

Present at the Creation: The Role of American Foundations in the International Development Arena, 1950s and 1960s

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RESÜMEE

Dieser Artikel beschäftigt sich mit der Rolle der Rockefeller Foundation und der Ford Foundation im Prozess der Etablierung der internationalen Entwicklungspolitik in den ersten beiden Jahrzehnten nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Dazu analysiert der Beitrag die Strategien und Mechanismen, die es den beiden Stiftungen als Nichtregierungsorganisationen erlaubten, sich einflussreiche Positionen in der internationalen Politik zu sichern. Der Antikommunismus in den USA ebenso wie die außenpolitischen Vorgaben Washingtons stellten hierbei Bedingungen, zu denen sich die Stiftungen explizit verhalten mussten. Zugleich erwiesen sie sich als geschickt darin, eigene Strukturen zu nutzen und neue herzustellen, die ihre Position in einem zunehmend kompetitiven Feld wie der Entwicklungspolitik stabilisierten.

1. Introduction

In the last ten years or so, international organizations like the League of Nations, the World Bank, the United Nations Organizations and the International Labor Organization have received much attention from historians working on development aid and development politics.¹ Also, many historians have used the archives of these and other international organizations to learn more about specific development approaches and development projects.² Those studies have greatly enhanced our understanding of the

1 See, among others: A. L. S. Staples, *The Birth of Development: How the World Bank, Food and Agriculture Organization, and World Health Organization Changed the World, 1945–1965*, Kent, OH 2006; D. Maul, *Human Rights, Development and Decolonization: The International Labour Organization, 1940–70*, Basingstoke 2012; O. Stokke, *The UN and Development: From Aid to Cooperation*, Bloomington 2009. Also see: M. Frey, S. Kunkel and C. R. Unger (ed.), *International Organizations and Development, 1945–1990*, Basingstoke forthcoming 2014.

2 M. Alacevich, *The World Bank and the Politics of Productivity: The Debate on Economic Growth, Poverty, and*

professionalization and internationalization of development aid in the post-1945 era, and they have notably enriched and broadened the field of international history. Interestingly, private organizations active in the field of development aid have received much less attention – although the development field in particular was characterized by the activities of private and semi-private agencies.³ One of those groups consists of private companies, about whose role in development we still know very little.⁴ Another group consists of philanthropic foundations like the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and the Carnegie institutions. In recent years the foundations' role as international (or global) distributors of knowledge has been emphasized.⁵ Their activities in the field of development aid have not been studied very systematically, however.⁶ "Analytically constructed studies of philanthropy are in short supply. The shelf of foundation books remains overly crowded with self-congratulatory, mostly boring, insider accounts; or with shrill denunciations by outsiders – mostly ill-informed if often entertaining in a gossipy sort of way. [...] We are hungry for works that tell us where foundations actually fit into the political economy, and how and when, even if, they are consequential."⁷ Many scholars would argue that the philanthropic foundations were, in fact, very consequential. Their projects, while not as large in size and funding as government-sponsored programs, received much attention from politicians and the international media at the time, and they often inspired larger, publically funded organizations to take up similar projects. For example, the fact that family planning received so much public and political attention and became a prominent field of development activities was not the least

Living Standards in the 1950s, in: *Journal of Global History*, 6 (2011), pp. 53-74; R. Jachertz and A. Nützenadel, *Coping with Hunger? Visions of a Global Food System, 1930–1960*, in: *Journal of Global History*, 6 (2011), pp. 99-119.

- 3 C. H. Wieters, *Of Heart-Felt Charity and Billion Dollar Enterprise: The Rise of Humanitarian NGOs after World War II – A Case Study of CARE*, in: M. Frey, S. Kunkel and C. R. Unger (ed.), *International Organizations and Development* (footnote 1); K. O'Sullivan, *A Global Nervous System: The Rise and Rise of Humanitarian NGOs*, in: *ibid*.
- 4 Exceptions are G. Grandin, *Fordlandia: The Rise and Fall of Henry Ford's Forgotten Jungle City*, New York 2009; A. Acker, *From Development to Politics: The Making and Unmaking of VW's "Model Ranch" Project in the Brazilian Amazon (1973–1986)*, PhD dissertation project, European University Institute.
- 5 See: J. Krige and H. Rausch (ed.), *American Foundations and the Coproduction of World Order in the Twentieth Century*, Göttingen 2012; K. Rietzler, *Experts for Peace: Structures and Motivations of Philanthropic Internationalism in the United States and Europe*, in: D. Laqua (ed.), *Internationalism Reconfigured: Transnational Ideas and Movements between the World Wars*, London 2011, pp. 45-65; G. Gemelli (ed.), *American Foundations and Large-Scale Research: Construction and Transfer of Knowledge*, Bologna 2001; V. Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe: Shepard Stone between Philanthropy, Academy, and Diplomacy*, Princeton 2001; E. Condliffe Lagemann, *The Politics of Knowledge: The Carnegie Corporation, Philanthropy, and Public Policy*, Chicago 1989.
- 6 Among the exceptions are: L. R. Bolling with C. Smith, *Private Foreign Aid: U.S. Philanthropy for Relief and Development*, Boulder 1982; G. L. A., *Wealth Equals Wisdom? The Rockefeller and Ford Foundations in India*, in: *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Sciences*, 554 (1997), pp. 104-116; K. McCarthy, *From Government to Grassroots Reform: The Ford Foundation's Population Programs in South Asia, 1959–1981*, in: S. Hewa and P. Hove (ed.), *Philanthropy and Cultural Context: Western Philanthropy in South, East, and Southeast Asia in the 20th Century*, Lanham 1997, pp. 129-156; G. H. Hess, *Waging the Cold War in the Third World: The Foundations and the Challenges of Development*, in: L. J. Friedman and M. McGarvie (ed.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Civility in American History*, Cambridge 2003, pp. 319-339.
- 7 K. Prewitt, *Foreword*, in: D. C. Hammack and S. Heydemann (ed.), *Globalization, Philanthropy, and Civil Society: Projecting Institutional Logics Abroad*, Bloomington 2009), pp. vii-ix, at p. vii.

