theorists of governmental rule (Foucault, 2010; Miller & Rose, 2008; Rose, 1999), we note the importance of the theory of 'human capital' to this mode of 'self-regulation.' Philosopher Michel Feher (2009) argues that the concept of 'human capital' emerges in the 1960s through the writings of economists such as Theodore W. Schultz (1902-1998) and Gary S. Becker (1930-2014), but later broadens and becomes embroiled in neoliberal modes of governance that exhort self-realisation and reinforce norms of social autonomy (see Schultz, 1959; 1972; Becker, 1993). For Feher (2009, 34), neoliberal governmentality – perfectly captured by former US President William Jefferson Clinton's nostrum of 'helping people to help themselves' – differs substantially from liberal rule in so

far as it presupposes a *speculative* rather than a *possessive* relationship with the self. Whereas ‘labor power is the property of the free laborer,’ Feher (2009, 34) writes, ‘neoliberal subjects do not exactly own their human capital; they invest in it’ (see also Read, 2009). As insightful as Feher’s analysis is, we must depart from his equating of ‘human capital’ – and its investments in ‘self-help’ – exclusively with neoliberalism. Indeed Clinton’s rhetorical question: how ‘to help people help themselves,’ which Feher makes much of, was obviously central to the much earlier thought of Andrew Carnegie, and as we shall see, it was also a cornerstone of strategic thinking at the Rockefeller Foundation. In other words, it is clear to us that the ideology of ‘self-help’ – the notion that one ought to be active in one’s own development and be a ‘doctor to oneself’ – historically predates neoliberalism (indeed in Michel Foucault’s [1997] influential genealogy, ‘technologies of the self’ are a conspicuous feature of ancient Greek and Roman thought). However, what interests us is less the ‘origins’ of this idea than its recrudescence in the twentieth century, particularly as it is taken up in the development initiatives of big philanthropy. The uptake of self-help as a strategic mode of investment also explains why modern philanthropy placed so much faith in the redemptive power of capitalist markets (leading some critics to decry the spread of ‘philanthrocapitalism’ [McGoey, 2011]). According to the classical liberal framing, the market is defined as a *self-regulating* system – an ‘invisible hand’ that *automatically* adjusts both supply and demand. Logically enough the idea of a natural, self-adjusting market proved attractive to reformers hoping to catalyse ‘self-sustaining’ change without resorting to draconian measures. In other words, markets hold the promise of governance without government: a way of achieving independence and self-sovereignty in daily social life. It is hardly surprising, then, that the modern philanthropic impulse to raise poor peasants out of poverty was based on the principle that sociocultural differences, while an obstacle to development, were not a ‘natural limit’ to enlightened self-progress. With thought and care the disinterested peasant *could be* made into an industrious and thriving farm worker. This, in fact, was the philanthropist’s mission – to realise the potential of ‘human capital.’ Or to say this differently: the longstanding goal of putting the peasant in the market was supplemented by the new, more radical aim of putting the market in the peasant.

HOME TRUTHS: S. A. KNAPP AND THE POLITICS OF RURAL UPLIFT

Conventional wisdom suggests that the Rockefeller-sponsored Green Revolution marked the commencement of international programmes of agrarian modernisation (Perkins, 1990; Cullather, 2010). However, efforts to boost rural livelihoods actually began *domestically* and much earlier in the twentieth century through the activities of a Rockefeller subsidiary philanthropy, the General Education Board (GEB). We thus follow author and activist Raj

Patel (2013) in arguing for a greater appreciation of a ‘long’ Green Revolution, although in contradistinction to Patel, we extend the conventional chronology of the Green Revolution *backwards* as well as forwards in time. Accepting this chronology, the U.S. South becomes a strategic site and testing ground for the development of modernisation theory, international political economy and global statecraft as they applied to agriculture (Ring, 2012).

In 1903, John D. Rockefeller Sr. founded the GEB to finance improved public education and to promote economic development that would lift poor American farmers, especially those located in Southern states, out of poverty (Fosdick, 1962; see also Mitchell & Lowe, 1990; Malczewski, 2013). Early GEB work on health education convinced the Board leaders that they needed to bring nutrition and agrarian practices into the field of social reform. Frederick T. Gates (1853-1929), Rockefeller’s key philanthropic advisor, asked staff whether there was a practical and effective way to promote modern methods of scientific farming. Wallace Buttrick (1853-1926), another agent of Rockefeller philanthropy and later Secretary of the GEB, was tasked with finding an answer to Gates’ question (Fosdick, 1962, 40). Buttrick undertook extensive tours of the US, but he was unable to find a model that met with Gates’ criteria. Close to giving up, Buttrick met with David Houston (1866-1940), then president of the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas, who during their meeting remarked, ‘Buttrick, you came at the right time. We have two universities in Texas. One is at Austin and the other is Dr. Seaman Knapp. He is here now’ (cited in Fosdick, 1962, 41).

Seaman Asahel Knapp (1833-1911) had by that point spent over 20 years working as a farmer, preacher and educator (Cline, 1970). He had made a name for himself as the pioneer of a ‘teaching-by-doing’ model of agricultural improvement; a blueprint that would form the cornerstone of what was later known as ‘farm demonstration’ work (Waterhouse, 2013). In 1898, he began collaborating with the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) to tackle the problem of rural stagnation in the US South and the specific threat posed by the boll weevil to the cotton harvest (Giesen, 2011). The federal government was providing the funds for Knapp’s farm demonstrations under the provision that his work would be confined to areas previously infested. Based on Buttrick’s initial meeting with Knapp, the GEB took a more ambitious view, deciding that the latter’s improved methods could be honed, scaled-up and propagated more broadly. Thus Rockefeller associates did not devise the tactic of ‘education by farm demonstration’. Typical of many philanthropic initiatives, the ‘solution’ already existed but it was Rockefeller’s uncommon vision, funding, energy and support via the GEB that enabled the transmission and expansion of demonstration activities

Indeed, Knapp appealed to the GEB precisely because he promised something different. For a start, he made clear his disagreement with conventional attitudes toward rural workers. ‘A great majority of those who have sought to improve rural life,’ he wrote, ‘have in the main unconsciously assumed that the reason rural conditions are so generally primitive in the south, is because of ignorance; a lack of civic pride; no ambition; [farmers] cannot be reached; are entrenched [sic] in prejudice etc. There was never a greater fallacy – offer a farmer a genuine thing and prove it and no class of people is more responsive ... There is general agreement that the rural conditions should be improved. The farmer believes it as strongly as the reformer’ (Knapp, 1908, 3).

Knapp’s vision of farming hung on two key ideas. First, to effect lasting change one had to *train, not teach*. He believed that farmers had failed to adopt the best scientific practices primarily because scientists lacked the means to translate technical knowledge into idioms the farmer could readily understand and mimic. ‘The vast array of [agricultural] knowledge,’ Knapp wrote to Buttrick, ‘must be reduced to a few simple principles, easily understood and of universal application.’ Knapp’s famous blueprint for farm improvement – what he tellingly termed agriculture’s ‘Ten Commandments’ – was an attempt to render complex knowledge (regarding soil quality, fertilisation, irrigation, plant spacing, crop rotation, seed variety and quality, animal husbandry, and the benefits of machine power) into simplified, instructional forms that could be relayed to farmers. ‘[One needs] to get down to where the people can understand,’ he instructed Buttrick, ‘[to] touch bottom and lift’ (cited in Evans, 1925, 3).

