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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Rural social engineering: reordering the countryside in decolonising India and Malaysia (1947–60)

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Abstract

In an interview in the early 1980s, Michel Foucault predicated that, from the eighteenth century on, modern government rationality has essentially been a form of urban planning. This article challenges this argument. It discusses the formation of rural social engineering, that is, the state-led efforts to design new men and new social orders outside the cities through plans, during decolonisation in Asia. Based on the comparative study of India after Partition (1947) and British Malaya during the counter-insurgency war (1948–60), the argument is that we can understand rural social engineering particularly in the 1950s less as a consequence of colonial inheritance or international change but as the result of how decolonisation unfolded including its patterns of violence, social conflict, and migration. As such, rural social engineering constituted a central element in the postcolonial 'art of the government of man'.

Introduction

In an interview with Paul Rabinow conducted in the early 1980s, Michel Foucault reflected on the meaning and relevance of space in modern forms of governance.[1] Taking the history of architecture as his starting point, the French philosopher and historian observed a particular significance of urban architecture for the way political elites in Europe developed their knowledge of and strategies for how to govern people. Since the eighteenth century, the organisation of urban space including the infrastructure and collective facilities of cities and urban hygienic measures moved into the very centre of 'the art of the government of men'. More precisely, Foucault claimed that since that time cities were 'no longer islands beyond the common law'. Rather, 'with the problems they raised, and the particular forms that they took, [they] served as the models for the governmental rationality that was to apply to the whole of the territory.'[2]

Put differently, Foucault suggested that roughly since the eighteenth century and particularly since the French Revolution, political and social elites across the continent developed a range of utopias and projects that interpreted societies and their states mainly, if not exclusively in terms of large cities.[3] Cities became the manifestation of a new, progress-oriented notion of the future,[4] which the modern state sought to conquer by universalising the principles of urban planning, policing, and administration over its entire territory. As a consequence, the organisation of cities not only transformed into a central ideological element of the makeability of societies but was increasingly equated with it. The design and organisation of cities increasingly stood for the art of the government of men and the planning of the future as such.

Foucault describes a feature of modern governmentality that indeed became central to the ever-growing competencies of state bureaucracies and their regulating procedures, although he largely ignored the role of colonies and other European overseas territories.[5] Nevertheless, with a view to late colonial and early postcolonial societies in Asia after 1945 Foucault's observations

are a stimulating starting point, especially because they require some important qualifications and specifications.

Throughout the twentieth century, the planning and reorganisation of cities turned into a central playing field of colonial administrators, postcolonial planners and development experts. However, given the fact that in almost all decolonising Asian societies after 1945 the vast majority of citizens lived in the countryside and that some of the foremost problems of these societies including poverty, malnourishment, illiteracy, and social discrimination were particularly acute among rural communities, rural areas required special attention from colonial and especially postcolonial elites. Although cities such as New Delhi, Jakarta, or Kuala Lumpur functioned as the lighthouses of modern statehood and postcolonial aspirations, their structures and policies could not simply be generalised across the hugely diverse rural communities with their socio-economic, cultural and political specificities.

As a consequence, the village turned into a central concept within the nationalist imaginations of the decolonisation era. After the Second World War, the political-ideological framings of the village across South and Southeast Asia oscillated between a site of authenticity and democracy,[6] a symbol of backwardness and oppression,[7] and a late imperial security threat to be contained by military and civilian modernisation efforts.[8] In spite of their diversity, these imaginations shared the view that the village ought to be framed as a key unit of national reconstruction. At the same time, postcolonial decision-makers defined this reconstruction through the reorganisation of urban space, the reshaping of urban architecture, and the reordering of urban societies as the prototype communities of the new nation.[9]

In contrast to Foucault's reasoning, therefore, the history of decolonising Asia suggests that it makes more sense to understand modern governmentality as a dialectic between rural social engineering and urban planning rather than the universalisation of urban governance principles across the entire national territory and its population. As I will argue below, this perspective proposes to analyse the concepts and practices of rural development in an intrinsic relationship with urban planning and the actual transformation of cities. Furthermore, it means that in a global-historical understanding of modern planning and governmentality that goes beyond the limited confines of European history, we may no longer be able to sustain a clear distinction between the modern historical formations of the rural and the urban.