due to research and pilot programs initiated by the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation. Similarly, the Green Revolution in India was very much driven by the two foundations.⁸ Looking back, the foundations seem to have managed to secure a degree of political influence and institutional independence disproportionate to their size, both financially and institutionally.⁹

What to make of this observation analytically? How can we conceptualize the position of small, non-governmental actors like the philanthropic foundations in the international arena from an institutional point of view? What turns organizations into institutions? And what can the foundations tell us about the evolution and functioning of the development field from a structural perspective?

In conceptualizing the foundations, I follow Steven Heydemann and David C. Hammack who consider the international development activities of the foundations as a projection of philanthropic institutional logics abroad. “By philanthropic projection we mean the effort to spread organizational norms and practices by means of the donation of money, goods, human efforts, and ideas. [...] By institutional logics we mean organizational arrangements for putting ideas into action and for sustaining patterns of social relationships.”¹⁰ It is important to note that the specific modes of projection “are both historically and geographically contingent”, and that the projection process cannot be understood as a linear, hegemonic one: “projection comes in many forms, has many points of origin, proceeds along widely varying pathways, and provokes highly divergent reactions.”¹¹ Similarly, the agency of the actors (here the foundations) in projecting norms and practices must not be reduced to their ‘decision-making capacities’: “Agency [...] is composed of social relations and can only become effective through them. Effective agency, therefore, requires organizing capacities; it is not simply the result of possessing certain persuasive powers or forms of charisma. [...] In other words, agency (and power) depend crucially upon the emergence of a network of actors”, as Norman Long reminds us.¹²

One could thus argue that it depended on the foundations’ skills in building and shaping networks, or network relationships, whether they managed to become institutions in the sense of embodying and reproducing norms and practices. Hence the question: How did the foundations, as historical actors, establish structures of such stability and flexibility that allowed them to project their institutional logics abroad? To answer this question,

8 G.H. Hess, *Waging the Cold War in the Third World*, pp. 323-324, 331-334, 337 (footnote 6).

9 I have argued similarly elsewhere: C. R. Unger, *Toward Global Equilibrium: American Foundations and Indian Modernization, 1950s to 1970s*, in: *Journal of Global History*, 6 (2011), pp. 121-142; idem, *The United States, Decolonization and the Education of Third World Elites*, in: J. Dülffer and M. Frey (ed.), *Elites and Decolonization in the Twentieth Century*, Basingstoke 2011, pp. 241-261.

10 S. Heydemann and D. C. Hammack, *Philanthropic Projections: Sending Institutional Logics Abroad*, in: S. Heydemann and D. C. Hammack (ed.), *Globalization, Philanthropy, and Civil Society*, pp. 3-31, at p. 7 (footnote 7).

11 Ibid., p. 17, 18.

12 N. Long, *From paradigm lost to paradigm regained? The case for an actor-oriented sociology of development*, in: N. Long and A. Long (ed.), *Battlefields of Knowledge: The Interlocking of Theory and Practice in Social Research and Development*, New York 1992, pp. 16-43, at p. 23.

we need “to identify and characterize differing actor strategies and rationales, the conditions under which they arise, their viability or effectiveness for solving specific problems, and their structural outcomes.”¹³ Yet we must not forget that actors’ freedom of movement is limited by existing structures. Here the concept of structuration advanced by Anthony Giddens comes in handy. According to Giddens, “The constitution of agents and structures are not two independently given sets of phenomena, a dualism, but represent a duality. According to the notion of the duality of structure, the structural properties of social systems are both medium and outcome of the practices they recursively organize.”¹⁴ To understand the structuration process of social systems one has to analyze “the modes in which such systems, grounded in the knowledgeable activities of situated actors who draw upon rules and resources in the diversity of action contexts, are produced and reproduced in interaction”. In this sense, it is important to realize that “structure is not to be equated with constraint but is always both constraining and enabling.”¹⁵ The specific understanding of structure proposed by Giddens seems particularly well suited to studying the case of the foundations because it allows us to keep two interdependent contexts in mind: The domestic context, which influenced the activities of the foundations as *American* foundations; and the international context, which had an impact on the behavior of the foundations as *transnational* actors. Against this background, I suggest considering the philanthropic foundations *institutions* in the field of development aid in the sense that they contributed to the formulation of norms that had a lasting imprint on the field and its structures.