Secondly, it follows from this that to reform *farm habits* necessitated a synergistic engagement with *farm habitats*. ‘The place to write this [agricultural] knowledge,’ Knapp declared, ‘is on the soil. When written there it will be read by the farmer and understood by him.’ It was not enough to make scientific improvements legible for farmers; the solutions had to be taken directly to the farm: ‘It must find the man and not compel the man to find it’ (Knapp, 1908, 15). To accomplish this objective Knapp vigorously promoted rural ‘extension’ work (employing county agents, home demonstration workers as well as boys’ and girls’ club participants) to show farm workers that even small changes in farming methods could yield startling results. Knapp was adamant that agents be, where possible, ‘farm people,’ familiar with local conditions, and a believer in ‘education by demonstration’. ‘It is of no use to send a carpenter to tell a tailor how to make a coat,’ he solemnly declared, ‘even if he is pretty well read on coats. The tailor won’t follow’ (Knapp, 1906, 7737). To convert the farm from a place bound by traditional opinions and methods into a laboratory of progressive, experimental practices, instructors would have to familiarise themselves with

local mores, site-specific agricultural problems, as well as communal and familial influences. In a statement that recalls Laurance Rockefeller's address to the students at The Buckley School, Knapp declared that international social adjustments must begin *domestically* in the attitudes and minds of ordinary people:

It is realized that the great force which readjusts the world originates in the home. Home conditions will ultimately mold the man's life. The home eventually controls the viewpoint of man; and you do all that you are a mind to do in the schools, but unless you reach in and get hold of that home and change its conditions you are nullifying the uplift of the school. We are reaching for the home. The matter of paramount importance in the world is the readjustment of the home. It is the greatest problem with which we have to deal, because it is the most delicate and most difficult of all problems (cited in Frysinger, 1924, 1).

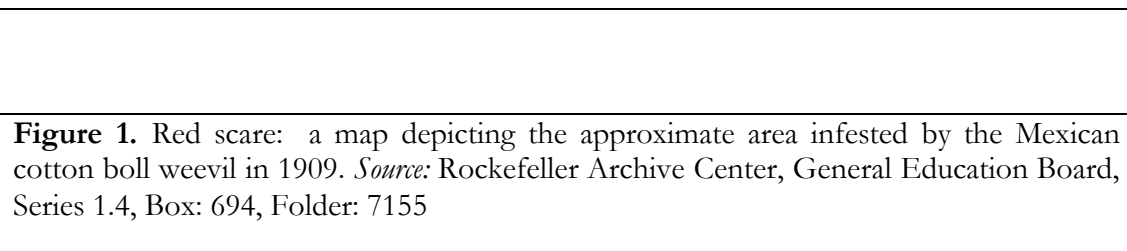
The crucial recognition here is that farming is a *social product*. In order to successfully implement agricultural reform, modernisers would need to engage with 'the most delicate and most difficult of all problems': the socialisation of families. Earlier USDA farm improvement efforts had identified the home, and the domestic work of farm wives in particular, as a key crucible for interventions targeting the progressive reform of the 'social' (Goldstein, 2012). Moving in these circles Seaman Knapp quickly became a fierce and most able exponent of this brand of liberal reform. In a set of recommendations to the GEB, Knapp crystallised the issues very clearly for the Board:

There remains still the home itself upon the farm, and the women and girls of the home, as one of the problems of rural up lift. This problem, in my view, can not be approached directly. No matter how earnest or enthusiastic the reformer, he who goes directly to the country home and tells the farmer and his wife that their entire home system is wrong and that they ought to change, will meet with failure and even well merited opposition. Under such circumstances it will be an affront and almost an insult to an honest and industrious people. But what can not be accomplished by direct means can usually be accomplished indirectly (Knapp, 1910, 1).

For many in the US South, the farm was above all a home. While cultivators earned a livelihood from the farm they also raised a family and built a social community around the hearth. To reform the farm was thus to reform the homestead – the very identities of rural toilers, *on* as well as *off* the field. Working in this sort of environment required sociological

nous and cultural sensitivity. While instructors would need to go ‘direct’ to the farm, they would also have to implement reforms ‘indirectly’ – often through subtle interventions in the governance and reproduction of the domestic realm – in order not to risk alienation or cultural offense. Above all, the demonstration worker had to be ever mindful that the central concern of farm improvement efforts was the modification of human behaviour.

THE SOCIALISATION OF FAMILIES



In collaboration with the USDA, Knapp’s earlier instruction work had focused on helping farmers in effected states meet the specific threat posed by the boll weevil to the cotton harvest in the US South (Fosdick, 1962, 44; see also Giesen, 2011) (Fig. 1). With an injection of financial support from the GEB – which invested 925,750 USD from 1906 to 1914 – Knapp’s ‘farm demonstration’ method was trialled in Southern states unaffected by the destructive beetle (Waterhouse, 2013, 36). The scale of operations in the field increased concomitantly, with the number of men implementing Knapp’s methods increasing from 49 in 1907 to 700 in 1912 (Scott, 1970, 226). In addition to farm demonstration work, Knapp’s agents also founded a network of agricultural societies in these trial regions. Boys’ clubs focused on applying new crop growing strategies and young males dominated numbers in the corn growing, livestock, and poultry clubs that soon dotted the countryside. At the girls’ clubs, members were encouraged to participate in bread-making, canning, the cultivation of vegetable gardens, orchard growing and ‘home economics’ (including dress-making, budget control and farm accounts, kitchen arrangement, work planning, home furnishing, cleaning, decorating and the like). The social clubs for boys were popularly known as ‘farm maker’ clubs and were deemed critical to effecting change in local growing practices, whereas those for girls were commonly called ‘home maker’ clubs and were considered central platforms for refashioning domestic culture, communicating new principles of ‘good taste’ and economic efficiency to the farm wives and mothers of the future (Evans, 1925, 20; see also Hoffschwelle, 2001). Overall these ‘junior extension programmes’ were deemed an outstanding success. Agents found young members receptive to new ideas, more disposed to follow instruction and ‘on the whole, better demonstrators than their parents’ (Evans, 1925,

18). Moreover, the child's ability to affect their parents' decision-making was keenly observed and applauded. The mentoring of young citizens was soon thought essential to changing the habits of their elders.

Knapp's extension workers were always eager to try novel methods to communicate their modernising message to domestic home makers and to ensure that the home, as well as the field, was a site of on-going improvement. In Kansas, an electronic food calendar was used to show the value of well-planned meals (Frysinger, 1924, 31). In Oklahoma, a targeted 'drink more milk' campaign encouraged better adult and child nutrition. In New Jersey, Arizona, and Minnesota, the promotion of 'home economics' included a 'phase of the project affecting the home maker herself, in helping her to develop better ways of standing, lifting, walking, sitting, and other activities essential to her daily work' (Frysinger, 1924, 35) (Fig. 2). In Alabama, the use of 'movable schools' proved particularly successful and was soon scaled-up and implemented in other states (Mercier, 1921, 18). By pre-arrangement, a local farmhouse and its surroundings would be repaired and remodelled using local labour. Working under the instruction of Knapp's agents, terraces, poultry sheds and sanitary toilets were constructed and buildings cleaned and painted. 'On the inside,' one report notes, 'the women scrub, disinfect, renovate, and rearrange, so that when the school is over the house is like new. The object is first to impress on the community the value of these improvements, and second to teach farmers themselves how to do the work' (Evans, 1925, 21). In other states, farm specific campaigns, such as 'clean up week,' were promoted and 'score-cards' were piloted as a stimulant to 'self-study,' continuous self-appraisal thought here as the quickest route to more efficient worker behaviour. In time the cultural power of motion pictures was harnessed to communicate more widely the ideas and values promoted by Knapp and his army of extension workers (see Mercier, 1921, 17; Frysinger, 1924, 22) (Fig. 3).

