

The Making of Modern Agriculture

Nelson Rockefeller's American International Association (AIA)
in Latin America (1946-1968)



Claiton Marcio da Silva

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First published 2023 by

The White Horse Press, The Old Vicarage, Winwick, Cambridgeshire PE28 5PN

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-912186-69-3 (HB); e-ISBN 978-1-912186-70-9

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

- ABCAR: Associação Brasileira de Crédito e Assistência Rural (Brazilian Association of Credit and Rural Assistance)
- ACAR: Associação de Crédito e Assistência Rural de Minas Gerais (Association of Credit and Rural Assistance of Minas Gerais)
- ACARESC: Associação de Crédito e Assistência Rural de Santa Catarina (Association for Credit and Rural Assistance of Santa Catarina)
- ACARPA: Associação de Crédito e Assistência Rural do Paraná (Association for Credit and Rural Assistance of Paraná, ACARPA)
- AIA: American International Association for Economic and Social Development
- ANCAR: Associação Nordestina de Crédito e Assistência Rural (Northeastern Association for Credit and Rural Assistance)
- ANCARBA: Associação Nordestina de Crédito e Assistência Rural da Bahia (Northeastern Association for Credit and Rural Assistance, State of Bahia)
- ANCAR – RN: Associação Nordestina de Crédito e Assistência Rural do Rio Grande do Norte (Northeastern Association for Credit and Rural Assistance, State of Rio Grande do Norte)
- ANCARCE: Associação Nordestina de Crédito e Assistência Rural do Ceará (Northeastern Association for Credit and Rural Assistance, State of Ceará)
- ANCARPA: Associação Nordestina de Crédito e Assistência Rural da Paraíba (Northeastern Association for Credit and Rural Assistance, State of Paraíba)
- ANCARPE: Associação Nordestina de Crédito e Assistência Rural de Pernambuco (Northeastern Association for Credit and Rural Assistance, State of Pernambuco)
- ANCARSE: Associação Nordestina de Crédito e Assistência Rural do Sergipe (Northeastern Association for Credit and Rural Assistance, State of Sergipe)
- APCAR: Associação Paulista de Assistência e Crédito Rural (São Paulo Association for Credit and Rural Assistance)

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ASCAR: Associação Sulina de Crédito e Assistência Rural (Southern Association for Credit and Rural Assistance)

CBR: Consejo de Bienestar Rural (Rural Welfare Council)

CIDEA: Consejo Interamericano de Educación Alimenticia (Inter-American Council of Nutrition Education)

CVF: Corporación Venezolana de Fomento (Venezuelan Development Corporation)

DNPEA: Departamento Nacional de Pesquisa Agrícola (National Department of Agricultural Research)

ECA: Economic Cooperation Administration

EMA: Empresa de Mecanização Agrícola (Agricultural Mechanization Company)

ESALQ: Escola Superior de Agricultura Luiz de Queiroz (Luiz de Queiroz College of Agriculture)

ESAV: Escola Superior de Agricultura e Veterinária de Viçosa (Viçosa College of Agriculture)

ETA: Escritório Técnico de Agricultura Brasil-Estados Unidos (Brazil/U.S. Technical Agriculture Office)

FAO: United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization

FIEMG: Federação das Indústrias do Estado de Minas Gerais (Federation of State Industries of Minas Gerais)

FmHA: Farmers Home Administration

FSA: Farm Security Administration

FSD: Food Supply Division

IAC: Instituto Agronômico de Campinas (Agronomic Institute of Campinas)

IAIAS: Inter-American Institute of Agricultural Sciences

IBEC: International Basic Economy Corporation

IIAA: Institute of Inter-American Affairs

IRI: IBEC Research Inc. or IRI Research Institute

List of Abbreviations

ITIC: Instituto Técnico de Inmigración y Colonización (Technical Institute of Immigration and Colonization)

JICA: Japan International Cooperation Agency

NCRSP: National Committee on Rural Social Planning

OIAA: Office of the Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs

PSD: Partido Social Democrático (Social Democratic Party)

PTB: Partido Trabalhista Brasileiro (Brazilian Labor Party)

RA: Resettlement Administration

RBF: Rockefeller Brothers Fund

SAPS: Serviço de Alimentação da Previdência Social (Social Welfare Food Service)

SASA: Sementes Agroceres S/A (Sementes Agroceres Limited Liability Corporation)

SESP: Serviço Especial de Saúde Pública (Special Service on Public Health)

SBF: Simon Bolivar Foundation or Bolivar Foundation

SVA: Setor de Visitação Alimentar (Food Visitation Sector)

UDN: União Democrática Nacional (National Democratic Union Party)

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

USDA: United States Department of Agriculture

VBEC: Venezuelan Basic Economy Corporation

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book is both a direct and an indirect result of almost two decades of research, with sporadic hiatuses, although I have kept the subject close at hand – at least in my imagination. After having written a regional history study about the emergence of 4-S Clubs – an adaptation of the US 4-H Clubs – during the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship, I received a valid suggestion from Professor Robert Wegner about the importance of studying international agencies in the consolidation of agriculture and sanitation policies in Latin America. In 2005 I started my Ph.D. at the Oswaldo Cruz University in Rio de Janeiro, diving into a transnational history of Brazil and the United States through the influence of the American International Association for Economic and International Development – Nelson Rockefeller’s AIA. During an intense winter in 2007–2008, I had the pleasure of developing a doctoral internship at the University of Guelph, Canada, under the supervision of Professor Stuart McCook. During my first stay in North America, I also had the opportunity to visit archives such as the Rockefeller Archive Center and, back in Brazil, I wrote my Ph.D. dissertation, defended in 2009. In this first phase, professors Robert Wegner and Stuart McCook played a fundamental role in the elaboration of my arguments. I am very grateful to both of them, as well as to other colleagues at COC/Fiocruz with whom I had the opportunity of sharing my training process: professors Dominichi Miranda de Sá, Magali Romero de Sá, Gilberto Hochman and Nísia Trindade Lima, as well as students such as Vanderlei Sebastião de Souza, André Felipe Cândido da Silva and Rômulo de Paula Andrade. Eventually, a shortened version of my Ph.D. dissertation was published in Portuguese in 2015.