In the following I will present the domestic situation the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation found themselves in after 1945. In a second step, I will outline the foundations’ activities in Africa and Asia in the 1950 and 1960s. First, though, a few words on the historiographical situation with regard to international organizations.

2. International organizations: Historiographical and conceptual considerations

Until recently, international organizations were perceived by many historians as rather monolithic actors with a given agenda. ‘The World Bank’ or ‘the Food and Agriculture Organization’ took decisions that then influenced the world at large (or did not have much influence). The internal decision-making processes within the organizations, the debates and the personnel involved did not receive much attention from scholars.¹⁶ One of the reasons for this rather narrow perspective was that it used to be difficult to gain

13 Ibid., p. 27.

14 A. Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge 1984, p. 25.

15 Ibid.

16 For an effort to pay more systematic attention to the inner and outer workings of International Organizations, see: M. N. Barnett and M. Finnemore, *The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations*, in: *International Organization*, 53 (1999) 4, pp. 699-732.

access to the archival material of those organizations, seeing that their archives were designed more for storage than for historical research. And when, in the 1980s and 1990s, criticism of institutions like the World Bank grew louder, the willingness to allow curious journalists and historians go through the papers of 'sensitive' projects was limited. While many organizations have made an effort to improve the accessibility of their archives for scholarly research, working with archival material from the organizations remains difficult.

The second, more important reason for the relative neglect of international organizations as historical actors was the historiographical focus on the nation state. Diplomatic and international history was mostly concerned with the relations between nations and with decision-making processes within national governments. The situation changed when, in the 1990s, debates about globalization, the alleged end of the nation state, and particularly the emergence of 'global governance' caught historians' attention.¹⁷ In this context, many historians became interested in the forerunners of those institutions many political scientists now interpreted as the backbone of global governance: the United Nations, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and others. Since then, international organizations have come into the focus of historical research at rapid speed.¹⁸ Simultaneously, a growing number of historians, some of them proponents of new international history and/or transnational history, included 'non-traditional' international actors in their research, like think tanks, experts, and non-governmental organizations. They also paid increasing attention to forms of communication and exchange different from the established diplomatic ones, particularly in the fields of knowledge and technology.¹⁹ In the process of doing research along those lines, the understanding of the behavior and the relevance of international organizations changed. Formerly presented as solid, if not static bureaucratic apparatuses, international organizations became portrayed as complex, active historical actors with their own agendas, their own approaches, and their own characteristics.

While the actor capacities of international organizations and the importance of organization staff have been widely acknowledged, historians have not yet investigated systematically the conditions and structures under which the organizations positioned themselves

17 See, among others: P. F. Diehl (ed.), *The Politics of Global Governance: International Organizations in an Interdependent World*, Boulder 2001; G. Folke Schuppert (ed.), *Global Governance and the Role of Non-State Actors*, Baden-Baden 2006; J. Whitman (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in Global Governance*, Basingstoke 2009.

18 For example: M. Herren, *Internationale Organisationen seit 1865: Eine Globalgeschichte der internationalen Ordnung*, Darmstadt 2009; S. Amrith and G. Sluga, *New Histories of the United Nations*, in: *Journal of World History*, 19 (2008) 3, pp. 251-274; J. Suri, *Non-Governmental Organizations and Non-State Actors*, in: P. Finney (ed.), *Palgrave Advances in International History*, Basingstoke 2005, pp. 223-246; S. Kott and J. Droux (ed.), *Globalizing Social Rights: The International Labor Organization and Beyond*, Basingstoke 2013; M. Mazower, *No Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations*, Princeton 2009; A. Iriye, *The Global Community: The Role of International Organizations in the Making of the Contemporary World*, Berkeley 2002; B. Reinalda, *Routledge History of International Organizations: From 1815 to the Present Day*, London 2009.

19 See, among others: Volker Berghahn, *America and the Intellectual Cold Wars in Europe* (footnote 5); D. C. Engerman et al. (ed.), *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War*, Amherst 2003; G. Hecht (ed.), *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War*, Cambridge, Mass. 2011.

in the field of development aid. Here it is important to note the conceptual difference between the terms ‘organization’ and ‘institution’, which are often used synonymously in historical writing about international and transnational organizations. In my understanding, based on Giddens, the foundations as *organizations* became *institutions* in that they contributed to the evolution and shaping of an institutional field – a social system characterized by unique rules, communication patterns and behavioral norms within which they positioned themselves vis-à-vis the other players in the field. By doing so, they challenged and adapted existing norms and rules and created new ones according to their own needs and interests. They did so in a negotiation process with the other players in the field and in reaction to external expectations, pressures, and offers. The interaction with internal and external influences left an imprint on the organizations’ characters, on their modes of behavior and their routines, while simultaneously influencing the field as such. It was in this (non-linear) process of *structuration* – claiming a position, adapting it to varying situations, relating one’s practices to existing rules and norms, establishing new ones, developing routines – that the foundations morphed from organizations into institutions. Specifically, the ways in which they assessed needs and opportunities for development aid, planned and conducted individual projects, evaluated and presented their work, and cooperated and competed with other organizations gained a normative quality that became a standard the other players in the development field had to acknowledge.