<p>Figure 2. Disciplining the body: reformers advocated tailoring working surfaces to an optimal height for each homemaker to increase domestic labour efficiency and reduce injury. <i>Source:</i> Frysinger, 1924, 35.</p>

By the time the GEB ended its formal ties with the USDA in 1914, it had concluded that its extension work had been a phenomenal success. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914 formalised farm extension work and at the same time a Home Demonstration Service was added to the USDA's portfolio (Scott, 1970, 288-313). Reports celebrated the resultant increase in rural productivity (and the subsequent boost to other sectors of the US economy)

and the filtering of a Protestant work ethic throughout the South, but especially among African-Americans. The incorporation of African-American men, as demonstration workers but especially as instructors (and in a context where they made up more than 50 percent of the rural workforce in several southern states), greatly worried white elites within segregated communities. Nonetheless Knapp was adamant that their inclusion had an important civilising effect through the promotion of modern agricultural methods, education and hygiene (see Crosby, 1986; Anderson & Moss, 1999, 85-108; Davis 2006). Where white extension work sought to birth a modern consumer class in the South, extension work among African-American women sought to intervene in this ‘problem’ population through reform of the home, encouraging modern hygiene and sanitation standards in order to combat fears of rampant ‘negro’ reproduction and the transmission of disease (Domosh, forthcoming a). Others backed Knapp’s employment of African-Americans on the grounds that rural stagnation, if left unaddressed, could lead to the outward migration of cheap labour and ultimately culminate in urban revolt. ‘The northward exodus of negro farmers,’ wrote J. A. Evans (1925, 7) of the USDA’s Office of Cooperative Extension Work, ‘embraced all classes – farm owners, tenants, and share croppers ... That the negro agents’ work was partly successful in checking the rush of negro farmers to the cities seems beyond question’. Extension work thus incorporated explicitly racialised concerns and became a key tool by which ‘backward’ regions and races could be readjusted, uplifted and integrated into the modern nation (Ring, 2012). Most importantly, however, the work of Knapp posthumously convinced staff at the Rockefeller Foundation, endowed and chartered in 1913, that agricultural development must be a programme of social adjustment as much as a technical mission. To re-organise rural life, Foundation leaders recognised that they needed to convince farmers to forsake their traditional agrarian world – and the sense of familiarity and security it offered – and embrace a new rural modernity. Moreover, it was felt that this mode of ‘life adjustment’ could be accomplished in a way that respected the primary aim of philanthropy to instil habits of ‘self-help’ and ‘self-reliance.’

Figure 3. The progress of a campaign: a map depicting those counties of Tennessee in which demonstration work was conducted in 1932 (checked in blue) and those in which introductory work was commenced (dotted in red). *Source:* Rockefeller Archive Center, General Education Board, Series 1.4, Box: 694, Folder: 7154.

CULTIVATING GLOBAL CITIZENS

In 1968, 300 international delegates were invited to New York for a Rockefeller Foundation symposium titled, 'Strategy for the Conquest of Hunger' (Harrar, 1968, vi). The mood at the conference was palpably buoyant. In Mexico, where the Rockefeller-sponsored Green Revolution took root under the careful tutelage of Norman Borlaug (1914-2009), corn and wheat yields had doubled and potato yields had tripled. Seemingly overnight, Mexico had been transformed from a net importer to a net exporter of wheat (see Fitzgerald, 1986; Cotter, 2000). The new varieties of wheat and corn were later exported to Pakistan, Peru, Columbia, East and West Africa, Chile, Ecuador, Peru, Venezuela and the Philippines. In addition, the Foundation established formal programmes of technical assistance in Colombia (1950), Chile (1955), and India (1956) and a network of international agricultural research centres, including the International Rice Research Institute (1960) and International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (1966) established in the Philippines and Mexico respectively. The 'Strategy for the Conquest of Hunger' thus marked a new, triumphant phase in an on-going agrarian strategy. The Trustees had decided that the Foundation ought to turn its attention to international matters, 'to do what it can to work toward the provision of an adequate food supply for all' (Rockefeller Foundation, 1968, 3). *'There have now been enough successes,'* one review noted, *'to demonstrate clearly that most nations can, if they will, dramatically and rapidly increase agricultural output. Throughout the world, traditional or subsistence agriculture can and must be replaced with a highly productive, market-oriented system'* (Rockefeller Foundation, 1968, 5, emphasis in original).

Reflecting on these achievements, Roberto Osoyo, Director General of the Mexican Ministry of Agriculture, addressed the delegates at the conference, taking care to remind them that the path from 'food deficits to food sufficiency' was built on the extension and demonstration work pioneered by the Rockefeller Foundation. This work, he said, created an all-important conduit between agricultural researchers and farm producers. Through such channels new seeds, machinery, and fertilisers were brought to rural Mexico, but more importantly, direct contact with villages made possible the training of rural youth (via 485 youth clubs that advanced skills in livestock breeding, vegetable gardening, trade crafts, as well as the 'development of civic, sporting and social activities') and the education of women in the art of managing their households and improving their 'families' surroundings.' 'The change in the attitude of the individual brought about by an increase in his general fund of knowledge,' Osoyo (1968, 12) concluded, 'definitely favors the possibility of his accepting new ideas, new practices, and new procedures that break existing barriers created by customs and ill-founded traditions that frequently act as curbs to progress.' This sanguine sentiment

was echoed throughout the two-day symposium. By pursuing agrarian strategies ‘on farms instead of on pilot projects,’ commented India’s delegate, Chidambaram Subramaniam, ‘we are compressing the time span of change’ (1968, 16). ‘As a feat of human engineering,’ he marvelled, ‘this has scarcely an equal in history’ (Subramaniam, 1968, 20).

What began as a GEB ‘template’ for domestic rural improvement was fast becoming an agreed international ‘strategy’ for channelling, directing, and eventually accelerating rural change (see Zimmerman, 2010; Domosh, forthcoming b). Whereas early modernisers – and we must include Knapp among this group – were primarily, though not exclusively, concerned with the health and prosperity of their own society, after the Second World War attention shifted to the world stage where widespread hardship and political independence were thought to be ‘dangers’ that the Soviet Union might exploit in its efforts to bring communism to the ‘Third World’ (Essex, 2009, 101; see also Rostow, 1960). As historian Michael Latham (2000, 6) makes clear, the once clear ‘boundaries between America’s domestic culture and its external role’ were rapidly dissolving (see also Farish, 2010). Indeed, the fact that Foundation officials and government ministers made a virtue of using martial metaphors to convey humanitarian concerns (the ‘conquest of hunger’, the ‘war on want’, and much later, ‘food security’) indicates the degree to which hunger and the problem of rural malaise were tied to wider counter-insurgency efforts (Sommerville, Essex & Le Billon, 2014; Essex, 2012). President Harry Truman’s famous ‘Point Four’ speech explicitly married modernisation efforts to the strategic objectives of the nascent Cold War. To contain the threat of the Soviet Union, the US needed a positive programme of reform that could deliver on Truman’s grand promise of prosperity for all ‘areas needing development’ (cited in Perkins, 1997, 144; see also Westad, 2005). Western science and technical knowledge were an intrinsic part of this development package, but for the seeds of change to flourish modernisers would first have to cultivate a global citizenry which, like the uplifted farmers of the US South, was ‘receptive’ to modern concepts, institutions and incentives. Once again, traditional farm values and lifestyles seemed to be all that stood between modernisers and their goals.

FORGING IMPROVED AGRONOMIC PRACTICES

The Rockefeller Foundation, with its strong track record in agricultural modernisation, was central to this new mission. In addition to launching formal programmes of technical assistance (e.g. Colombia in 1950, Chile in 1955, and India in 1956) and a network of international agricultural research centres (e.g. the International Rice Research Institute and

the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center, established in 1960 and 1966 respectively), the Foundation deepened its commitment to better understanding the dynamics driving global agricultural development (see Smith, 2009; Felstehausen & Diaz-Cisneros, 1985). To this end the Council on Economic and Cultural Affairs (CECA) – established in 1953 and later renamed the Agricultural Development Council (ADC) – was tasked with training rural scientists and finding solutions to the ‘economic and human problems’ associated with agricultural poverty in Asia (Mosher, 1970, 6). Although founded and primarily funded by John D. Rockefeller III (1906-1978) – and thus formally separate to the Rockefeller Foundation (of which he was chairman, 1952-1972) – we intend to show that ADC’s remit and methods were clearly synchronised with the strategic goals of the Foundation.