But the work I present here for the first time in English is completely rewritten, adding new arguments and updated literature and, finally, expanding the regions studied. *The Making of Modern Agriculture* remains an AIA study, but now including several countries in Latin America and, to a lesser extent, Asia, pursuing the relationships between science, politics and socio-environmental change. My thanks for this ‘second phase’ of AIA research must mention the constant academic exchanges with my colleagues Jó Klanovicz (Unicentro), Samira Moretto, Marlon Brandt, Delmir Valentini, and José Radin (all from UFFS, who also stood in for me at various times to enable my work to progress), as well as my Master’s students who embarked on the topic of agricultural modernisation and environmental history. During this period, I also had the

pleasure of meeting new colleagues interested in the Rockefellers' work, such as Antônio Pedro Tota, Maria Gabriela Marinho, Ryan Nehring, Cliff Welch, João Márcio Mendes Pereira, Sandro Dutra, Shane Hamilton and Ursula Prutsch, among many others. I also thank Professor Deborah Fitzgerald and colleague Willian San Martin for the excellent suggestions about the progress of my work during my stay at MIT. I express special thanks to the Rachel Carson Center for Environment and Society at the Ludwig-Maximilian University of Munich, where I found a very favourable environment for the advancement of my readings on Latin America. In particular, colleagues like Roberta Biasillo and Serenella Iovino opened many theoretical perspectives that are, even if briefly, inserted here. Also, special thanks to my friend Claudio de Majo, with whom I wrote a number of articles and co-edited a book during this period. Finally, after the defence of my Ph.D. dissertation, I returned to the Rockefeller Archive Center, as well as researching in the library and database of MIT, the Rachel Carson Center, the Emater libraries (Minas Gerais) and the Epagri collection (Santa Catarina), where I was always well received and to all of whom I express my sincere thanks! I also acknowledge the Coordination of Superior Level Staff Improvement, the Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (CNPq), the Universidade Federal da Fronteira Sul (UFFS) and the Rockefeller Archive Center for providing the fellowships and grants that enabled me to conduct this research. Fortunately, I was able to count on the reading of the original by several readers and translators, whom I thank: Claire Lagier, Earl Richard Downes and, most recently, my dedicated editor Sarah Johnson. Thank you for your patience and suggestive reading!

None of this would be possible without the support of Marina Andrioli, and more recently, our beloved Martina Luísa, to whom I dedicate this work.

PREFACE

It is an honour to write the foreword to *The Making of Modern Agriculture*. This is the third iteration of Claiton da Silva's work exploring the development work of Nelson Rockefeller's AIA. The initial project was his doctoral dissertation for the Fundação Oswaldo Cruz; this version focused on the AIA's work in Brazil. In 2015, he published a revised and expanded version of the dissertation as *De agricultor a farmer: Nelson Rockefeller e a modernização da agricultura no Brasil*. Since then, he has been researching and writing prolifically – in both Portuguese and English – on a wide range of themes and topics, most of which explore the often contentious process of agricultural modernisation in Brazil, and in the Global South more generally. *The Making of Modern Agriculture* is much more than an English-language translation of *De agricultor a farmer*. It is a larger, more ambitious, book that situates the AIA's work in Brazil in a global framework, and engages in larger scholarly conversations. It makes one of da Silva's most important contributions accessible to English-speaking audiences.

The Making of Modern Agriculture joins the recent surge of historical writing on post World War II agricultural modernisation programmes. Much of this writing focuses on the green revolution, a Cold War programme of technological modernisation focused on increasing the productivity of key food crops. American foundations, especially the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, played key roles in this 'diplomacy of private enterprise'. The Rockefeller and Ford Foundations, in particular, emphasised scientific and technological improvements in agricultural productivity. They promoted and implemented green revolution technologies around the globe, especially in Asia and the Pacific.

The Making of Modern Agriculture focuses on a different model of agricultural development, promoted by Nelson A. Rockefeller's American International Association for Economic and Social Development (AIA). The AIA's projects focused primarily on promoting the health of rural workers, and providing agricultural credit. While *The Making of Modern Agriculture* is rooted in the AIA's work in Brazil, da Silva situates these events in global, regional and local contexts. He shows how the AIA's work in Brazil was informed by its experiences elsewhere, especially in Venezuela, and later in China and India – as well as the prior experience of the AIA staff in the United States during the Great Depression and World War II. As such, *The Making of Modern Agriculture* is an important contribution on the role of science, technology and expertise in the global Cold War.

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Like many other technical assistance organisations in these years, the AIA presented itself as fundamentally apolitical. This technocratic vision of agricultural modernisation preceded the Cold War. But Truman's Point Four programmes made this vision a core part of US foreign policy during the Cold War, a move that was *inherently* political. In compelling small vignettes, da Silva shows us how different Brazilians interpreted the AIA's technocratic mission. Some inhabitants of the rural municipality of Martins Guimarães apparently thought the officially secular ACAR was a American 'communist' project; in the municipality of Machado, the Catholic priest complained that the local ACAR home economist was a Protestant and asked that she be dismissed. In a different context, however, Juscelino Kubitschek and some political leaders in Brazil wanted American officials to continue leading ACAR, since that way the organisation would 'stay away from [domestic] political issues' and 'provide an atmosphere of neutrality'. The rhetoric of technocratic neutrality was, and remains, politically loaded – in spite of what its advocates say.