3. Between freedom of action and domestic constraints: The postwar situation

The first question to be answered is why private foundations would spend millions of dollars on development projects abroad while the companies they received the money from were situated in the United States. The Rockefeller Foundation had a long history of aid activities abroad, particularly in the field of medicine and public health. Initially an effort to counter accusations that John D. Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company was concerned with economic gains only while neglecting the situation of the local populations, the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research was founded in 1901, followed by the Rockefeller Sanitary Commission in 1909. While initially an effort to improve the company’s image, the philanthropic activities with a Christian undertone soon took on a life of their own and developed “a growing secular and scientific emphasis”.²⁰ In the 1920s and 1930s, the foundation set up clinics and research institutions, organized public health campaigns, and sent doctors and researchers as advisors to Asian and South American countries to help establish standards of medical treatment that would pre-

20 E. S. Rosenberg, *Missions to the World: Philanthropy Abroad*, in: L. J. Friedman and M. McGarvie (ed.), *Charity, Philanthropy and Civility in American History*, pp. 241-262, at p. 253 (footnote 6).

vent the outbreak of epidemics and generally improve the populations' health.²¹ These activities need to be understood in the larger context of American experiences with humanitarianism and internationalism since the late nineteenth century, when news of famines or natural catastrophes reached the United States and triggered the perception of American responsibility and ability to share and help, both in the United States and abroad, particularly in Europe. Especially after 1918, American financial strength combined with postwar internationalism encouraged private organizations, many of them religiously inspired, to carry their knowledge and approaches abroad. Political interests were present in some instances – for example, in the case of the American Relief Administration's work in Russia under the leadership of Herbert Hoover – but not dominant.²² As the number of organizations professionally concerned with humanitarian aid grew in the late 1920s and 1930s, a process of specialization set in, which in turn encouraged the Rockefeller Foundation to continue and intensify its work in the public health sector. At the same time, the foundation made a name in the field of promoting social scientific and humanities research in order to promote international understanding and peace.²³ Returning to our conceptual interest in institutional history, this constellation allows insight into the structuration process. We can see how the Rockefeller Foundation and its sub-organizations were both subjects and creators of institutional structures, how they worked within those structures and simultaneously reproduced and changed them. As 'co-inventors' of humanitarianism abroad, the foundation contributed to the shaping of the international humanitarian regime that came to characterize the interwar period. This is not to suggest that the foundation consciously worked toward this goal. But once it became clear that there was a continuous need and a growing 'market' for non-state international humanitarian activities, and in connection with the political motives of promoting peace, it seemed only logical to build on the foundation's experience and expand existing structures.

This process gained speed in the years after World War II, as the need for socioeconomic development became one of the few topics on which political leaders in both 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' countries, scientific experts, and the newly founded international organizations agreed on. As the United States became a power with global aspirations in the context of the Cold War, the potential field of action of the Rockefeller Foundation grew in size, too. From the American point of view, the decline of the European empires opened up political and economic opportunities for the United States. At the

21 See: E. S. Rosenberg, *Missions to the World*, pp. 253–255 (footnote 20); M. Cueto (ed.), *Missionaries of Science: The Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America*. Bloomington 1994; S. Hewa, *Colonialism, Tropical Disease, and Imperial Medicine: Rockefeller Philanthropy in Sri Lanka*, Lanham 1995; W. H. Schneider (ed.), *Rockefeller Philanthropy & Modern Biomedicine: International Initiatives from World War I to the Cold War*, Bloomington 2002.

22 E. S. Rosenberg, *Missions to the World*, pp. 248–249 (footnote 20).

23 See: K. Rietzler, *From Peace Advocacy to International Relations Research: The Transformation of Transatlantic Philanthropic Networks, 1900–1930*, in: B. Struck, D. Rodogno and J. Vogel (ed.), *Shaping the Transnational Sphere: Experts, Networks, Issues, 1850–1930*, New York 2014 forthcoming; N. Guilhot (ed.), *The Invention of International Relations Theory: Realism, the Rockefeller Foundation and the 1954 Conference on Theory*, New York 2011.

same time, it seemed vital to ensure that the former colonies did not turn away from the West. Hence, supporting the development process of the new nations with money and know-how became an important element of American foreign policy. This geopolitical situation presented an opportunity for the foundation: It produced a favorable climate for the continuation and extension of philanthropic activities begun much earlier.²⁴