In the ever-growing body of scholarly literature on the history of (rural) development planning in Asia after 1945 there are numerous approaches to explain where ideas on the reordering of rural and urban life came from, how they were implemented, and what consequences they had both for local communities and the planners themselves. Generally, the overall picture suggests that there was no single timely and spatial origin of these ideas and that they remained contested throughout the years of their evolution. Among the various historiographical attempts to explain these processes, I would like to highlight three important lines of argumentation before I dig deeper into the cases of decolonising India and Malaysia.

A first group of contributions to the historiography of (rural) development planning emphasises the roots of these discourses and policies in the colonial era and thus puts the focus on aspects of continuity since the nineteenth and early twentieth century. In the case of the British Empire and its successor states, it is important to realise that the British Colonial Service reached its numerical climax after 1945, when the British authorities added another 15,000 new officers to its ranks.[10] This happened at a time when the decolonisation of South Asia was already on the horizon. In the decades after the Second World War, these British colonial officers became the backbone of Anglo-Saxon development planning after the disintegration of the Empire and in this way facilitated the gradual transformation of colonial development policies into a new international aid industry.[11] A similar argument on colonial continuities can be made about the intellectual history of development. The basic ideas of modernisation theory, which determined most of the development debates and planning after 1945, have a long history and go back to the nineteenth century, when the tradition-to-modernity paradigm took shape in European thought and

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policymaking.[12] Furthermore, it seems debatable in how far the post-1945 development projects indeed added altogether new perspectives to a range of liberal-capitalist and socialist development paradigms that evolved in the aftermath of the First World War and the Great Depression.[13] In brief, the continuity of colonial development ideas and policies ought to be an important element in our historical explanation of rural planning during and after decolonisation.

A second line of argumentation concerns the worldviews and personal attitudes of political elites and planners in early postcolonial Asia. In a way, this perspective includes colonial continuities but concentrates more on individual biographies, the formative period of indigenous elites in colonised societies, and their careers after independence. In this light, the history of development is less a history of (colonial) institutions, economic interests, and political clienteles. Instead, this history can be written as an intellectual history[14] or as an international history of knowledge transfers,[15] which illustrates the evolution of development ideas among local and international elites and their social networks. The elements that play a central role in these approaches are the widely shared fascination with industrialisation as probably the most important paradigm for rural and urban development plans during and after decolonisation; the enormous trust in technology and its capacities to address all kinds of problems including what was perceived as economic backwardness, the persistence of tradition-based social cleavages, and territorial disintegration;[16] and the fundamental importance of expertise in the modernisation of rural areas and the state.[17] In return, this expertise also legitimised the political and economic elites, their overall importance for the future of society and their political significance after the anti-colonial struggles had come to an end.

A third approach to the history of development emphasises the inter- and transnational character of (rural) development planning, particularly since 1945. Although this interpretation, influenced by the overall trend in historiography to focus on translocal connectivity and the entanglement of societies across large distances, has recently received a significant amount of scholarly attention, it is not entirely new. Already in the 1980s historians of international development framed the conjunctions and waves of development planning after the Second World War as global trends, which were closely connected to the geopolitics of the Cold War and the policies of international funding institutions.[18] In this light, pressure for agrarian reform, greater emphasis on the rural poor, an improvement of access to social services, technology, and infrastructure for rural communities, and more efforts to increase agricultural output and productivity were the result of changes in the international aid industry and its strategic priorities.

More recently, historians argued that it is insufficient to understand the formation of development paradigms after 1945 exclusively or even primarily in terms of continuity from the colonial era. Development experts both in international institutions such as the World Bank and within decolonising societies in Asia increasingly shared the view that the persistent social and economic structures of rural areas were no longer suitable for the modernisation of society. As a consequence, these structures required far-reaching state interventions, also against the resistance of rural communities.[19] The village thus shifted from the margins of colonial development debates into the centre of postcolonial planning. Planning understood as 'imagining the postcolonial future'[20] had indeed colonial origins in the interwar period. After 1945, however, it was the result of a rapidly globalising academic and political exchange, which cannot be understood within the confines of imperial or national history.[21] Thus, rural development ideas and practices in decolonising societies are increasingly seen as local facets of an evolving global expertise and a new, institutionalised aid industry that took shape in the context of the globalising Cold War.[22]