Da Silva pays careful attention to political and institutional power at different scales, and moves effortlessly between different levels of analysis. Histories of agricultural modernisation often focus on the nation-state as the unit of analysis. While nation-states matters to this story, his analysis of the AIA's work in Brazil moves seamlessly between the national, state and municipal scales. He shows how actors at each level shaped the development of the AIA's projects. In the Brazilian story, the state governments that stand out as the main actors, especially in the powerful central states of São Paulo and Minas Gerais. Key governors – Milton Campos and Juscelino Kubitschek, among others – played an instrumental role in facilitating and promoting the AIA's work in their home states. These and other powerful governors also influenced the national government to promote and ultimately nationalise the AIA's initiatives – especially when Kubitschek was elected president.

Above all else, *The Making of Modern Agriculture* serves as a compelling exploration of the development agendas of Latin Americans themselves. The landscapes, peoples and institutions of Latin America were not developmental blank slates, upon which agents of the AIA could develop their ideas and programmes. Rather, the work of the AIA succeeded in places to the extent that they could align their vision of development with those of the political and economic leaders in the places they worked. And, as da Silva shows, the lines of influence worked both ways; the AIA had to adapt or abandon plans that did not align smoothly with the local needs or interests. 'Development', he argues in the conclusion, is 'polysemous'. And contested, and constantly evolving.

Preface

The Making of Modern Agriculture embraces this complexity and navigates it skilfully, all the while resisting simplistic, reductive answers. In the end, this is much more than a history of the AIA; it is a reflection on the practice and politics of development – then, and now.

Stuart McCook

INTRODUCTION: DRAFTING A NEW WORLD FROM A MANHATTAN OFFICE

In 1974, while attending a second session of the Judiciary Committee of the House of the Representatives, Nelson Rockefeller (1908–1979) evoked his war experience to argue for his nomination as Vice President. ‘The Nazi propaganda during the war’, he said, was ‘our real adversary down there’ in South America. Answering more than a hundred questions in the course of ten days, Rockefeller summarised what ‘they said’ – or the German-Nazi rhetoric against the US: ‘This was a nip-and-tuck proposition, their propaganda was the United States [would] drop you like a hot potato as soon as this war is over. They have no real interest in you.’ Rockefeller went on to affirm that he felt a personal identification with Latin-American people and governments and that he had therefore taken a different approach from that of typical US official diplomacy. After the war, this self-proclaimed identification with Latin Americans led him to set up two corporations. The first was a nonprofit, the American International Association for Social and Economic Development (AIA), ‘to undertake cooperative ventures with governments in agriculture extension, agricultural credit, in education and in other fields of government services’.¹ The other, the International Basic Economy Co. (IBEC), was primarily concerned with the ‘development, distribution, and selling foodstuffs, housing, and other things that related to their basic economy’.² Answering questions retrospectively about his decades of involvement in Latin America, Rockefeller hinted at his plans to reinvent Latin America after 1945, something he had been, to a certain extent, because of his political influence and economic power, in a position to try.

The focus of this book is the philanthropic work of the AIA in agriculture between 1946 and 1968 in Latin America, primarily in Brazil and Venezuela,

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1. Hearings before the Committee on the Judiciary House of the Representatives. Second Session on Nomination of Nelson Rockefeller to be Vice President of the United States. (Washington: US Government Print Office, 1974).
 2. Hearings before the Committee on the Judiciary House of the Representatives. Second Session on Nomination of Nelson Rockefeller to be Vice President of the United States. (Washington: US Government Print Office, 1974). For a detailed history of IBEC, see Darlene Rivas, *Missionary Capitalist: Nelson Rockefeller in Venezuela* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: University of North Carolina Press, 2002); and Shane Hamilton, *Supermarket USA. Food and Power in the Cold War Farms Race* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2018)..

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although with programmes also carried out in India and China for a brief period. Throughout the 22 years of its work, the AIA supported supervised rural credit, land reform planning, agricultural extension, rural youth club work and health and vocational education, motivated by the fact that government policymakers and private institutions considered the health of workers to be as precarious as their agricultural techniques. According to the AIA journalist Martha Dalrymple – who published the AIA official history entitled *The AIA Story* in 1968 – the agency ‘had an objective that is much simpler than its name. It was set up to do things that needed to be done but that nobody else was doing, and it was set up to be impermanent.’ Then, ‘its whole method of operation was to encourage self-development, to improve living standards, in general to help make life a little better for people in the less fortunate areas of the world, and then to help them to do it for themselves’.³

Due to Latin America’s strategic position and its support of the Allies against the Nazis, some Latin American leaders as well as US businessmen and politicians – among them Nelson Rockefeller – understood that US diplomacy should maintain solid relations based on financial aid with the entire continent. With the Truman administration directing more and more of its energies and resources to the recovery of a devastated Europe, foundations like Ford and Rockefeller, and associations like AIA, IBEC and the later IBEC Research Institute (IRI), founded in 1950 and also linked to Nelson Rockefeller, would play an important role in maintaining and expanding international relations between the United States and Latin America – and part of what we now understand as the Global South – through a diplomacy of private enterprise. Even though they were financially supported by some of the most powerful families on the planet at the time, these agencies did not command resources comparable to the Marshall Plan. In the case of the AIA, though, their activities were extremely influential, albeit controversial at times. This is because, although there had been agronomic institutes and colleges in Latin America since the late nineteenth century, the work of the AIA in conjunction with local governments inaugurated a model of agricultural development that expanded throughout the region.⁴

3. Martha Dalrymple, *The AIA Story: Two Decades of International Cooperation* (New York: AIA, 1968), p. 1

4. See Claiton Marcio da Silva, *De agricultor a farmer. Nelson Rockefeller e a modernização da agricultura no Brasil* (Guarapuava/Curitiba: Unicentro/UFPR, 2015). See also Herbert Klein and Francisco Vidal Luna, *Feeding the World. Brazil’s Transformation into a Modern Agricultural Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), ch. 4.

