

access on urban population growth. Furthermore, I do not find evidence for the hypothesis that railroads appeared as a consequence of previous growth.

The four main chapters of this thesis show how human capital and technology shaped the economic development of Prussia during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These developments had long-term consequences and might have become the foundation for Germany's economic environment.

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Quests for Community: The United States, Community Development, and the World, 1935–1965

Since World War II, the richer nations of the world have given aid to the poorer ones as a way of encouraging development. And yet, after seventy-odd years, how effective that aid has been remains an open question. That problem, which has long interested economists, has emerged as a major topic of interest for historians as well. And two decades or so of fruitful research have yielded a powerful way of understanding international development projects. As recent historians have

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encouraged us to see it, postwar development aid has been principally an exercise in “modernization”—a top-down attempt on the part of donor nations to replace traditional societies in the global South with modern ones, with “modernity” understood as a condition marked by industrial society, a robust state ruled by scientifically minded experts, the transformation of political problems into technical ones, and the achievement of abundance. Modernization projects, however, have been notably heavy-handed, achieving mixed economic results while legitimizing—and even encouraging—cultural disruption, ecological damage, and military violence in target societies. Not surprisingly, development experts in the past two decades have largely rejected modernization as a development agenda and have retreated to a supposedly more enlightened and community-based approach that focuses on small-scale interventions and defers to local preferences and conditions.

That community-based approach, however, is not as new as it seems. My dissertation argues that, from the very beginning of international development programs after World War II, many of the largest and most influential government aid programs emanating from the United States were grassroots, localist, and anti-technocratic in their stated orientation. The aid officials presiding over such projects, often experts on agriculture or rural society, entered the field of foreign relations with a set of preoccupations that differed from those of modernization theory. As a rule, they privileged small-scale works, local knowledge, democratic participation, and communal solidarity at the level of the village. In collaboration with Third World policymakers, they designed a political project—community development—that came to hold sway throughout the global South in the 1950s. Community development programs covered hundreds of million people in dozens of nations (the U.S. posted advisers to 47 countries by 1956) and regularly commanded heavy investments from the United States, host-country governments, the United Nations, and philanthropies such as the Ford Foundation and CARE.

This episode in the history of international development is not entirely a cheery one. Community development was always intriguingly Janus-faced, capable of embodying the highest hopes of some of the most admirable figures in modern history while at the same time contributing to vicious forms of oppression. My dissertation thus explains how strange bedfellows—the Peace Corps and the CIA, Mohandas Gandhi and Ferdinand Marcos, the agrarian radicals of New Deal and leaders of the Japanese internment camps, the proponents of the War on Poverty and those of the Vietnam War—were yoked together by the conviction that development should not be about scientists and engineers building dams but about villages and neighborhoods coming together to shape their own fates.

The story of community development begins in the New Deal, not with the Keynesian economists who sought to transform the economy by channeling investment into industry, but with the rural experts concerned with the devastation that such an investment would wreak on small farming communities. In the Tennessee Valley Authority and the USDA, these experts used their positions to launch experiments in participatory planning. Such efforts received a great deal of public approval. Although we often think of the United States as pursuing centralization with great enthusiasm during the Roosevelt years, there were, in fact, many who reacted to the Depression and to the growth of fascism abroad by concluding that humans had somehow lost control of their own creations and that society must be rebuilt, as urban theorist Lewis Mumford put it, “on a human scale.” Small towns, villages, neighborhoods, and small social groups became constant points of reference from the mid-1930s through at least the 1950s—one need only think of Thornton Wilder’s

massively successful play, *Our Town* (1937), Norman Rockwell's sentimental paintings of small-town life, or the mainstream success that anthropologists such as Margaret Mead enjoyed for their studies of "primitive" cultures. My dissertation draws together this diffuse but still neglected episode in thought and culture and suggests it's important for policymaking.

The advocates of small-town life—both the theorists such as Lewis Mumford and the men working on rural problems for the New Deal—have received admiration from both intellectual historians and historians of agriculture. They are usually regarded, however, as prophets in the wilderness, celebrated perhaps for the clarity of their vision but not for their ability to effect change. The sense that such activists were ineffective, however, is merely a consequence of the fact that we have been looking for their influence in the wrong place. The small-town vision was indeed crowded out by wartime industrialization and state-building in the United States, but it held sway abroad. That is because after the United States ascended to its position of global hegemony after World War II, it began to invest heavily—and for the first time—in development aid to the global south. Having only a relatively small empire and no cadre of colonial officials or area-studies experts (those would come significantly later), the U.S. government fastened on rural experts from the New Deal programs to staff its agencies. Men who had been working on Southern agriculture joined with anthropologists who had been studying remote tribes to oversee development in the Third World. And as they joined the ranks of the civil service, they brought with them a fascination with rural cultures and traditions.