The established networks and institutional experiences the Rockefeller Foundation could build on were of great advantage in the postwar years. While the field of development was expanding, became increasingly 'scientized', and went through a rapid professionalization process, the demand for development aid grew at similar speed. Many of the newly independent nations or those aiming for independence actively asked for support from the industrialized countries to help them overcome their economic shortages and the lack of know-how and resources they identified as one of the causes of 'underdevelopment'. Within the limits defined by domestic (conservative) opposition to spending American tax dollars abroad, the United States government, either bilaterally or, to a smaller extent, through international mechanisms like the World Bank, proved eager to supply aid to new nations in Asia and Africa. Its goal was to implement development approaches in line with American interests and beliefs, which would also help to prevent strategic alliances with the Soviet Union. Yet not everyone accepted Washington's aid gratefully. Many of the new nations' leaders' were critical of what they perceived as an intervention into their domestic affairs, while others considered the United States a neo-colonial force and a danger to their independence. In this regard, private organizations like the foundations had an easier stand. They were greeted with less distrust than the American government because, as private agencies, they were not immediately identified with 'Washington'. As a Ford Foundation memorandum stated in 1953, "The willingness of the governments and the people to receive help from private American sources affords the Foundation an opportunity not enjoyed to the same full extent by the United States or other foreign governments."²⁵

The Ford Foundation was a newcomer to the field of international philanthropy at the time. As a foundation previously active on a domestic regional level, the Ford Foundation had to find its identity and position in a field dominated by much more experienced competitors. In contrast to the Rockefeller Foundation, the Ford Foundation was not involved in the development of humanitarian activism in its early stages; it entered the scene when many of the structures – connections between humanitarian and philanthropic organizations in the United States and abroad; relations with government agencies; funding practices; bureaucratic routines – were already in place. While this meant that the Ford Foundation staff had to work with norms and processes created by others, it also implied that the organization did not have to spend as much time and energy on building an institutional framework as the Rockefeller Foundation had done since the

24 G. H. Hess, *Waging the Cold War in the Third World*, pp. 323-324 (footnote 6).

25 Ford Foundation, *The Problems of Asia and the Near East in Relation to World Peace*, April 16, 1953, Part 1, pp. 3-4. Ford Foundation Archive (FFA), Report 003306.

1910s, and that it could use the existing structures for its own purposes. On the other hand, being a late-comer meant that the Ford Foundation lacked the Rockefeller Foundation's experience and networks in humanitarian and development aid, and thus had to make a coordinated effort to gain recognition both from the other players in the field and from potential receivers of aid. In trying to make up for its lack in institutional and symbolic capital, the Ford Foundation relied on two resources it possessed in large quantity: Money and political connections to decision-makers in Washington. In financial terms, the foundation became the largest one in the United States when, in the late 1940s, the Ford family would have had to pay an estimated federal estate tax of \$ 321,000,000 after the death of Henry and Edsel Ford.²⁶ Instead of paying this amount to the government, the family decided to transfer it into the Ford Foundation. Hence, the problem was not how to save money but how to spend it fast and efficiently. The foundation's president at the time was Paul Hoffman, who had headed the European Recovery Program before joining the Ford Foundation. In 1966, McGeorge Bundy, who had been special assistant to the President on national security, succeeded him. There were many other connections like these within the Ford Foundation's different programs and divisions.²⁷

Ford Foundation spending increased linearly throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s. By the mid-1960s, the foundation "was devoting about \$50 million annually to overseas programs, Rockefeller was spending about \$10 million".²⁸ Furthermore, the Ford Foundation did not shy away from emphasizing that its activities abroad were in line with American national interests. Promoting development abroad would help to contain communism in Asia, Ford Foundation staff and board members made clear in their memoranda and appropriation decisions. For example, in 1959 an internal paper on the foundation's future program with regard to Asia and the Near East stated: "Asia and the Near East [...] consist of many newly emergent nations precariously situated along the periphery of the Soviet-Communist orbit. [...] If democracy should fail, one of the probable consequences would be that world Communism would be immeasurably and perhaps decisively strengthened and the danger of a third world war sharply increased." The paper's author argued that against this background it was the Ford Foundation's job to help "foster the orderly democratic growth of Asia and the Near East". To do so, the foundation should promote stability, improve living conditions, and strengthen local leadership, the paper recommended.²⁹ Seeing that the foundation was willing to actively engage in the containment of communism, Allen Dulles, the director of the Central Intelligence Agency, stated that he considered the foundation's overseas activities "a 'great asset' to the U.S. in its international relations". If possible the Ford Foundation should

26 O. Zunz, *Philanthropy in America: A History*, Princeton 2011, p. 174.

27 "David Bell, vice president in charge of Ford's International Division, had previously been the director of the Agency for International Development (AID). John J. McCloy had been president of the World Bank and the U.S. High Commissioner for Germany prior to serving as chairman of the Ford board of trustees." in: G. H. Hess, *Waging the Cold War in the Third World*, p. 323 (footnote 6).