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In a general sense, therefore, this book recounts relations between the United States and Latin America from the 1940s to the 1960s, addressing the work of the AIA in Latin America. As Rockefeller explained, the AIA worked on small-scale technical assistance projects, aiming to nationalise these services in order to support Latin American governments – especially in Venezuela and Brazil.⁵ More specifically, this book argues that the AIA's activities were guided by a new form of intervention in Latin America, away from the Big Stick Policy and closer to a benevolent rhetoric. Ideally, the AIA aimed to serve as a bridge by which the successful projects of the Good Neighbor Policy would reach the post-war world, no longer as state policy, but as diplomacy enacted by private groups.

Even though the AIA is contemporary with the dramatic changes in global agriculture of the post-1945 period, it is a mistake to affirm that agencies like the AIA worked simply as propagators of the technical packages of the green revolution. In fact, the AIA had among its technical staff some experienced professionals, who preferred certain technological innovations but sought practical and cheap solutions, sometimes better adapted to the local ecology. Including the point of view of Latin Americans in the analysis, my central argument refutes the literature's portrayal of uncomplicated acceptance of the AIA's programmes within Latin American institutions and rural society. Challenging this one-sided view, my anti- and post-colonial analysis demonstrates that the AIA's projects needed to negotiate and adapt to local and institutional resistance. Based on unpublished primary sources, I demonstrate how the AIA followed non-place based, theoretical paths to put into practice its ideology of development and modernisation. Foregrounding aspects such as the lack of knowledge about the culture of local people and their traditional knowledge, the inconsistencies of bureaucratic political elites, and the stubborn insistence on replicating programmes created in the United States for countries labelled as underdeveloped enable this book to present a different approach from the literature on Nelson Rockefeller and the AIA. Unlike other accounts, it weaves together the relationships between different agents, considering Latin Americans' capacity for historical agency.

Some scholars demonstrate that economic or materialistic arguments have dominated the academic approach to US-Latin American relations since the 1960s. The liberal tradition of studies highlights a missionary calling in the foundation of the AIA: to help peoples then considered underdeveloped to

5. On Brazil, see da Silva, *De agricultor a farmer*. See also Rivas, *Missionary Capitalist* and Hamilton, *Supermarket USA*.

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encounter development⁶ – an aim best formulated in John Dewey’s philosophical pragmatism. Alternatively, from a materialistic or structuralist perspective, this agency would be considered more as an instrument in the complex US imperialist apparatus planning the domination of Latin America than as a missionary agency.⁷ In recent decades, with the renewal of studies on relations between the US and Latin America, scholars have added other variables to the discussion, broadening interpretations previously guided by ideological or simply economic realms of international relations. Analytical oppositions such as mission or imperialism, conflict or agreement, domination or resistance, which dominated the debate up to the 1980s, did not explore the full complexity of the power relations involved. Questioning these interpretative limitations, historian Darlene Rivas argues that the historiography of US/Latin American relations incorporated the concept of culture into the discussion in the late 1990s, although mainly in the context of economic development and the emergence of a consumer culture in the twentieth century.⁸ Meanwhile, post-colonial studies have provided a new perspective by linking discursive strategies, power relations and material practices to understand the complex interactions between the different governmental and non-governmental actors involved in the post-colonial venture or encounter.⁹ More recently, environmental studies have the potential to develop aspects that better assess the impact of foundations such as Rockefeller and AIA in Latin America – although there are still very few studies on the Rockefellers in these terms, though research is well developed in terms of history of sciences and medicine.

The experience of Nelson Rockefeller and the AIA offers an important case study for interpreting not only the classic issues surrounding such encounters – such as relations of domination, imperialism, resistance and mission – but also the importance of Latin Americans themselves in the reconfiguration of relations between the US and Latin America. The first wave of literature (up to the late 1990s) on both the AIA’s work and Nelson Rockefeller’s experience in Latin America explored, with some exceptions, conceptual binaries such as mission/imperialism, philanthropy/domination. The late 1990s renewal of historical studies on relations between the United States and Latin America provided new approaches that, in turn, demonstrated greater complexity in