Building on these three historiographical approaches, I intend to add another line of argumentation based on a comparative analysis of decolonising India and British Malaya. Both societies were former British colonies but experienced very different forms of decolonisation and patterns of rural development after independence. My hypothesis is that rural planning in late imperial and early postcolonial Asia was not only the result of colonial inheritance, personal views of indigenous elites, and translocal institutional and political dynamics specific to the evolving Cold War

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era; rather, rural planning was also determined by the character of decolonisation in a way that restructured and traumatised society. This argument suggests that we understand better the historical imaginations of the postcolonial future outside the cities if we consider more centrally which course decolonisation, understood as attempts to reorder the nation and the world,[23] took and what this course meant for rural as well as urban communities. With India and British Malaya, I compare two distinct manifestations of decolonisation in the form of the humanitarian disaster of Partition (1947) and late imperial warfare of the so-called Emergency (1948–60).

To facilitate the comparative approach below, there are a few conceptual clarifications necessary. For one, the historical achievements of Asian societies since 1945 in improving the well-being of rural communities have been impressive. However, the differences within Asia remain significant.[24] Malaysia is among the best performers in terms of poverty reduction in rural areas, whereas India has always been lagging behind by a significant margin.

At the same time, it remains challenging to clearly define what we exactly mean by rural and thus what kind of empirical material needs to be included in such a comparison. Parts of the existing literature on (the history of) rural development suggests that the most compelling definition of rural is that it is everything outside the cities and thus simply the opposite of urban.[25] For my historical comparison, though, a more useful approach is to understand the rural as a result of political imagination, that is, a constructed location of economic backwardness, socio-cultural conservatism, and political unpredictability outside the cities beyond effective state control. The rural is thus characterised by a high potential for unrest and other forms of law and order challenges for state authorities.[26] Correspondingly, cities can be analysed as political constructions that depended on the invention of the village as an object of modern political decision-making.[27]

In light of these constructivist understandings of both the village and the city, rural development and rural planning initiatives can be understood as the range of political efforts to regulate the rural and thus alter its socio-economic and cultural character. The ultimate goal of such efforts is to integrate rural communities and territories into the normative framework of state authorities and subordinate them under their effective control.

A second point of clarification stems from the conceptual entanglement between the rural and the urban. As we cannot define nor historically understand the one without the other, a sole focus on rural planning initiatives as a subject of historical enquiry seems unrealistic. As both cases of India and British Malaya will demonstrate, rural development imaginations have usually been closely connected with ideas of urban planning. What is more, international as well as domestic development experts specialised in rural community transformation were usually urban themselves in terms of personal circumstances, social embedding, and political outlooks.[28] In the late 1940s and 1950s, this dialectic of the rural and the urban frequently combined economic change with a wide-ranging restructuration of rural communities along the cornerstones of modernisation and industrialisation. For this reason, I prefer the term rural social engineering to rural planning. As the history of planning frequently tells us little about what actually happened on the ground,[29] rural social engineering goes beyond the drafting of plans for people outside the cities and includes the comprehensive agenda of state-induced social, economic and mental transformations and their far-reaching consequences for these communities.[30]

From these clarifications follows that my comparison between India and British Malaya is not about a detailed reconstruction of planning measures undertaken by the Indian authorities and the British colonial administration in Malaya. Rather, my approach is hermeneutic as I try to explain in how far these measures, generally drafted and implemented after the largest turmoil of decolonisation had abated, can be explained through the course of decolonisation itself. My argument therefore diverts from the emphasis of colonial continuities and devotes more attention to the ruptures and the newness of decolonising societies in order to find out how the meanings of rural social engineering have been their result. The sources I will be using for this comparison come mainly from Indian and Singaporean state archives and the archives of the Church Missionary Society in Birmingham.