28 *Ibid.*, p. 324.

29 Ford Foundation, *Program for Asia and the Near East*, 1959. FFA, Report 002832.

“work in the difficult areas where the U.S. Government technical assistance would be relatively ineffective because of the suspicions of the indigenous governments.”³⁰ The Ford Foundation willingly fulfilled this role of promoting American interests in situations where the US government did not see an opportunity to become active.³¹ In institutional terms, the foundation filled a void that was created by what could be called an “institutional failure[s]” of Washington.³²

Yet it would be shortsighted to assume that the Ford Foundation made itself entirely dependent on the US government. Rather, the foundation staff used the rhetoric of anticommunism and the national interest to create room for maneuver. With regard to the international arena, this was necessary because the Ford Foundation had to ‘earn’ its position in the development field vis-à-vis more established organizations. Domestically it was important because the foundation had to convince the American public that it was politically ‘reliable’. Many American conservatives regarded the foundations as centers of leftist intellectualism and suspected their staff of harboring socialist sympathies. In the first half of the 1950s, under the influence of McCarthyism, several congressional committees inquired into potential ‘un-American’ activities of the foundations. To fend off attention from their internationalist outlook and activities, foundation representatives felt the urge to assure the American public of their political loyalty and reliability.³³ Emphasizing the anticommunist character of development aid offered an opportunity to do so. In that sense, the Ford Foundation strengthened the institutionalized norms (domestic anti-communism and the structures of the national security state established after 1945) while at the same time using them to promote its own interests. Abroad the Ford Foundation worked hard to develop and uphold an image of “dispassionate objectivity” so as not to be considered Washington’s handmaiden.³⁴ For the foundation, keeping the right *distance from* Washington while benefiting from *proximity to* Washington meant walking a fine line. An important instrument to stay on the line was hiring scientific experts as staff and advisors and funding basic and applied research in fields of foundation interest, a strategy that helped to strengthen the Ford Foundation’s reputation as a politically responsible yet ‘neutral’ philanthropic organization.

The Rockefeller Foundation encountered similar concerns with the domestic perception of international philanthropy practiced by an American foundation. In 1950, the foundation’s John Marshall, in a confidential memorandum on ‘Relations of the Foundation with Governmental and Intergovernmental Agencies’, stressed the fact that the “disinterestedness of the Foundation with respect to national interests in its international work”

30 W. Nielsen, Interview with Mr. Allen W. Dulles, Director, Central Intelligence Agency, April 18, 1955. FFA, Report 005611.

31 G. H. Hess, *Waging the Cold War in the Third World*, pp. 325-327 (footnote 6).

32 S. Heydemann and D. C. Hammack, *Philanthropic Projections*, p. 13 (footnote 10).

33 R. A. McCaughley, *International Studies and Academic Enterprise: A Chapter in the Enclosure of American Learning*, New York 1984, pp. 160-165; W. Kalb, *Stiftungen und Bildungswesen in den USA*, Berlin 1968, pp. 188-190; B. Whitaker, *The Foundations: An Anatomy of Philanthropy and Society*, London 1974, pp. 106-110.

34 United States Department of State, Memorandum of Conversation, May 7, 1954. National Archives and Record Administration, Record Group 59, Entry 1534, Box 3, Folder India Economic, 1954.

was its greatest asset and the precondition for the foundation's successful work. If the foundation appeared to be "directed or motivated" by the national interest of the United States, it would risk its "international reputation for disinterestedness", which would make it difficult to continue its work abroad and might attract communist propaganda.³⁵ Hence, the Rockefeller Foundation focused on the promotion of science and expertise as supposedly 'apolitical' fields of activity. Having long been associated with scientific research, this was a logical step for the foundation but also a strategically helpful one. In the American Cold War context, science and know-how were perceived of and portrayed as 'neutral' technical objects, detached from political struggles and ideologies. The Rockefeller Foundation succeeded in portraying its sharing of expertise as a technical and humanitarian endeavor, a dual task both too narrow and too noble to be drawn into diplomatic squabble. In this sense, the Rockefeller Foundation, too, found a way of staying within the established institutional framework while building a parallel set of structures sidelining them. Before we look at this strategy in greater detail, a very short overview of the foundations' development-related activities might be useful.

4. Small is flexible: The foundations' strategic advantages in development politics

In the 1950s and 1960s, the Ford Foundation and the Rockefeller Foundation invested millions of dollars into a large number of different development-related projects in Asia, Africa, and Latin America.³⁶ They usually cooperated closely with the governments of the countries in question and used personal contacts with government representatives and local leaders to gain a foothold. Whereas national governments often channeled their development aid into large-scale economic development, particularly with regard to industrialization, the foundations tended to focus on smaller pilot projects. Since their financial resources were limited, the foundations had to find ways of competing with much larger governmental organizations. If they succeeded in promoting new development approaches with "multiplier potential",³⁷ those approaches might later be taken up by the United States government or an international organization and become funded on a much larger scale. By following this strategy, the foundations hoped to secure and improve their standing in the field and, possibly, to leave their institutional footprint in the development arena.³⁸ Economic interests of the companies with which the founda-

35 J. Marshall, Relations of the Foundation with Governmental and Intergovernmental Agencies, Nov. 3, 1950 (900 PRO 51). Rockefeller Archive Center (RAC), Rockefeller Foundation, Record Group 3.2, Series 900, Box 29, Folder 159, pp. 2-3.