Like other Rockefeller-sponsored programmes of this period, the ADC’s objectives reflected Cold War logics (Stevenson & Locke, 1989). Sovereignty gaps, looming food deficits and unrestrained population growth were considered the ‘perfect storm’ for communist subversion. As Jamey Essex (2012, 194) notes, ‘[h]unger’s material presence as a manifestation of vulnerability represents both the actual existence of risk to geopolitical order and the failure to appropriately manage or control such risk, with potential repercussions across the entire world economic and political system.’ Satisfying the immediate nutritional needs of hungry peasants was one method of silencing the pedlars of revolution, but the provision of handouts was never a sustainable strategy in the long-term. Instead, and echoing the GEB’s earlier domestic and racial uplift strategies in the US South, broader structural and social reforms would be necessary to bring about the efficient administration of agricultural production and the acceleration of capitalist development. Within this context, strategies designed to orientate social exchanges *away* from subsistence living and *toward* commercial practices formed an integral part of counter-insurgency planning (see Cullather, 2006; Sackley, 2011). New seeds and high-input agriculture simultaneously offered a route out of poverty and, in the staid thinking of development experts, a step toward a more market-driven industrial society. By ‘conquering’ hunger and stabilising rural livelihoods, Western modernity would signal its lasting triumph over communism. In short, rural development became a geopolitical imperative: to stave off a ‘Red Revolution’ it was necessary to bring about a lasting ‘Green Revolution’ (see Cullather, 2010, 179).

According to Arthur Theodore Mosher (1910-1992) – known to friends as ‘Art’ – President of the ADC from 1967-1973, plans for rural modernisation were hampered less by technical limitations than by social and psychological barriers. With a background in agricultural extension work and later trained as an agricultural economist – significantly his

doctoral supervisor was the Nobel Prize winning economist, Theodore W. Schultz, whose work on the economics of agricultural development and ‘human capital’ proved a major influence (Schultz, 1964; 1968) – Mosher believed that the ADC needed to forge ‘modernization theory’ into forms that were recognisable and attractive to a ‘largely illiterate’ peasantry (Mosher, 1957, 268). Broadly understood, the objective was didactic and would begin with ADC efforts to exert greater influence over the content of training materials used by students and practitioners of rural development (White, 2013).

Under Mosher’s direction, staff at the ADC began the task of selecting case studies that illustrated ‘successful’ development, identifying key socio-technical determinants and ‘accelerators’ of rural reform, and synthesising these lessons into powerful sociological slogans for agricultural modernisation. The fruits of this work appeared in monograph form under the title *Getting Agriculture Moving: Essentials for Development and Modernization*. Authored by Mosher, the text was widely circulated, particularly in Asia, and was subsequently translated into dozens of languages (White, 2013). *Getting Agriculture Moving* was published alongside three sister volumes – *Selected Readings to Accompany Getting Agriculture Moving* (1966), *Training Manual for Group Study of Getting Agriculture Moving* (1966), and *Case Studies to Accompany Getting Agriculture Moving* (1967) – which taken together offer a critical window into ADC’s thinking on rural uplift.

As others have remarked, ADC’s programme for reform marks a high point in modernisation theory (see White, 2013). Less noted, however, is the degree to which this international programme drew on rural policies developed domestically and much earlier in the century through the activities of the GEB. Indeed both Mosher and Knapp shared the belief that for farm reform to be effective it was necessary to make theory concrete – to ‘write it on the soil’ to employ Knapp’s felicitous phrase. Whereas Knapp concluded that to change the behaviour of farmers one had to act ‘indirectly’ on their environment (the farm) to make it more amenable to greater productivity, Mosher spoke of the need to differentiate between ‘crucial’ factors that influence farmer behaviour in a ‘causative sense’ and those other ‘associational’ factors that generate change ‘indirectly or unobtrusively within a matrix we do not completely understand’ (Mosher, 1970, 10). For Mosher, there was a compelling need to create what he termed ‘propitious conditions’ that would *incentivise* Third World peasants to exert maximum effort for food production. Here Mosher had in mind not merely the infrastructure for development – subsidies for machinery and fertilizers, food marketing systems, transportation networks, and the like – but the hidden human factors that shape a farmers’ ‘internal impulse’ and ‘choice-making’ (Mosher, 1957, 248) (Fig. 4). Although the language they adopted differed (noticeably Mosher’s writings bear the imprint of his training

in behavioural economics), both men conceived of ‘farming’ as a nested social enterprise, and ‘development’ as the means of acting on, and exercising control over, those messy spatio-social relations (Fig. 5). As Mosher put it: ‘Agricultural development is a social product. It is not the result of farmers alone. It is the result of the activities of farmers and farm families, lawmakers, highway engineers, merchants, manufacturers, research workers, teachers, veterinarians, editors, and every citizen who participates in electing public officials and influencing the laws of his country’ (1966, 12).

Figure 4. Diagram illustrating how agricultural development programmes interact with and change various aspects of rural life. *Source:* Mosher, 1976, 16.

Figure 5. Diagram depicting the different ‘geographical’ components of modern agriculture. *Source:* Mosher, 1976, 78.

How to ‘find the man’ in such a complex world, Laurance Rockefeller might well have wondered? For Mosher and his team the task was partly technical (for example, distinguishing between factors deemed ‘essential’ for development and those that can ‘accelerate’ agrarian change) and partly socio-psychological (for instance, mediating the forces that shape peasant attitudes and experiences). ‘The farmer is more than a cultivator and a manager,’ declared Mosher. ‘He is a *person* and a member of two groups of persons that are important to him. He is a member of a *family* and he is a member of a *local community* or neighborhood. Much of what the farmer is as a person he owes to his membership in these two social groups. Much of what he can do as an individual is determined by them’ (Mosher, 1966, 28). Thus for development experts to be successful, they needed to get to grips with the realities of rural communities where religious leaders, village elders, and elected officials wielded enormous power, where farmers’ wives often controlled the domestic realm and farm finance, where sons could be voices for progressive change (threatening ‘to leave the farm for the city unless more modern methods are adopted’), and the natural ‘affection of husbands and fathers for their families’ could shape the overall farm economy. In a lecture to aspiring

extension workers, Mosher [1978, 83] named such influential persons ‘conditioners’. For Mosher, getting to grips with the activities of ‘conditioners’ was important less because it promoted a better understanding of the rural sociology and more because these conditioners were the true ‘vectors for changing the decision-making of the father/farmer’ (1966, 34; see also Cleaver, 1972, 179; White, 2013, 16).

Note that Mosher is here making an important distinction between *agriculture* and *agricultural development*. While plant breeders, pathologists, soil scientists, entomologists, engineers and technicians had done much to modify the technical infrastructure of the farm, these innovations hardly touched the personal and social life of poor farmers. In other words, technology addressed agriculture, *not* agricultural development. Thus Mosher, like Knapp before him, placed great store in the role of extension workers whose ‘training methods’ ought to include ‘conversations during farm and home visits, method demonstrations, result demonstrations, group meetings, farm tours, exhibits and fairs’ (Mosher, 1966, 131). ‘[I]t is a mistake,’ warned Mosher, ‘to limit the concept of the extension workers to that of being an errand boy peddling news about research’ (1966, 133). To spur development, demonstration agents had to become an ‘encouraging companion’ to farmers, urging them to question ‘*why they do the things they do, and are they way they are,*’ and making them ‘*aware of the alternatives*’ (Mosher, 1966, 31, 133). In short, in Mosher’s view the path to successful development lay in the *conditioning of the conditioners* via grass-roots extension work.