6. Darlene Rivas, *Missionary Capitalist*.

7. Ibid.

8. Ibid.

9. Cecília Azevedo, *Em nome da América: os Corpos de Paz no Brasil (1961–1981)* (Rio de Janeiro: Alameda, 2008).

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economic, political, social, cultural and environmental relations. From this perspective, by exploring unpublished primary sources, the present volume discusses the complex entanglements between technological modernisation and environmental-cultural change, combining macro and micro-scale analyses. Its core argument is that diverse national and local relations, characterised by a mix of support and resistance, shaped the negotiations that framed the AIA's work in Latin America. As historian Daniel Immerwahr reminds us, modernisation refers to a political vision: 'the desire to achieve a particular social configuration in which institutions are oriented toward industry, governed by urban norms, shaped by bureaucratic practices, and centralized to a significant degree'. In some aspects, the term development 'is often used as a synonym for modernization'; however, Immerwahr refers to development as a way to achieving 'increase of social capacity'.¹⁰ At least before the rise of Walt Whitman Rostow's Modernization Theory in late 1950s, experts entangled words such 'to modernise' and 'to develop' in different programmes, and sometimes obliterated them in rhetoric that preferred to incorporate local concepts. Overall, these concepts carried the desire to break with traditional knowledge; as Immerwahr summarises, 'modernization is one form of development, but it may be possible to improve people's lives without centralizing their institutions'. This need not mean, 'they [want] to return to the past' but rather that 'they [have] mapped out an alternate route forward', summarised as 'development without modernization'.¹¹ Last but not least, modernisation should, according to Rostow and some of his contemporaries, such as British conservative politician Cyril Black, be placed above democracy. This means that, when the imperatives of modernisation conflict with democratic autonomy, the latter should be sacrificed for the sake of the former.¹²

In this book, I demonstrate how some decisions about how to implement modernisation projects were driven from a luxurious office in Rockefeller Plaza, New York. But, gradually, these decisions were increasingly informed by reports from AIA technicians and directors working in Latin America, showing how the Association's wishes clashed with those of local governments and socioenvironmental actors. Therefore, this book doesn't only discuss the plans of US agents, but how the interests of local governments and actors interfered

10. Daniel Immerwahr, *Thinking Small. The United States and the Lure of Community Development* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London: Harvard University Press, 2015).

11. Ibid.

12. João Feres Jr. *A história do conceito de Latin America nos Estados Unidos* (Bauru: Edusc, 2005), p. 105.

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with and modified the original modernisation projects. We will thus gain an idea of how modernisation and development are concepts that are tested in certain realities: their materialisation carries within it new ‘genes’ added from the places where the programmes were applied, and possibly incorporated into new conceptions. By this argument, we can think of a hypothetical programme initiated during the Great Depression by the US Farm Security Administration, tested in Brazil by the AIA in the 1950s and, due to application difficulties, having its initial notion reformulated. Later, this ‘hybrid’ programme might have been developed by the Ford Foundation in India and, according to local needs, have had to undergo new adaptations.

We can question a diffusionist analysis by understanding that certain aspects of the relations between the US and Latin America depend on situational variables; even if at different, unequal levels of power, it is important to discuss how Latin America also influenced the empire. Following this perspective, I ask whether the actions of these agents figured as mission or imperialism, but I also explore how the AIA modified its ideals by establishing relationships that responded to geopolitical stimuli, national issues, regional political arrangements and unique historical characteristics. In summary, in the macro context, the AIA was not only an immovable reflection of the geopolitics of the Cold War, but also an important agent – along with the Ford Foundation, Carnegie, Rockefeller and the World Bank – in consolidating a political agenda for Latin America under the aegis of Point Four and the Alliance for Progress.¹³ While a scholar such as Parmar focuses – in his study about the ‘Big 3’ Ford, Carnegie and Rockefeller Foundations – on the role of private enterprise through philanthropy in constructing the US hegemony,¹⁴ my focus is on the role of agricultural experts in mediating social and cultural transformation through programmes of rural development.

Chronologically, the work of the AIA is part of the Cold War; historically, it resonates with important US ideologies rooted in the nineteenth century, such as Manifest Destiny, the Frontier myth and the Yeomanry; with Theodore

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13. The Point Four and Alliance for Progress were programmes that marked the renewal of US foreign policy toward a more internationalist approach, spurring geopolitical hegemony after 1945. See Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development. The Making and Unmaking of the Third world* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995). See also Felipe Loureiro, *Aliança para o Progresso e o governo João Goulart (1961–1964). Ajuda econômica norte-americana a estados brasileiros e a desestabilização da democracia no Brasil pós-guerra* (São Paulo: Editora da UNESP, 2020).
14. Interjeet Parmar, *Foundations of the American Century: The Ford, Carnegie, and Rockefeller Foundations in the Rise of American Power* (New York: Columbia, 2012), p. 2.

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Roosevelt's progressivism; the ideals of industrialisation of agriculture of the 1920s; and certain characteristics of the New Deal, such as providing land for poor blacks in the South or Mid-West. In this book, I address in general terms these ideologies, which, although different in time and space, have connections mainly as they concern agricultural activities. In the imaginary related to the advance to the West, mythologised by authors such as historian Frederick Jackson Turner, rural life and agriculture played a fundamental role in the construction of civilisation; the socio-political imaginary of the nineteenth-century United States was shaped by the attraction of a 'free land', drawing populations to the lands beyond the Alleghany mountains, the Mississippi valley and above the plateaus and mountains of the far west.

Classic authors such as Henry Nash Smith have understood that the process of constituting the socio-political ideals of the American nation recurrently projected the image of an Empire. One group manifested an interest in controlling the oceans in the manner of the British navy; to another, the notion of success was a numerically populous society occupying the interior of the continent. Although not opposed in their entirety, these ideas were based on different economic policies, the first inspired by the mercantile practices of the British, and the second requiring a demographic increase with the creation of new states to the west resulting from agricultural expansion into an 'empty' and fertile territory. Although both theses required the expansion of territory to the West – the first would aim to reach the Pacific Ocean – the second turned out to be closer to the actual course of history in the nineteenth century: an 'American Empire based on agrarian assumptions'.¹⁵ More specifically, the frontier, in this perspective, is not established as static, but as the result of successive human experimentation, imposed by economic and environmental conditions: first there is a reversion to the primitive, followed by a succession of frontier types that brought high levels of enterprise and complexity. In historiographical terms, the progressivism of Turner, Charles Beard and Vernon Louis Parrington consolidated ideals that were intended to free man from the

15. Henry Nash Smith, *Virgin Land. The American West as Symbol and Myth* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1971), p. 3. The notion of free lands in the West influenced social thought by Benjamin Franklin, Emerson, Lincoln, Whitman and others. But this imaginary was consolidated at the end of the 19th century and lasted until the 1950s through the work of the aforementioned Wisconsin historian, Frederick Jackson Turner. Frederick Jackson Turner, 'The significance of the frontier in American History, 1893', in John Mack Faragher (ed.), *Rereading Frederick Jackson Turner* (New York: Holt, 1994), pp. 31–60. Although there is some question about the permanence of the frontier myth after WWII, we will observe throughout this book how this was a recurring theme for characters like John Camp and Walter Crawford.