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The birth of rural social engineering in humanitarian disaster: India after Partition

When British-India was divided into the two independent states of India and Pakistan in August 1947, both states found themselves in a rapidly evolving humanitarian disaster. Already several months before Partition, the communal (i.e., inter-religious) tensions rose significantly resulting in severe problems of the British-colonial authorities to sustain law and order in the main northern Indian cities as well as in the rural areas that later became the new border regions between India and West and East Pakistan.[31] The mass violence in the aftermath of Partition, which killed hundreds of thousands and forced millions more to migrate, was the immediate context in which early postcolonial forms of rural social engineering emerged. The enormous task of providing 'relief and rehabilitation' to the refugees and integrate them as citizens into their recipient society not only dominated Indian politics in the first years after 1947 but also deeply influenced the first five-year plan, which covered the years 1951–6. At stake was not only India's territorial integration and the accommodation of the refugees, but the foundation of a new social order capable of absorbing migrants, rural and urban communities, and various religious communities and castes.

In 1948, the Advisory Planning Board, a predecessor of the National Planning Commission, passed the government's industrial policy resolution. In this resolution, the Board stated that 'the nation has now set itself to establish a social order where justice and equality of opportunity shall be secured to all the people. ... For this purpose, careful planning and integrated effort over the whole field of national activity was necessary.' A National Planning Commission should be given the task to formulate concrete programmes of 'development and to secure their execution'.[32] Consequently, Prime Minister Nehru, who chaired the Commission and whose reputation should become 'as high as can be' during these years of disaster management,[33] directed these national planning efforts initially towards the integration of refugees into the cities, where the vast majority of them arrived, but also the rural areas of northern India.

From the very beginning, though, these endeavours towards a new social order were hampered by conflicting ideas on how such a new social order should look like, which role already existing villages ought to play, and how new forms of settlement and model villages could be built up in order to manifest the modern identity of postcolonial India. Among the new political and bureaucratic elites in Delhi existed a significant fraction with a sceptical, even negative attitude towards Indian life in the villages. One of the most outspoken critics of the village communities was B. R. Ambedkar, the justice minister and representative of the Dalit communities.[34] In an extensive statement on the 'basic features of the Indian constitution' held in front of the Constituent Assembly in 1948, he criticised tendencies within the government and among 'intellectuals' to imagine future India as an assembly of village governments as 'pathetic'.[35] In his view, the village was nothing but a 'sink of localism, a den of ignorance, narrow-mindedness and communalism' that not only justified but demanded large-scale interventions in order to replace the current social order with an entirely new one.[36] In order to combat provincialism and inter-religious conflict (communalism), the Indian state and its constitution ought to select the individual as its key unit and provide far-reaching safeguards for social and religious minorities.

Nehru himself and large parts of his senior civil servants were not as extreme as Ambedkar in their views on rural India but also for them the cities were 'the highest cultural achievements of the age'.[37] Correspondingly, they shared a strong notion of rural backwardness and repressive provincialism that needed to be addressed by the state. As many of the senior civil servants in Delhi were trained in Great Britain and quite a few had graduated from prominent universities such as Cambridge and the London School of Economics, they strongly believed in social change initiated and completed by enlightened and competent state elites.[38] With this self-perception they stood in the long tradition of English utilitarian thinking that foresaw almost indefinite power to the government and the law to modernise and 'civilise' India according to English standards.[39] The severe humanitarian crisis after Partition provided a unique opportunity for such interventions. The concrete measures taken to transform rural life in northern India after 1947, however, remained

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riddled with political conflict. One group of tensions resulted from the divergence between the practical requirements of rural communities and the interests of the national administrative services.[40] Another set of conflicts evolved around the contradictions between a strongly hierarchical social structure of rural communities and the ideals of an egalitarian India as described by the Advisory Planning Board.

An immediate concern among the decision-makers in Delhi was the occupational structure of the refugees seen as not in line with the economic features of rural communities in northern India. As a consequence, the social integration of these new citizens was declared a major economic challenge. Kshitish Chandra Neogy, member of the Constituent Assembly and Nehru's first Minister of Relief and Rehabilitation, brought this issue to the attention of the Assembly in late 1947.[41] Particularly in East Punjab, where non-Muslim evacuees continued arriving from Pakistan while Muslim refugees had left India, the problem acquired a massive scale. Neogy urged the government for more and better rural economic planning, a plea he illustrated with the example of carpenters. While there already lived a sufficient number of carpenters (Hindus) in the region's rural communities, even more carpenters would migrate from Pakistan. At the same time, blacksmiths, who were traditionally Muslims, had largely left the region while this skill was hardly ever found among refugees. The necessary conclusion for Neogy was that the government needed to encourage or even force these skilled artisans to give up their hereditary craft and take to something more in line with the economic requirements of local rural communities.