Mosher clearly believed that a spirit of inquisitiveness and openness were essential to agricultural modernization. In a related publication that addressed ‘agricultural development,’ he even went so far as to assert that ‘the opposite of traditional [living] is “choice-making”’ (Mosher, 1957, 248). ‘Farmers must not be induced to make “a change” in farming,’ Mosher went on to argue, ‘but to shift from an attitude of tradition to one of continuous choice-making in economic and political fields as well as in the narrow realm of farming practices, realizing that all of these vitally affect agricultural production’ (1957, 248-249). For Mosher, ‘choice-making,’ ‘values’ and ‘attitude,’ ‘motivation’ and ‘aspiration’ ought to be the watchwords of everyday individual conduct. These ‘intangible’ qualities ultimately determined the pace of agricultural change and whether the initial ‘take off’ would end in lasting improvements. What good is promoting new modes of agricultural production, he reasoned, without also stimulating a spirit of risk-taking in farmers? After all, commercial agriculture would yield few results unless farmers first become familiar with the ‘types of judgment’ that a monetized environment required. ‘Thus, encouraging farmers to move from traditional agriculture to progressive agriculture requires the development of a wholly new habit of thinking, a new way of living’ (Mosher, 1957, 248). The key idea for Mosher was the

‘the educability of farmers.’ ‘Education must equip people to *understand, evaluate, choose, and take responsibility*’ (Mosher, 1957, 255-256). And within agriculture, farmers must learn make many choices: there are, for instance, important *biologic* choices (what plants to cultivate and animals to husband), *economic* choices (how to wisely allocate limited capital) and *political* choices (what forms of rule best serve improved farming. ‘In a progressive society,’ Mosher concluded, ‘social attitudes and behaviour must increasingly be governed by understanding and by choice’ (1957, 256-257). In short, the goal of agricultural development was to stimulate and orientate the farmer’s conduct and aspirations so as to make subsistence-level existence seem alien and commercial farming appear both desirable and imminently attainable. This process of transition from one mode of life to another must begin with interventions targeting the foundations of human behaviour. As Mosher (1978, 16) advised his students, ‘To teach John Latin it is not enough to know Latin; it is also necessary to know John.’

THE HUMAN FACTOR

It is worth pausing here to specify more precisely the calculus behind Mosher’s depiction of rural modernization. We suggest that there are four critical things to note. Firstly, it is important to recognise a shift in thinking about rural peasants as hopeless ‘objects of opprobrium’ (the phrase belongs to historian James Vernon [2007, 17]) to conceptualising the farmer as a kind of *unfulfilled entrepreneur*. Over and over again, Rockefeller agents depicted farmers as aspirational subjects who aspired to a better life for themselves and their families, but found themselves shackled by economic circumstances and their wider socio-political milieu. Rural modernisers thus rejected the conventional fatalistic view of peasants as primitive, idle, and mendacious, stressing instead that it was possible to rouse rural labourers and ‘upgrade’ seemingly entrenched farming practices (see Murray Li, 2007). Human life and social conditions were now imagined and treated as perfectly mouldable. ‘Twenty years to Eden!’ was the rallying cry of Rockefeller agricultural consultants (Stakman, 1955, 26). A future, better world was not only thought to be within reach; philanthropists offered a road map to realise this sunny paradise.

Secondly, it is important to recognise the emergence of ‘human capital’ as a sphere of strategic calculation. The key person here is economist and Nobel Laureate Theodore W. Schultz who argued for a more comprehensive understanding of capital that included the notion of differential or relativised human capacities. Schultz (1993, 14) argued that human capital is best understood as a set of ‘capabilities’ that are either ‘innate’ (i.e. genetic) or

socially ‘acquired.’ Since for Schultz (1962, 1) ‘the economic capabilities of man are predominantly *a produced means of production*’ (i.e. features that are largely ‘acquired’), development practitioners, and those seeking to nudge society toward greater productivity, needed to focus on strategies that help people take the utmost advantage of ‘income-increasing economic events,’ where ‘events’ are understood to entail everything from the delivery of new seeds and credit systems to participation in further schooling and technical training. Above all this meant assisting people to ‘invest in themselves’ – that is, to see themselves, and indeed their families, as an *unrealised fund of wealth*. In sum, advocates of this theoretical approach solicited people to understand themselves as ‘human capital’ yet to be valorised (Schultz, 1959, 109; cf. Feher 2009).

Undoubtedly Mosher was an important conduit between Schultz’s thinking and the strategic objectives of the Rockefeller Foundation. In addition to being academically trained under Schultz’s instruction, Mosher also worked closely with him under the auspices of the Ford Foundation’s National Planning Association of which the former was a trustee. This fact informs our third point; namely that Mosher’s ideas were quickly absorbed by the Rockefeller Foundation, and diffused internationally, not simply because they reflected fashionable thinking in behavioural economics, but because they seemed to align in a rather seamless and natural way with the philanthropic goal of ‘self-help’ practised more than half a century earlier by Seaman Knapp. In his official history of the GEB, former President of the Rockefeller Foundation, Raymond Fosdick (1883-1972), makes clear that Knapp disapproved of eleemosynary allowances and their federal equivalent, government handouts. In Knapp’s opinion, a relief scheme ‘that is not based on self-help is like sending a man to hold up a sick calf. After a while they both get tired and fall down together’ (cited in Fosdick, 1962, 42). For the farmer to truly thrive, Knapp insisted, he must generate his own solutions ‘on his own farm and with his own hands’ (cited in Fosdick, 1962, 42). Mosher also stressed the importance of ‘knowledge gained with sleeves rolled up, in the heat of everyday labor,’ and echoed his mentor Schultz in arguing that human capital, unlike many forms of physical capital, is ‘cumulative’ and therefore ‘self-generating’ (Mosher, 1957, 269, 416). Behavioural economics thus updated and extended the classical understanding of capitalist markets as ‘self-regulating.’ For them the ‘hidden hand’ that automatically adjusts market terms must embrace the ‘material hand’ of the farmer, the true source of progressive social change. In this sense, encouraging farmers to consider themselves as investments – as human capital – was analogous to training them in the continuous practice of *self-governed improvement*. This modality of rule is roughly consonant with the observations of Dardot and Laval (2013, 5) whereby ‘to govern is not to govern against liberty, or despite it; it is to govern through liberty’ (see also Rose, 1999).

Fourth and finally, it is vital to recognise how the security imperatives of the Cold War fed into and indeed amplified efforts to shape and direct individual, domestic and community behaviour. Mosher, for example, argued that rural change was the first stage in catalysing far broader social reforms:

We are likely to think and talk of agricultural development as being valuable only because it makes more farm products available for human use. In fact, it has an additional, and perhaps a more important product: it changes the people who engage in it. For agricultural development to occur, the knowledge and skill of the farmers must keep increasing and changing. As farmers adopt more and more new methods, their ideas change. They develop a new and different attitude toward agriculture, toward the natural world that surrounds them, and toward themselves. Their early successes in increasing production increase their self-confidence. Their increasing contacts and transactions with merchants and government agencies draw them into closer acquaintance with the world beyond their villages. They increasingly become *citizens*, full members of the nation (Mosher, 1966, 11-12).

Mosher's equation of nation building and international statecraft (Bashford, 2013, 196) with agricultural modernization recalls Seaman Knapp's vision for elevating 'backward' poor white and African-American farmers in the US South, encouraging them to become full participants in capitalist modernity. In both cases, the attempt to lead people out of poverty was considered to be the most effective way of negating social and racial tensions that might otherwise threaten the political order. Development, thus conceived, became a form of social prophylaxis. At the theoretical level, the aim was to anticipate social, political and economic trajectories in order to act in a forward-thinking, pre-emptive capacity – snuffing out problems before they metastasised into difficult and intractable crises. In the words of Robert D. Calkins (1951, 7), one time Director of the GEB: 'True philanthropy acts on reason to remove causes, rather than on emotion to alleviate distress. It seeks to provide cures, not palliatives – remedies, not relief. It works for enduring improvements that may be perpetuated, rather than transient gains that cannot be maintained.'