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past and ensure the qualities of the New World as opposed to the Old. Thus, believing in the fundamental newness of the new land, this movement needed to believe that when something was not going well, injustices and reactionary interests were hindering the natural development of a naturally democratic people and a just society.¹⁶ I do not consider the efforts of international agencies during the Cold War to be a simple echo of the expansionist imaginary; rather, I argue that, in a certain time and space, the ideal of farmers occupying the ‘empty lands’ of Latin America would be taken up by AIA to justify a liberal and democratic society, sometimes amalgamating with agrarian ideals based on latifundia and with still visible scars of plantation slavery. In countries like Brazil, the notion of ‘free lands’ to the West and successive comparisons with the myth of the US frontier fomented the debate and legitimised conquering hinterlands: ‘the last great frontier of the Western Hemisphere now lies south of Rio Grande’,¹⁷ asserted Texas A&M Dean E.J. Kyle during his 1943 visit to Nelson Rockefeller in Latin America; ‘fortunately’, John Camp would say in the early 1960s, Brazil has a large empty frontier area offering prospects for the development of a new rural economy. According to him, the opening of a new ‘West’ in Brazil should be conducted in the same manner as the opening of the US West under the Homestead Act after the Civil War.¹⁸

In addition, programmes such as Point Four and the Alliance for Progress synthesised some of the principles present in nineteenth and early twentieth century ideologies, incorporating them into larger prescriptive models of development and modernisation – above all, the temporality of programmes like the Alliance for Progress is posited as diachronic, meaning that the United States experiences a different *tempo* from that of Latin America, which in its future will achieve similar progress as long as it adopts the prescriptions of modernisation. Moreover, Americanisation here also means a multiple experience of exchange, liked that addressed by Hodge in his study on the legacies of British colonialism. Hodge’s argument may be adapted to this topic to understand, ‘the way development as a framework of ideas and practices emerged out of efforts to manage the social, economic, and ecological crises of the late colonial

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16. Lucia Lippi de Oliverira, *Americanos: representações de identidade nacional no Brasil e nos Estados Unidos* (Belo Horizonte: Editora da UFMG, 2000), p. 133.
 17. Edwin Jackson Kyle, ‘The mission of the land-grant colleges in promoting our good neighbor policies among the Latin American republics’, *Science, New Series* 97 (2507) (1943): 55.
 18. Gerhardt Colby and Charlotte Dennett, *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil* (New York: Open Road Media, 2019), p. 289.

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world'. According to Hodge, the economic interwar depression and the rising social unrest 'marked a critical turning point in the colonial encounter, setting off a far-reaching process of official rethinking and reform designed to forestall popular discontent and give a new lease on life and legitimacy to the imperial project'.¹⁹ By the end of WWII, conferences such as Bretton Woods indicated an intense exchange of technical experience, in which foundations such as Ford and Rockefeller played a decisive role in the financing and adoption of practices created in colonial encounters. On the other hand, as we shall see, although the tradeoffs do exist, the AIA actually followed a pattern closer to that consolidated through the New Deal.

The renewal of studies on the relationship between the US and Latin America from a anti- or post-colonial perspective does not relativise power structures to the point of denying the asymmetrical relations between the two regions. Although their works seek to identify resistances and unforeseen rearrangements in the hierarchies of power, the authors who have developed this approach have no intention of glossing over the interventionist character, the intention of domination and the civilising perspective embedded in the imperial actions of the US.²⁰ Shifting the debate's focus to culture, gender, ethnicity, linguistic analysis – and environment – as well as questioning static concepts of modernity, development, state, nation and nature, and demonstrating the role of local actors in the constitution of these power relations, does not mean leaving aside the power asymmetries built up over time. In Venezuela, Rockefeller surrounded himself with similarly minded people who, with their academic and business knowledge and insights as government insiders, were able to implement the desired activities. In the Brazilian experience, it is important to note the importance of Kenneth Kadow, John Benjamin Griffing, Walter Crawford and Santiago Apodaca, among others, in the foundation of the AIA's actions, especially when Rockefeller withdrew from it in the 1950s during his tenure as New York state governor.

Nelson Rockefeller scholars have proposed an inspiring interpretation – since it does not necessarily exclude or oppose philanthropy and profit, capitalism and assistance, mission and domination. In this approach, for Nelson Rockefeller, charity and business did not possess well-defined boundaries, as addressed

19. James Morgan Hodge, *The Triumph of the Expert. Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of the British Empire* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007), p. 2.