36 For an overview see: G. H. Hess, Waging the Cold War in the Third World (footnote 6).

37 Ford Foundation, The Problems of Asia and the Near East in Relation to World Peace, April 16, 1953, Part 3, 2. FFA, Report 003306.

38 D. Rusk, Notes on Rockefeller Foundation Program. Prepared for discussion at meeting of Board of Trustees, Dec. 1-2, 1953, Dec. 1, 1953 (900 PRO 46). RAC, RF, RG 3.2, Series 900, Box 29, Folder 159.

tions were associated as well as American business interests abroad at least indirectly affected the selection of regions in which projects would be conducted.³⁹

In the 1950s, the Ford Foundation developed an emphasis on rural projects, with the goal of promoting structural change through education and community development. Working through its New Delhi office under the leadership of Douglas Ensminger, who was a close friend of Indian Prime Minister Nehru, it co-organized India's Community Development Programme, which was dedicated to changing the living conditions of the Indian rural population through self-help measures. Spending large amounts of money and investing much energy into community development, the Ford Foundation established itself as an institution widely recognized in the field, and one the Indian government much preferred over the official American aid program.⁴⁰ At the same time, the Ford Foundation funded educational, public health, urban renewal, and social and cultural programs, financed the establishment and construction of clinics, universities, and schools, and paid for American and international academics to serve as advisors to government units concerned with development issues.⁴¹ Additionally, it funded research in development economics and related fields at American universities.⁴²

The Rockefeller Foundation also contributed to those fields and, in some cases, cooperated with the Ford Foundation, especially in the field of higher education. Generally, however, the Rockefeller Foundation's profile remained more specialized.⁴³ It was organized around the organization's traditional areas of engagements: Health, nutrition, agriculture, and academic research on those topics. Among its most famous projects was the Green Revolution in Latin America, whose roots reached back to efforts in the 1940s to mechanize and intensify Mexico's agriculture and introduce new, high-yield varieties. Under the organizational and conceptual leadership of the Rockefeller Foundation, the project expanded continuously until, in the early 1960s, fifteen Latin American countries were involved. Working closely together with those countries' governments, the foundation established research institutions and training centers to develop the local expertise needed. The most visible expression of the Foundation's effort to produce and

39 A 1966 discussion paper on the Ford Foundation's Overseas Development Activities stated that "as a foundation dependent on income on endowment, [...] a substantial part of its income comes from profits earned outside the United States." Ford Foundation, Discussion Paper on the Future of the Foundation's Overseas Development Activities (draft). November 10, 1966, FFA, Report 009013. The economic interests of the Ford Company were mentioned in a report by W. O. Brown, M. J. Fox, and J. B. Howard, Report of Ford Foundation Mission to Africa. Confidential, January 16, 1957, FFA, Report 000579.

40 See: N. Sackley, Foundation in the Field: The Ford Foundation's New Delhi Office and the Construction of Development Knowledge, 1951–1970, in: J. Krige and H. Rausch, *American Foundations*, pp. 232–260 (footnote 5); O. Zunz, *Philanthropy in America*, pp. 156–158 (footnote 26).

41 See: G. Rosen, *Western Economists and Eastern Societies: Agents of Change in South Asia, 1950–1970*, Baltimore 1985; D. C. Engerman, The Political Power of Economic Ideas? Foreign Economic Advisors and Indian Planning in the 1950s and 1960s, in: A. Hilger and C. R. Unger (ed.), *India in the World since 1947: National and Transnational Perspectives*, Frankfurt am Main 2012, pp. 120–135, 130–133.

42 For an overview of the foundations' activities see: G. H. Hess, *Waging the Cold War in the Third World* (footnote 6). On the foundations' support of higher education, see: C. R. Unger, *The United States, Decolonization and the Education of Third World Elites*, pp. 241–261 (footnote 9).

43 G. H. Hess, *Waging the Cold War in the Third World*, p. 324 (footnote 6).

disseminate new knowledge and technology to improve agriculture was the founding of the International Rice Research Institute on the Philippines, a collaborative project with the Ford Foundation and the government of the Philippines. The research conducted at the IRRI served to promote the intensification and modernization of agriculture in India, where the Green Revolution took place in the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁴⁴ Not the least due to the foundations' activities in this context, science became a cornerstone of foreign policy and international development aid.