CONCLUSION

In *Creating a Progressive Rural Structure* (1969), Mosher recounts travelling across the Indo-Gangetic Plain with a friend who plainly enquired, 'Will this region ever be as

productive as Iowa?’ Pondering his interlocutor’s question, Mosher realised that he had been ‘guilty of a common error.’ ‘Too frequently,’ he went on to explain, ‘we ask ourselves only “what should we do next?” We do not look far enough down the years, visualize what would happen ultimately, then work backward to the present as well as forward from where we are now developing our plans’ (Mosher, 1969, xv). This sense of working ‘backward to the present’ was a cardinal feature of Rockefeller-sponsored modernisation. By *designing the future*, reformers believed they could vanquish hunger and poverty, birthing a new world that aligned more clearly with US strategic interests.

Conceiving the ‘design’ was one thing; implementing it was a challenge of far greater magnitude. To transform listless peasants into useful, productive machines meant rethinking the process of modernisation itself. Although the Green Revolution is frequently associated with technical breakthroughs – and even a ‘technical bias’ – arguably its singular achievement was to position human behaviour at the centre of its calculations. In this sense, its *modus operandi* may be said to be more *social* than technical engineering. Norman Borlaug drew attention to this fact in an address given in 1968:

The most conservative man in traditional agriculture is the scientist, and sometimes I am not proud to be one of them. This is most discouraging. The scientist is a privileged person, the man who should lead us out of the wilderness of static, underproductive agriculture, and yet by his apathy and failure to exercise his unique vision, he keeps us in the swamp of despair. The scientist fears change because he is in a relatively privileged position in his own society. If there is no breakthrough in yield, he will not be criticized. But if he makes a recommendation and something goes wrong, he may lose his job. In many different countries there is no faith or understanding between the farmer and the scientist. Almost without exception the farmer says, “This man is a theorist. He is not a doer, and he can’t help us.” In the past, this complaint was all too often valid, but today the situation is rapidly changing (cited in Wortman & Cummings, 1978, 337-338).

Here, the echo with Knapp’s criticism of the distant and disinterested agricultural scientist is unmistakable. However, Borlaug was more likely recycling ideas popularised by the American economist Theodore W. Schultz. Like other Schultz-inspired Rockefeller consultants, Borlaug recognised that their technical efforts to revolutionise agricultural production would only succeed if they also instilled modern mind-sets and habits in individual farmers. The long-held traditions and mores of the farmer ‘should not be

considered immovable obstacles to development,' cautioned Mosher, '[for] development is an instrument in changing them' (1966, 36). Modernisers sought to catalyse social reform on the farm by inculcating in the entire farming family a desire to adopt the modern methods and market-oriented attitudes championed by the Rockefeller Foundation. We see pioneered in the extension work of Knapp and Mosher the ultimate goal of Rockefeller-sponsored agricultural development: 'the modernization of [the peasant's] mind' (Ekbladh, 2010, 5; see also Cullather, 2010, 27).

The philanthropic imperative to 'transform the world' continues into the present. It is beyond the scope of this paper to trace the nature of contemporary agricultural development efforts and their multiple entanglements with international philanthropy. However, more modestly we can note that the politics of 'self-help' remains a key pillar of contemporary Rockefeller Foundation philanthropy, most conspicuously through its on-going partnership with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in funding the Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA) initiated in 2006. Indeed, at the World Economic Forum in 2008, Bill Gates outlined his own philanthropic vision of 'creative capitalism' manifested through organisations such as AGRA:

[An] approach where governments, businesses, and nonprofits work together to stretch the reach of market forces so that more people can make a profit, or gain recognition, doing work that eases the world's inequities ... [R]ecognition triggers a market-based reward for good behavior. In markets where profits are not possible, recognition is proxy; where profits are possible, recognition is an added incentive (Gates, 2008).

AGRA is part of a broader campaign intended to inspire a 'renewed revolution' in agricultural development, but its roots in earlier philanthropic endeavours are clear and obvious. The expressed goal is to convert risk-averse African smallholders into entrepreneurial farmers willing to invest, both materially and affectively, in capitalist speculation. Indeed the originality of philanthropy is precisely this creation of new norms and rules that call on individuals to conceive of themselves as 'masters of their own destiny.' Of course, then as well as now, the great irony is that this 'awakening' occurs exactly at the moment that farmers' futures are subject to ever deeper and more intrusive acts of psycho-social regulation.