20. Azevedo, *En nome da América*, p. 21.

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by the AIA co-founder John E. Lockwood.²¹ For instance, the activities of the AIA and IBEC were born, as previously observed, under the same institution. Perhaps the AIA was the ‘Sunday’ agency, where the millionaire could follow the philanthropic tradition of the Rockefeller family and carry out charitable activities, while IBEC would be the ‘Weekday’ company, directed towards doing business and consequently obtaining profits – part of which could be reverted to philanthropy.²² In a way, the renewal of studies on imperialism has prompted different perspectives that can broaden the discussion on Nelson Rockefeller’s and the AIA’s actions in Brazil and the rest of Latin America. Again, studies on the Rockefeller Foundation have generated novel interpretations. *Missionaries of Science*, a book edited by Peruvian historian Marcos Cueto in 1994, indicates that the concern with the diffusion of scientific knowledge was not simply a form of domination.²³ Moreover, historian Steven Palmer clarifies this perspective: analysing the Rockefeller Foundation’s work in Costa Rica in the first decades of the twentieth century, Palmer argues that the bibliography on this agency necessarily adopts an imperialist approach; on the other hand, he raises new questions around scholars’ addressing of political and everyday practices in the countries hosting these programmes. In this perspective, once Rockefeller Foundation established a scientific mission to combat hookworm in Costa Rica, the foundation’s programmes were subject to new influences from environmental dynamics hitherto unknown to US experts, as well as local experts having impacts on their initial ideals.²⁴ Palmer states that the Rockefeller Foundation’s initial intention in promoting biomedical knowledge faced strong resistance from the population because of the ethnic-cultural diversity found in the British Caribbean. He indicates that, rather than converting the masses to scientific truth and a purely biomedical understanding of hygiene, this early public health apparatus made deep concessions to the cultural differences and medical practices of the target population and ultimately legitimised and promoted medical pluralism.²⁵ Thus, for Palmer, initiatives in international

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21. Cary Reich, *The Life of Nelson A. Rockefeller: Worlds to Conquer (1908–1958)* (New York: Doubleday, 1996), p. 407.
 22. *Ibid.*, p. 408.
 23. Marcos Cueto (ed.), *Missionaries of Science: the Rockefeller Foundation and Latin America* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994).
 24. Steven Palmer, ‘Central American encounters with Rockefeller public health, 1914–1921’, in Gilbert Joseph, Catherine Legrand and Ricardo Salvatore (eds), *Close Encounters of Empire: Writing the Cultural History of U.S.-Latin America Relations* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), p. 312.
 25. *Ibid.*

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public health are not a simple reflection of imperialist imposition. This leads us to the core of an important truth about international public health: its desire for uniformity and biopolitical processing is not easily consistent with the need for active consent by subjects of the action. Thus, to understand its historical impact, Palmer believes that scholars need to combine an analysis of the institutional, in which ideologies and methods may in fact seem very uniform, with a careful study of local manifestations in which the norm is the verification of enormously varied and fundamentally different results.²⁶

More recently, historian Antonio Pedro Tota made an interpretative effort in this sense. Nelson was an imperialist, but he was also the philanthropist seeking to redeem the sins of his family and his social class, he states. Above all, Rockefeller considered himself the instrument of transformation and progress in the construction of modern nations in Latin America; he saw bringing the American standard of life to the region as his ‘mission’. He was all this together,²⁷ a multi-faceted actor throughout his performance and, even given his great effort to ‘Americanize’ Brazil and Latin America, his intentions, projects and actions cannot be considered a mere imposition. Years earlier, Tota put forward a very precise argument that will serve as a complement in our analysis: he claimed that the process of Americanisation in the 1940s happened under certain conditions, since a people only incorporates certain cultural values of another people if it makes sense in the general set of its culture. This means that cultural assimilation is not only imitation, but also a complicated process of recreation.²⁸ More recently, in a similar attempt, historian Tiago Saraiva explored the modernist notion of anthropophagy as ‘part of a continuum of historical practices’ able to subsume social, economic and biological spheres of existence.²⁹ Following these insights, I delineate how the AIA’s actions also transcended the initial boundaries of American attempts to establish an informal empire. So, thinking of Palmer’s study on Central America, while Costa Rican elites found in the practices of the Foundation a model that could enable the advances of social medicine, the AIA introduced models of agricultural modernisation modified in light of experiences over decades. Later, local governments nationalised these,

26. Ibid.

27. Carlos Haag, ‘O capitalista missionário: a aventura brasileira de Nelson Rockefeller’, *Pesquisa Fapesp*, São Paulo, n. 157 (2009): 90.

28. Antonio Pedro Tota, *O imperialismo sedutor: a americanização do Brasil na época da Segunda Guerra* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2000), p. 193.

29. Tiago Saraiva, ‘Anthropophagy and sadness: cloning citrus in São Paulo in the Plantationocene era’, *History and Technology* 34 (1) (2018): 89–99.

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increasingly distancing them from possible philanthropic ideals. In short, the sense of philanthropy changed according to the experiences of negotiation and/or conflict between the different groups involved in the process.

The bibliography on Nelson Rockefeller is unanimous about one element: his anti-communist views. In this regard, the multimillionaire was a man of his time: white, rich and privileged in several aspects, he opposed the rise of Nazism – although its remnants in Argentina did not worry him too much – and, when Hitler and Mussolini were defeated, he directed his fury toward the communists. Obviously, this was expected behaviour for a wealthy Republican in the United States; overwhelmed by Macarthyist hysteria, Rockefeller and other influential men created modernising apparatuses during Point Four as a way to roll back communism. As these instruments became ineffective, they opted for torture and the elimination of left-wing supporters in Latin America, sponsoring coups, strengthening authoritarian governments and informing Central Intelligence Agency agents. Thus, the anti-communist dispute in the 1950s began with the diffusion of educational programmes during Point Four and ended in the 1970s with support for training programmes for torture agents during the Alliance for Progress period. The participation of the US government or figures like Rockefeller in the anti-USSR and Cuba agenda is a canonical subject, but during the 1950s other less-studied enemies joined anti-Communism. In fact, in my research, I have rarely found direct mention of communism; if capitalism and communism divided the hearts and minds of politicians and decision-makers, technicians faced bureaucracy, tradition and patrimonialism in their daily lives. For this reason, if fighting communism was the ultimate goal in the minds of US modernisers and their Latin American allies, other struggles took place on the battlefield of bureaucracy and lack of resources, where technocracy faced political profiling for positions in Latin America.