Small-town advocates from the United States were not the only ones enchanted by villages. Nationalist leaders in the decolonizing world also had reason to be skeptical about modernity's benefits, and they, too, often looked to the village as the locus of culture. It is no accident that the first community development program, designed by a U.S. aid worker (and a close colleague of Lewis Mumford's), was established in India, where it was strongly supported by and closely allied with the Gandhian movement. The Indian program grew so steadily that by the 1960s it covered, village by village, 10 percent of the world's population. Such growth was impressive on paper—and other countries quickly took note—but for Indians living in poverty it meant frustratingly little. Time and again, attempts to devolve power to the villages did little more than to bolster existing rural social hierarchies. Development projects designed by "the people" had a way of benefiting the village headman, the caste leader, and the landlord, and in the end India's massive community development experiment did conspicuously little to lift the new nation from poverty. The failure of such a large and, at the time, prominent application of Gandhian ideals in the realm of development is a tantalizingly rich story, and yet, for all that has been written about India's manifold development campaigns, there is no full historical account of it. Instead, almost all writing about development in postcolonial India stresses large-scale engineering projects and similar top-down schemes.

If the community development program in India was defined by the ideals of Mohandas Gandhi, the program in the Philippines, which was nearly as influential, was defined by those of the CIA. There, the landlord-dominated government faced a very threat of being toppled by a peasant rebellion in the early 1950s. Working with nationalist leaders, the United States imported community development from India to the Philippines, this time as a counterinsurgency campaign under the direction of the CIA legend Edward Lansdale, the Cold War hero who would later be instrumental in shaping the U.S. intervention in Vietnam. Lansdale's quick suppression of the rebellion encouraged Philippine leaders to invest heavily in community development

for their very survival and forged a relationship between community development and counterinsurgency that remains to this day. The CIA carried community development from the Philippines to Latin America and to South Vietnam, where it dovetailed with the strategic hamlet program. At the same time, the dictator Ferdinand Marcos used the community development program to consolidate his power over the country. India had shown that community development could not do much to alleviate poverty, but the Philippines showed that it was a strikingly effective tool for political control of the villages of the Third World.

Despite community development's demonstrable failure to bring prosperity, it returned to the United States in the 1960s, like a boomerang. It was in the 1960s that policymakers there realized that postwar affluence had not reached all Americans, and that the tide that had lifted so many boats had caught others in its undertow. As liberals cast about for solutions to the increasingly evident crisis of the inner cities, they called community developers working abroad back from Third World villages to U.S. ghettos. My dissertation establishes the surprising fact that the men who emerged as the commanders of the War on Poverty were often veterans of overseas community development projects, many of them through the Peace Corps. Hoping that what they had tried in rural Asia and Latin America might be translated back to the "urban villages" of the United States, as they had come to know them, they placed at the center of the War on Poverty a controversial initiative called the Community Action Program, which they openly admitted was based on overseas community development. But inner-city neighborhoods, it turned out, were not the same as Third World villages. Whereas in the rural parts of the global South community development shunted power to the landlords and local potentates, strong urban segregation in the United States meant that there were few powerful local elites around to control the program. Instead, community action became the vehicle for a sudden rebellion, strongly linked to the increasingly militant civil rights movement. (The Black Panther Party, tellingly, was founded at a community action agency.) Politicians rushed to shut the program down and put in its place more politically palatable versions of "community-building." Fire, not ice, had destroyed this iteration of community development, but the result was largely the same.

The story of community development is, in the end, the story of how admirable ideals—ideals that are still very close to our hearts—went awry. It is the story of how the United States, acting on those ideals, sought to fight poverty at home and abroad. But in doing so it had to grapple with the fact that "community," just like "scientific expertise," is a treacherous receptacle for our uncritical faith. That is an important message today because, since the 1990s, the World Bank and other leading development agencies have turned heavily toward community-based development strategies. Whether in the eyes of the Nobel-winning economist Amartya Sen or the Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus of the Grameen Bank, development is no longer seen as an attempt to make poor nations resemble rich ones. It is about poor people acting locally to take charge of their own destinies. But that ideal is not new. And it is only by grappling with its disappointing past that we can formulate a mature development policy in the present.

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