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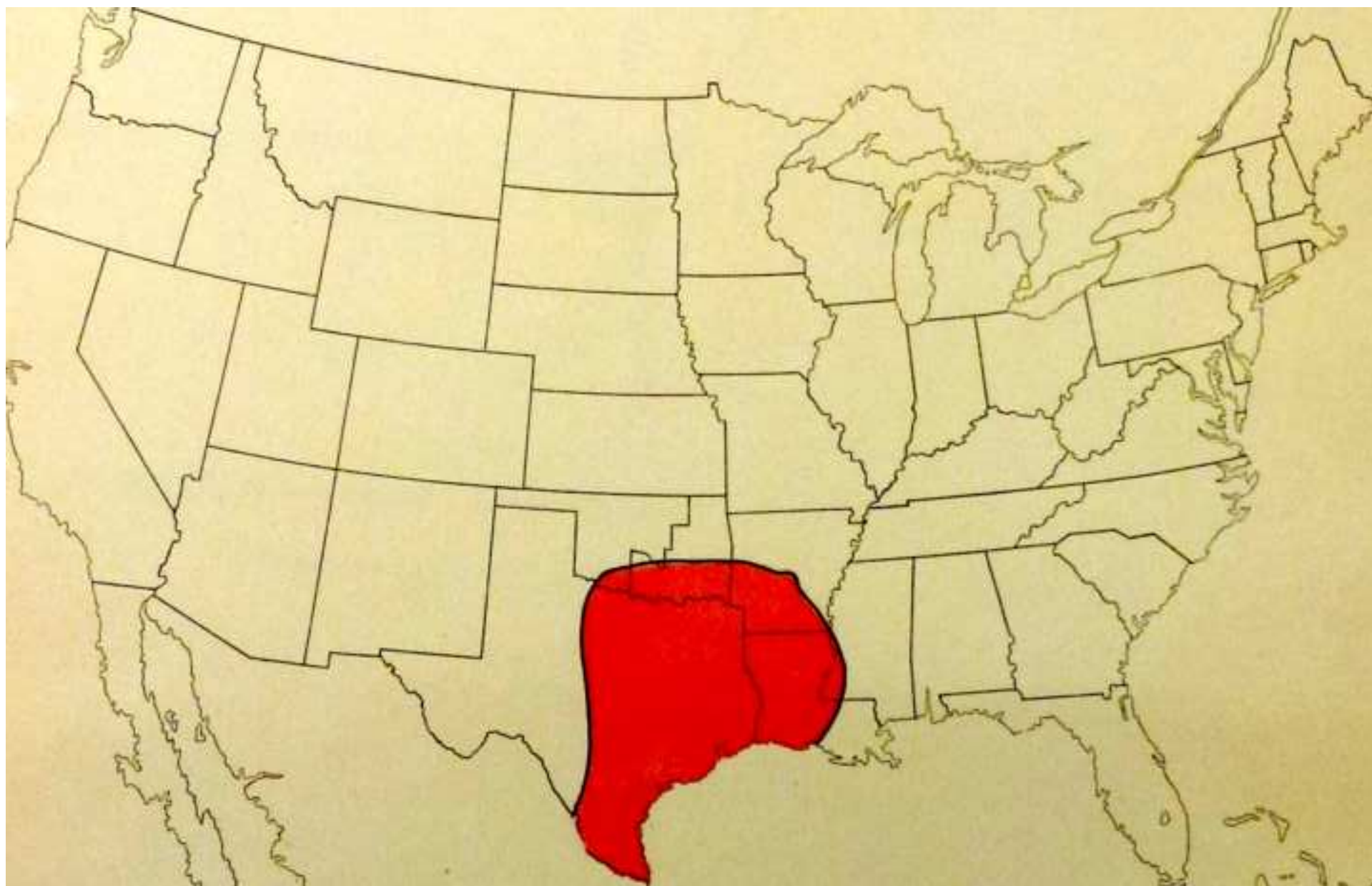
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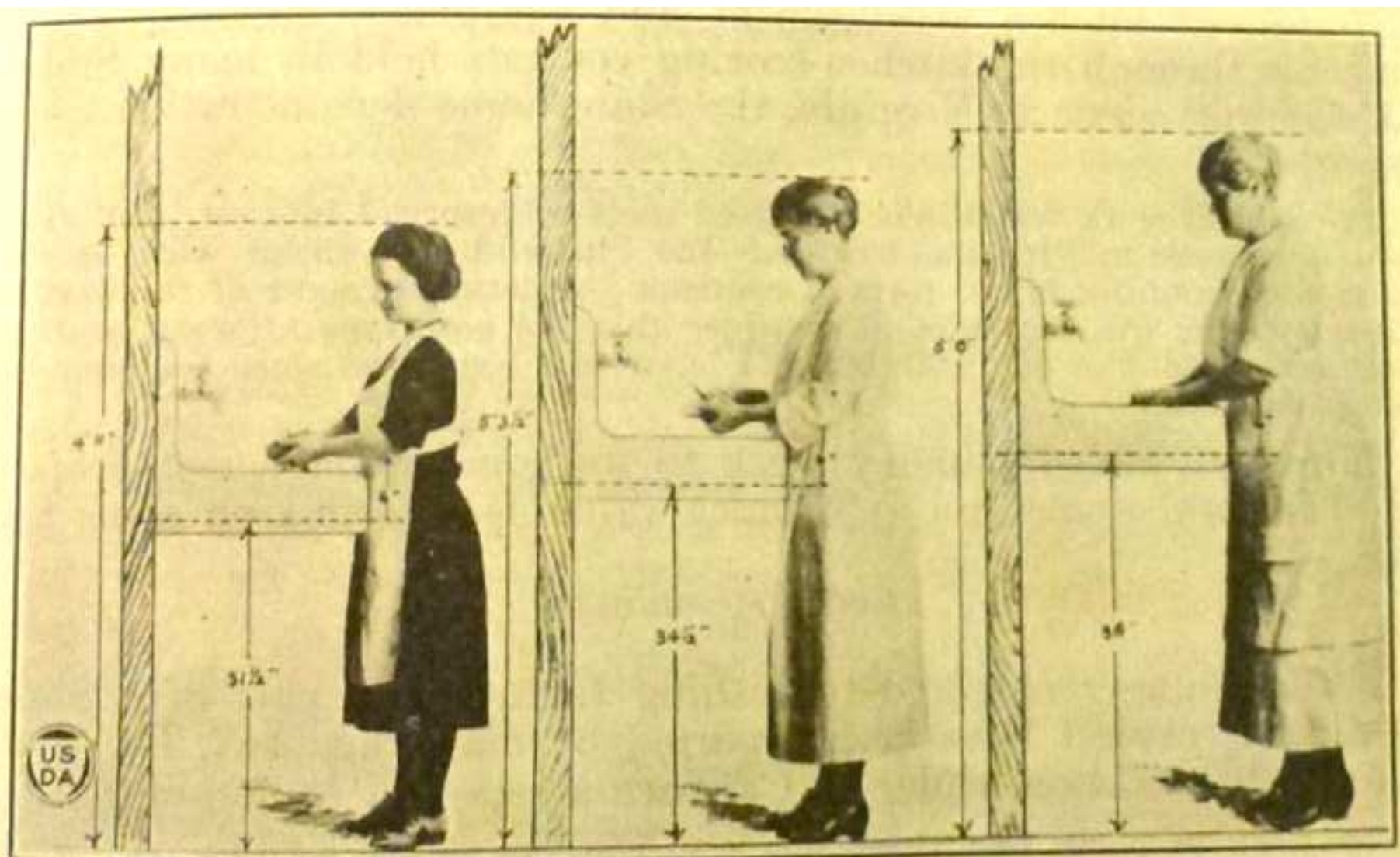
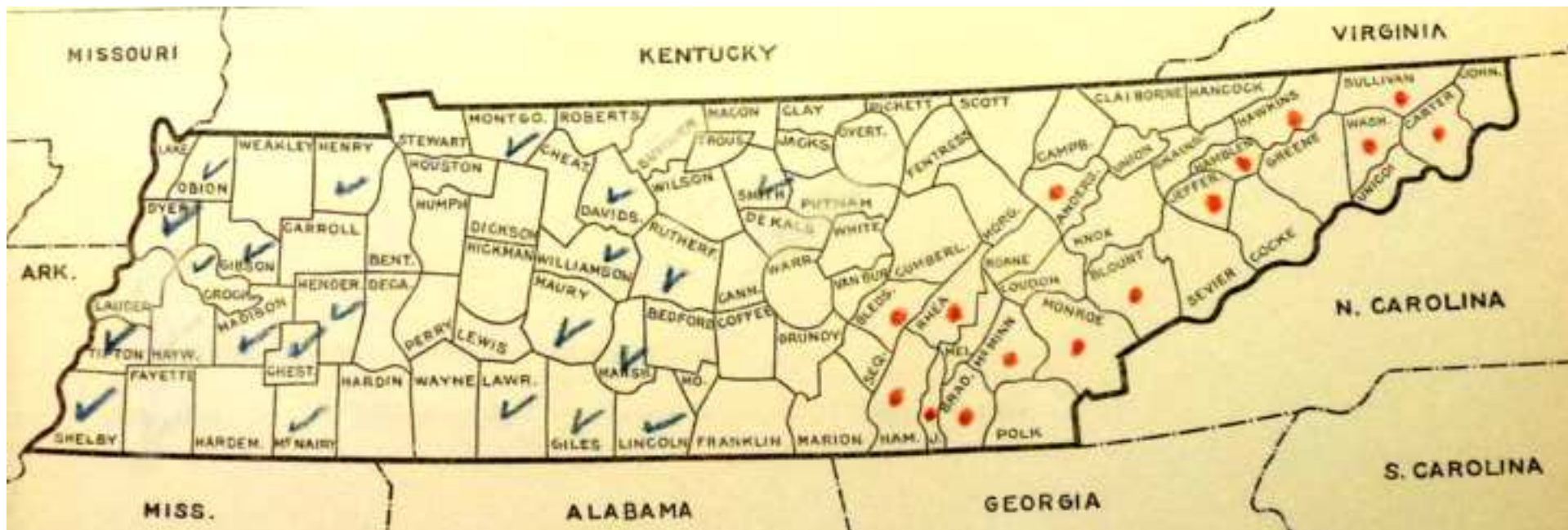


FIG. 8.—Adjusting the heights of working surfaces to meet the needs of the worker. As a help in the physical welfare of rural women, the proper height of working surfaces was widely emphasized in home-management work in 1922. During the year 44,570 women were reported as improving their practices in the management of their homes through desirable equipment, a time schedule of work, and greater economy in purchasing. (Photograph furnished by Washington State Extension Service.)