Although the Minister's argument seems anecdotal, the problem he described turned into a major concern of rural social engineering in the aftermath of Partition. The government estimated in 1949 that among the 4.2 million refugees arriving in India, between 3 and 3.2 million would originate from rural areas,[42] for which some form of occupation needed to be found. One solution was to reallocate arable land to families with an agricultural background. The approach the authorities came up with to achieve this was group allotment of land, which they called a 'great promise for the future'.[43] The idea was to assign ten acres of land to each family and then group families together into joint management units to optimise the agricultural self-organisation and demarcate the land units as fairly as possible. In spite of these noble plans, access to arable land remained one of the core challenges among agricultural refugees. Critics of the government policy on the allocation of land have later emphasised that the authorities failed particularly the landless agricultural workers, which traditionally belong to the poorest sections of rural Indian communities.[44] As a consequence, the failure of land redistribution in the aftermath of Partition reinforced rural inequality in favour of the landed agricultural classes.

Another approach to address the occupational problems in rural northern India was to build new model villages and small towns with their distinct, self-sufficient economic structure. This strategy was not only based on the observation that refugees with unsuitable professional skills arrived in rural communities between Delhi and Lahore. An equally important factor was the soaring population pressure on the main cities in the region, particularly Delhi.

In April 1950, Mohanlal Saksena, Union Minister of Rehabilitation between 1948 and 1950, wrote to Vallabhbhai Patel, the home minister, that it was an enormous challenge for the government to find shelter and employment for the two or so million refugees that had already arrived in India. An occupational survey had brought to light that many of these refugees would be tillers of the spoil, weavers, and artisans, which were no doubt useful professions: 'Unfortunately, many of them are pouring into camps in the cities and towns in India, and the same are crowded to the limits of their capacity. I feel that if we are to succeed in the task of settlement of this vast mass of humanity, it can be only on the basis of planned dispersal to the multitude of India's hamlets and remote villages.'[45] The foundation of new small towns in rural northern Indian areas was therefore seen as a decisive means to facilitate the dispersal of refugees away from Delhi and other main cities. For this reason, the intellectual and political history of the new town concept in India are closely connected with a new subject of social planning: the villager in urban environments.[46]

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As the mass migration in the aftermath of Partition unfolded, the government in Delhi envisioned the development of new townships as an important element in its rehabilitation strategy for East Punjab and other regions affected by large-scale migration. For the authorities it was important that these new towns would fit into the schemes of national planning and thus constitute not a separate element of rural social engineering but become an integral part of early comprehensive national planning efforts.[47] One preferred location for such a new township was Faridabad, in the late 1940s around 24 kilometres south of Delhi on Mathura Road. The national government took the decision to erect a model town at this location in 1949 in order to settle around fifty thousand 'displaced persons' originating from Dera Ghazi Khan and the North West Frontier Provinces, now Pakistan. The planning and the construction of this town happened directly under the authority of the national government with Rajendra Prasad, who become the chairman of the Faridabad Development Board, and Otto Koenigsberger, a German architect specialised in urban development in Africa, Asia and Latin America, as the Board's main planning advisor.

Gradually, the model town of Faridabad, constructed with the support of the Indian army, replaced the refugee camp in the same area. According to Nehru, the purpose of this new town was not only to provide food and shelter but also to provide training and work for the new citizens. As he saw it, the deployment of the military was ambivalent: it had many logistical advantages but also required the tight supervision through national authorities due to its exemplary nature.[48] Both the camp in Faridabad and its successor, the new town were therefore considered a role model for the new social and political order the planning authorities had envisioned earlier.[49] In its prototypical function of national significance, Faridabad was the most important site of a whole range of 14 new townships in northern and western India to release pressure from the main cities and to accommodate refugees in rural areas with unsuitable professional backgrounds.[50]