The promotion of the Green Revolution and the establishment of international research institutes like the IRRI point toward a characteristic practice of the Rockefeller and the Ford foundations: While keeping a distance from 'hard' political power, they created and powered complex transnational networks through which they channeled expertise and money to promote specific development approaches. Though apparently a 'technical' decision, this could be a highly political affair. For example, many of those concerned with rural development considered a redistributive land reform more effective than the use of technology to overcome food shortages. Yet, from the American point of view such an approach was dangerously close to socialism, whereas the Green Revolution promised to achieve economic development through markets, incentives, and competition.⁴⁵

Speaking in terms of structuration, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation, by funding scientific research and sharing expert knowledge geared toward development, from within the existing social system built a knowledge-based network, or sub-system, of development aid. In doing so, they created institutional structures that overlapped with political ones but were strong enough to diverge and follow their own directions. This institutional strength was a factor the US government came to depend on. Washington could withhold aid from countries to pressure them into adopting policies favored by the United States, and it could use its financial power to influence the decisions of international organizations like the World Bank in its interests. Yet, while the White House could make India liberalize its agricultural sector,⁴⁶ it depended on experts to identify possibilities to change agricultural practices and to make sure that the new agrotechnologies reached the Indian peasants. This was what the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation excelled at. They had direct connections to officials and experts in the countries in question; they were well-versed in organizing transnational development projects; they were small enough to be flexible and highly efficient, and sometimes

44 G. H. Hess, *Waging the Cold War in the Third World*, pp. 333-334 (footnote 6); C. R. Unger, *Indian Grains, American Philanthropy, and Global Development: The Green Revolution and the Modernization of India*, in: M. van der Burg and H. Maat (ed.), *International Rice Research and Development: 50 Years of IRRI for Global Food Security, Stability & Welfare*, New York 2014 in press.

45 This is the underlying argument in: N. Cullather, *The Hungry World: America's Cold War Battle against Poverty in Asia*, Cambridge, Mass. 2010.

46 See, for example: K. L. Ahlberg, 'Machiavelli with a Heart': The Johnson Administration's Food for Peace Program in India, 1965-1966, in: *Diplomatic History*, 31 (2007) 4, pp. 665-701; P. Sharma, *The United States, the World Bank, and the Challenges of International Development in the 1970s*, in: *Diplomatic History*, 37 (2013) 3, pp. 572-604.

‘invisible’; and they were able to gain access to local political and institutional structures because of their reputation of being ‘unpolitical’.

5. Conclusion

In trying to understand the foundations’ rise to positions of international influence in the postwar period, it is helpful to study the tools and mechanisms they developed and employed in the process. By carefully managing their political, social, and financial capital, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Ford Foundation succeeded in avoiding domestic political attacks while making themselves indispensable in the foreign policy arena. They came to be considered valuable partners for national governments and international organizations alike, many of which relied on them as door openers to local and transnational networks. Realizing that knowledge and expertise were powerful political resources in the context of decolonization and the Cold War, they succeeded in claiming and securing a spot on the institutional map of the foreign relations territory. In that sense, it seems safe to say that the foundations were not only present at the creation of the international development field after 1945 but actively contributed to shaping and ordering it.

Looking at the situation through the lens of structuration, it becomes apparent that the foundations proved very apt in using and challenging, stabilizing and transforming the structures they were part of. They positioned themselves within the existing system as defined by the international and domestic political circumstances, but also by the philanthropic and humanitarian practices that had become established since the early decades of the century. In the postwar period, they drew on this basis to extend their networks and their activities onto a global level. What enabled them to do so were their notable ‘organizing capacities’. These rested on their interpersonal, proactive approach, their flexibility due to small size and financial independence, and the fact that their focus on apparently ‘neutral’ expertise allowed them to slip through some of the gates set up by political and diplomatic conflicts. Similarly, their success in ‘projecting institutional logics abroad’ was closely linked to their ability to navigate the different social systems they were part of and helped building – the American foreign policy system, the international development aid system, and the transnational system of expertise. In that sense, studying the institutional history of the foundations’ development activities can sharpen our understanding of the process of ordering a complex social field (in this case, development aid).

Giddens’s concept of structuration is useful insofar as it highlights the interrelatedness of factors and levels of analysis historians might otherwise tend to distinguish somewhat artificially. For example, an analytical perspective informed by the duality of structure and agency suggests that it would be simplistic to think of ‘the Cold War’ producing the conditions under which the foundations conducted their projects. What becomes apparent is that the social system that we attribute to and associate with the Cold War was

not something that organized itself but depended on the active contribution of historical actors like the foundations. Such a view is in line with ongoing efforts to complicate Cold War history by including 'minor' players and their agency in the analysis of the conflict.⁴⁷ Yet it is not sufficient to add historical agents in the sense of 'completing' the picture. What is needed is a differentiated understanding of the interrelations of the actors involved, their building of networks, and the formulation and adaptation of norms and routines in situations of constant change.

47 See, for example: T. Smith, *New Bottles for New Wine: A Pericentric Framework for the Study of the Cold War*, in: *Diplomatic History*, 24 (2000) 4, pp. 567-591; G. Laron, *Origins of the Suez Crisis: Postwar Development Diplomacy and the Struggle over Third World Industrialization, 1945-1956*, Washington, DC, 2013.