Figure

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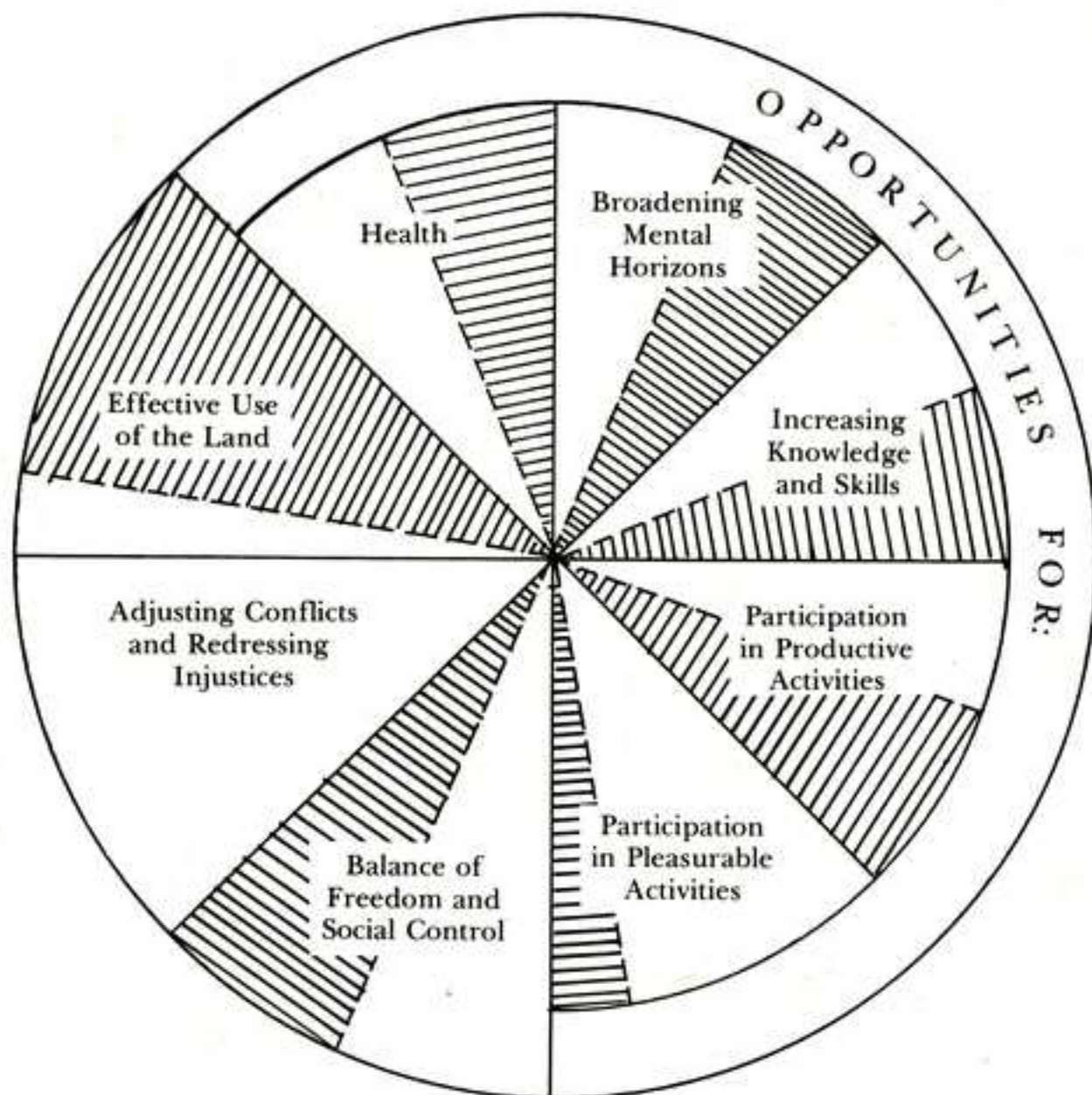
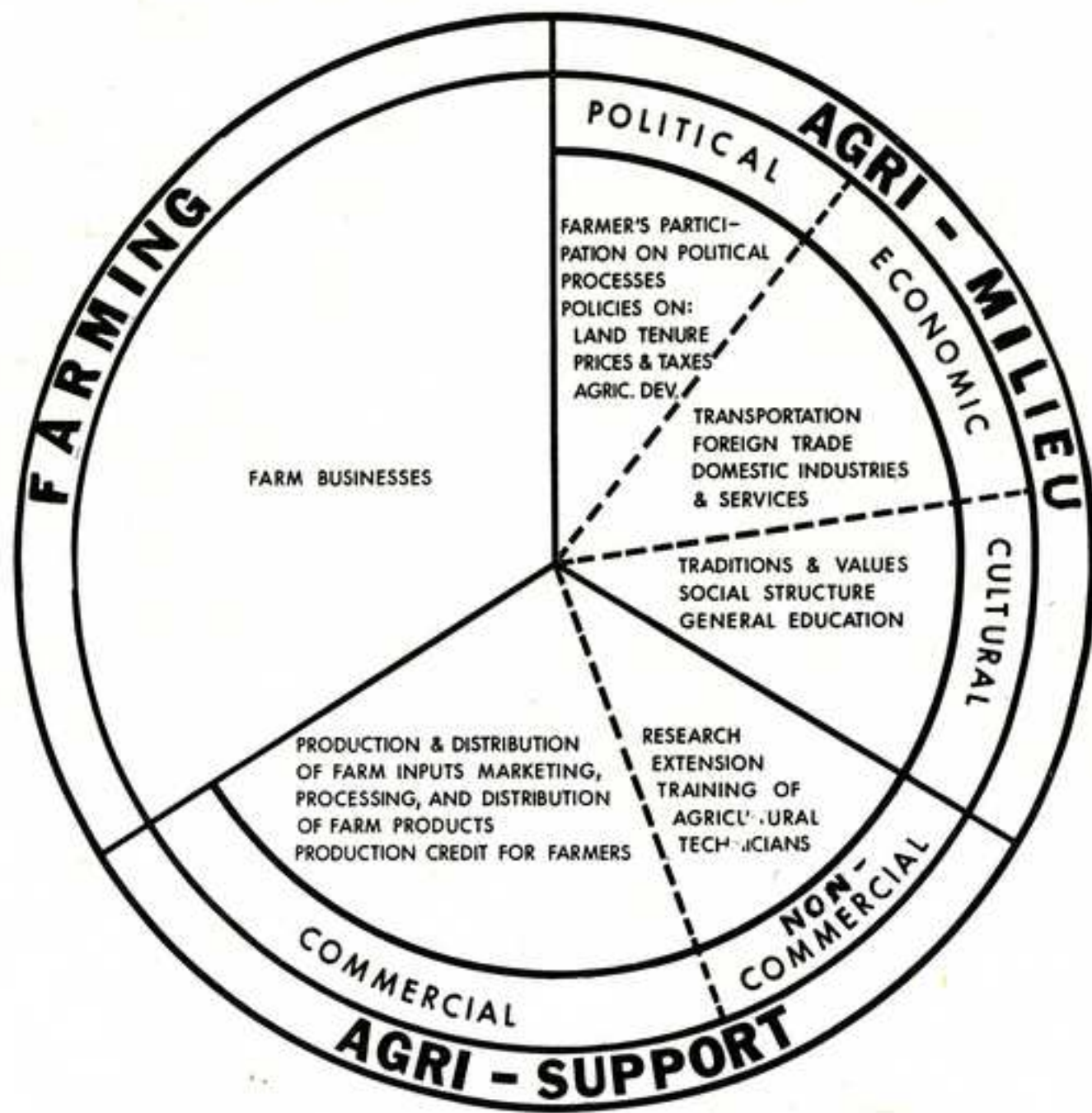


Figure 1. Impact of Agricultural Program Components on Various Aspects of Rural Development (shaded areas)

The Geographic Structure of Agriculture

To support a modern agriculture, agri-support activities, must be easily accessible to each farmer in regions having agricultural potential. To accomplish that, two units of geographic organization are crucial. One is the *farming locality*. The other is the *farming district*.



FUNCTIONAL COMPONENTS OF A MODERN AGRICULTURE

Highlights for review

- explores the origins and strategic investment in practices of ‘self-help’ by key American philanthropic foundations;
- traces the relationship between domestic rural reform in the US and global agricultural development from the Cold War forward to the present;
- shows how modernisation theory – as it applied to agriculture – was conceived as a form of social prophylaxis: a Green Revolution was designed to stave off a Red Revolution;
- discusses the ‘problematism of the farmer’ and argues that farmers were encouraged to invest, both materially and affectively, in capitalist speculation;
- concludes that the mission to modernise Third World farming involved social as well as technical engineering.