Several years later, when the Faridabad model town was completed, the Indian authorities published a brochure on the 'new life' of previously 'displaced persons' in these new townships. The contrast to Ambedkar's dark vision of the Indian village is striking. As the Ministry of Education saw it, life in these towns was good and modern. 'Training-Cum-Production Centres' provided the professional skills needed in a modern economy; Montessori-trained teachers provided free and compulsory education to all children including regular physical training; women received 'condensed courses' on general education and professional training such as tailoring, embroidery, and knitting; and medical officers took care of the sick and provided 'extra milk and special diet' to women and children.[51] The new citizens in these townships came either from urban backgrounds in Pakistan or from rural communities and thus received training in new skills that were meant to make them fit for modern life in the young nation. The construction works alone were supposed to absorb hundreds of thousands of labourers for several years.[52] Refugees began to dominate the trade in and around Delhi.[53] Overall, though, the capacity of these new settlements was far too limited to absorb the enormous number of refugees. The consequence was that in the first half of the 1950s the slums in the outskirts of Delhi grew significantly in population and spatial expansion and the government was increasingly concerned about the hygienic, sanitary and economic conditions in these unregulated settlements.[54]

Apart from the question whether the information on the model towns provided in the brochure is historically adequate or not, this list of achievements can also be read as a contrast programme to what was perceived as the backwardness of the village and the multiple challenges the village constituted for the government and its modernisation mission. Towns like Faridabad ought to become the lighthouses of modern Indian society with their high degree of planning and order, new social arrangements, and comprehensive organisation of life. In that respect, they manifest Foucault's notion of urban planning as the paradigm of modern governmentality, although not entirely disconnected from the burning issues of planning and social restructuration in the countryside. What these new townships namely also illustrate is how blurry the boundaries were between rural and urban social engineering to erect a new social order. Both fields, the agriculture-dominated villages in rural India and the restructuration of India's major cities were

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seen as two interconnected problems that needed to be addressed together. The comprehensive objective of creating a new social order demanded comprehensive strategies of social engineering, which necessarily had to combine rural and urban change.

A final measure of rural social engineering relevant here is the Community Development and Rural Extension Programme initiated by the national government on 2nd October 1952. In contrast to the township initiative and other rehabilitation measures, the purpose of this programme was 'to create from stagnant backward villages a vital, progressive rural community'.[55] The strategies the Programme deployed included innovation in agricultural production to increase overall productivity, the build up of new institutions to connect and coordinate rural communities and in this way increase the presence of the government in the villages, the implementation of sanitation and health programmes, and the improvement of education and infrastructure. It is important to realise that the goals of this programme were not limited to socio-economic indicators but also included an important mental dimension: the mindset of people living in rural communities should be prepared for comprehensive forms of change including their religious, social, and political orientation towards a more flexible, liberal and future-oriented worldview.[56]

The history of the Community Development Programme (CDP) is relatively well-researched.[57] I will thus limit myself to the discussion of a few core aspects in light of my hypothesis about the importance of postcolonial discontinuities and Partition as the formative context for the emergence of rural social engineering in independent India.

The Programme was based on a number of 'model village experiments' carried out by late colonial bureaucrats. Many of the experts in charge of these experiments remained influential after 1947 and carried over their expertise into the new initiative of the Indian government. Since the early twentieth century these experiments had been part of larger paradigms of rural social engineering that belonged to a transnational flow of expertise, money, agricultural inputs, and ideas of development and institutional setup.[58] In that sense, the post-independence CDP was part of a much longer translocal history of development expertise that had evolved over several decades with international civil society organisations, universities, American foundations, and missionaries feeding into the formulation and implementation of rural social engineering in India.

After 1947, the United States had a strong interest in advancing community development in India. Through the Ford Foundation, the United States Technical Cooperation Administration and other US-American development institutions, the United States supported these efforts of the Indian government together with similar endeavours in dozens of other so-called developing countries.[59] The Rockefeller Foundation and USAID also helped to connect agricultural research in India with comparable research in the Caribbean and Central America.[60]

In the mid-1960s, however, USAID abolished its community development unit and stopped its involvement in such activities abroad, including in India. The US authorities explained their policy change with mainly four crucial 'imperfections' of the community development approach: it was not capable of solving the Indian food crisis; it did not succeed in forming harmonious rural communities; it remained elitist and paternalistic; and it was not sufficiently accepted among local and international agricultural experts.[61] In contrast to some contemporary analysts who had interpreted India's CDP as a democratic procedure,[62] USAID saw it as too much aloof from the life realities of its target groups. Thus, although the idea of rural extension through community development might have been indeed 'revolutionary',[63] its course and outcome were less so.