Instead of understanding the AIA as a *continuum* of Nelson Rockefeller's projects in Venezuela with Creole Petroleum and in Brazil with the Office of the Coordinator of the Inter-American Affairs (OIAA), I suggest the pursuit of other issues left unexplored by the classic historiography of scholars such as Dalrymple. For instance, I explore internal aspects of the American economy around 1945; at the same time, the departure from an isolationist political posture justified the supposed need to shape the world in the image and likeness of the USA, as evidenced by the rise of development and modernisation ideologies. Moreover, I discuss how some of the characters involved in the creation of the AIA had a broad sense of their strength in the making of a new

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world order. On the other hand, I shed light on how Latin-American elites pursued development on their own basis and how local power often resisted.

This book has three parts: the first, 'New York – Caracas – Rio de Janeiro', explores Nelson Rockefeller's early experiences, travelling from his comfortable office situated in the Rockefeller Plaza to Latin America. In the first chapter, I demonstrate how new programmatic content sought to differentiate itself from imperialism and colonialism to justify its work outside the territory of the United States. Here, I elaborate on the ideological proximity between the emerging ideal of development and modernisation and the AIA's perception about its role in the underdeveloped world. From this assumption, I identify in the second chapter how the coordinator of the Office for Coordination of Commercial and Cultural Relations between the American Republics – later, Coordinator of Inter-American Affairs between 1940 and 1944, and finally Office of Inter-American Affairs – founded a first organised intervention in Latin America that survived the Good Neighbor Policy and stimulated the emergence of agricultural modernisation programmes after World War II. Finally, I demonstrate in chapters 3 and 4 how the resurgence of political nationalism post-1945 hardened negotiations between private US associations and Latin American countries. The rise of *Acción Democrática* in Venezuela (chapter 3) became a key example in two senses: first, Latin Americans were also seeking ways to insert themselves into the industrialised world; second, the difficulties of negotiation led North Americans to invest increasingly in philanthropic rhetoric, as discussed through the *Serviço de Alimentação da Previdência Social* (Social Welfare Food Service, SAPS) case in chapter 4. In summary, the disagreements among US modernisers and Latin American political elites demonstrate how the initial idea of governing and organising Latin America from a distant office in New York encountered local resistance. The modernising intervention intended by white-wealthy-men with degrees from the most renowned universities was not readily accepted – actually, it was challenged.

Part II, entitled 'Over the Hills and Far Away: Dusting off the Boots in Latin America', discusses how North American agricultural experts immersed themselves in the politics and the rural world of Latin America – to promote social change. Starting in chapter 5, I describe how, from the 1950s on, local leaders and government officials engaged in dialogue with and adapted the agricultural development projects in an anthropophagic way. Understanding that the history of Latin America is not only the history of oppression and resistance, I guide my argument via the constant disputes around the creation and control of agencies dedicated to agricultural research and modernisation.

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This form of Latin American cultural anthropophagy – according to Saraiva’s approach – which appropriates ideas and transforms them into something tangible, figures in the case of São Paulo as a classic piece of extension service work. In chapters 6 and 7, on the other hand, I offer a counterpoint to the São Paulo case, discussing how the ideal of merging agriculture and industry found a favourable environment in Minas Gerais. In this Brazilian state, the most important agricultural development programme of the second half of the twentieth century, the ACAR, developed a supervised credit and technical assistance model, closer to the US Farm Security Administration ideal. Little by little, Brazil served as fertile ground for the AIA’s programmes, though Nelson Rockefeller completely separated himself from the venture in 1958, when he became governor of New York.

In the final part of the book, entitled ‘Low-Budget Imperialism’, I demonstrate in chapter 8 how the AIA gravitated to the orbit of Point Four, failing in its attempt to settle its modernising projects in Asia. On the other hand, between 1957 and 1963, the IRI Research Institute became the experimental research arm within the AIA, offering practical solutions in terms of techniques and technologies. In a sense, IRI ensured the continuity of the ideals forged by AIA even after the philanthropic agency closed in 1968, by associating itself with the nascent green revolution – expanding its territory of operation and promoting the global circulation of technology (chapter 9). Eventually, in the late 1950s and early 1960s, the usual sponsors reduced their funding to every project. On the other hand, I demonstrate in chapter 10 how Brazilian political elites accepted the ACAR model. Together with other national or Point Four-linked institutions, they nationalised the programme initiated by the AIA in 1949. Finally, in chapter 11, I demonstrate how the historical context of the Alliance for Progress was influential in displacing relatively small agencies and institutions such as the AIA because of the governmental programmes and bigger resources available in a new era of technical cooperation – these became possible because of the AIA’s and other agencies’ work since WWII. In its last seven years, the AIA worked more in connection with Alliance for Progress projects or as a true think tank, spreading its ideals; its 1960s projects, along with their predecessors, were forgotten, merged or adapted at regional and national levels in the years following 1968, when the Association closed its operations. In summary, this book – taking the methodological choice not to follow the chronology of events religiously, but to revisit them according to the needs of the argument – hopes to contribute to a renewed research agenda based on multi-scale and connected studies of agricultural modernisation in the Global South.