In spite of its bumpy international career, the CDP in India did leave its mark on rural social engineering. An important impact was, for example, that it turned refugee townships into a model for agricultural innovation and community development. It connected rural social engineering in India with various international stakeholders who also remained present and involved after the CDP had been abolished.[64] Driven by the urgent need to provide food, shelter and work for a large number of refugees, the CDP transformed rural social engineering from a national political affair into a globalising agenda that combined local, national, and international dynamics.

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The priorities and strategies of the CDP were also reflected in the early attempts of India's national development planning with, again, less than satisfying results. In the early 1950s, when the Indian government considered the main bulk of its relief and rehabilitation initiative done, India's rural economy supplied over half of national product. Two consecutive good monsoons between 1953–5 provided the country with satisfying harvests.[65] As a consequence of Partition and its disruptions of India's rural and urban communities, the first five-year plan (1951–6) put a clear emphasis on agricultural output, the reallocation of land, and food supply.[66] In contrast to Gandhi, who had favoured a decentralised version of self-reliance in food production,[67] Nehru's vision for the nation was about state-led cooperative farming based on the latest agricultural techniques in order to achieve a 'prosperous agriculture' as the prerequisite for industrial progress.[68]

Close observers of India's performance in rural social engineering, though, found very critical words on these early planning efforts: instead of providing more food security, the government's approach to rural planning had increased the anxiety for food and far too little had been done to reduce rural unemployment;[69] the first five-year plans failed as redistributive devices because the actual outcome was not the provision of land to those who would have needed it the most;[70] the funds allocated to rural development were highly insufficient; and improper monitoring and a lack of close supervision of rural development schemes by bureaucrats largely remote from the rural life realities resulted in significant shortcomings of several rural social engineering efforts.[71] As a consequence, the rural poor were largely neglected in national planning.

To conclude the Indian case, Partition was an important formative context for the evolution of postcolonial forms of rural social engineering. Although its impact on the actual transformation of agriculture and rural life was limited, the new elites formulated the core visions of rural social engineering in relation and as a reaction to the humanitarian disaster of Partition. The Indian case also illustrates that ideas and measures of rural social engineering cannot be understood in isolation but need to be analysed in the context of urban developments. The early postcolonial planners saw both interconnected as they could only together lead to a new social order in a society with a new mindset.

Rural social engineering and late imperial warfare: decolonising Malaysia

While South Asia was confronted with the devastating humanitarian consequences of Partition and large-scale religious violence, the British authorities in Malaya initiated a military counter-insurgency campaign in 1948 against what they perceived as communist 'terrorists'.[72] This campaign resulted in outright warfare and a state of emergency until 1960. In the course of this war the British resettled around half a million, mainly ethnically Chinese people to pursue a number of strategic and economic goals that also had a transformative impact on rural communities both during the final stage of the British colonial rule as well as after independence in 1959.

While the general history of the Malayan Emergency and the anti-guerrilla warfare is well-documented,[73] I will concentrate on a few specific features of these years to analyse how this form of violent decolonisation determined rural social engineering. The deployment of forced and voluntary resettlement on a large scale was by no means a specificity of British Malaya. Around the same time, the British, French and later also US-American authorities applied similar strategies in various Asian and African societies. One of the most important features of these military campaigns was to create opportunities for far-reaching social transformation mainly in rural areas that would have been difficult, if not impossible to enforced in times of peace.[74] Interestingly, this aspect is not a particularly new insight created by contemporary historians but was an established framing of these campaigns while they were still ongoing and immediately after their completion.

In the early phase of the Malayan Emergency, British research on the situation of agricultural production and rural development in the colony had brought to light that Malaya's surface was still largely characterised by jungle and swamp and only a small share was actually arable land.

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The structure of agricultural production resulted in a high dependency on food imports and the overall dominance of one single crop: rubber.[75] Politically informed witnesses drew two conclusions from this observation: the rural areas of Malaya were socially and economically very backward; and it was very easy for communist guerrilla forces to hide in inaccessible territories and launch their military attacks from the jungles.[76] Correspondingly, observers writing after Malaysia's independence in 1959 concluded that the establishment of 'compact communities different from the traditional fragmented or open type of settlement' brought about a 'social revolution' that would have been far less comprehensive and would have taken much longer to achieve 'in ordinary circumstances'.[77]

Another view was that the (largely) forced resettlements of the Emergency were a 'vast social experiment'[78] and an 'experiment in democracy', which could only succeed when aligned with social, cultural and mental modernisation.[79] Others praised the 'educational and sociological benefits' of resettlements to integrate rural communities and particularly ethnic Chinese families into national modernisation processes.[80] In brief, the interpretation of counter-insurgency warfare in Malaya and elsewhere as an opportunity provider for far-reaching socio-economic transformations of rural communities was a central element of contemporary intellectual analysis.

The governmental and military authorities in British Malaya had a slightly broader view on the war and its resettlement programme as they also included strategic and economic considerations into their planning. For them, a central ambition of the war was to convert plantations and mines from 'half-governed places'[81] into fully controlled pillars of Malaya's export industry beyond the reach of communist and other anti-British forces.

But even these authorities saw the military campaign primarily as a tool of rural social engineering with the goal to transform rural communities as comprehensively as possible in a relatively short period of time. Among the foremost objectives of the resettlement were to congregate scattered rural population into areas 'where protection could be provided'; to concentrate the labour forces of tin and rubber industries and mines in larger settlements to be financed by the employing compagnies themselves; to acquire full control over food supplies to dry out any form of military opposition in the countryside; to suppress disruptions of rubber estates, road transports and other forms of vital infrastructure; and to transform these new villages into permanent settlements with a high degree of social services, drains, water supply, and sanitation.[82] The authorities also insisted that the around 400,000 people that had been resettled by the end of 1951, were not living in 'concentration camps', as the communist guerrilla groups had repeatedly stated, but that the wire fences were protective means to prevent any form of contact between civilians and the guerrillas.[83]

Both the academic comments on the Emergency and the strategic goals of the colonial authorities reveal that the most central motive of the campaign was to transform rural, poor and occasionally nomadic communities into citizens of a modern nation. Similar to India, these uprooted parts of the population provided a special target group for rural social engineering. The organisers of a so-called Rehabilitation Camp in Taiping, Malaya, formulated this mission very explicitly.[84] The idea behind resettlement was not only to concentrate dispersed groups into more manageable and thus also more controllable entities, but to 'condition such a man that he can take his place in society without danger to that society, to educate, or re-educate him mentally, morally, and physically, into the type of free citizen who will be a credit to his land of adoption.'[85] Resettlement as rural social engineering was therefore a combination of new social organisation within larger settlements of several hundred or thousands of families, modern education provided by the government and Christian missionaries, physical training classes for children and adults, and anti-communist propaganda.

In this way, the colonial government hoped that these new villages 'will be an important factor in the development of rural prosperity and the people by [*sic*] Malayanised, so they will become staunch defenders of democracy'.[86] In this grand-scale social experiment the provision of social infrastructure and some degree of welfare was a key requirement for rural communities to accept

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their 'new mode of life'.[87] Besides open repression, the military control of space and the application of force to resettle the families, the goal of the government was to convince these people about the benefits of their new way of living and the long-term economic perspectives provided through resettlement. In spite of the severe problems particularly in the first few years of the Emergency to provide access to sufficient food, social services, and employment and harsh restrictions of the freedom of movement, the authorities increasingly stabilised the situation in the second half of the 1950s and indeed managed to transform many of these new villages into modern permanent settlements.

Another important facet of the new villages as elements of rural social engineering was their physical location. The new social order to be achieved through resettlement was centrally defined through space or, in other words, through the relative location of these new villages within Malaysia's national territory. As mentioned earlier, the perception of British Malaya was strongly determined by the presence of jungle and swamps as the two dominant geographical elements of the colony's surface structure. Among other things, the resettlement projects were military efforts to carve rural communities out of the uncontrollable and largely impermeable jungle areas.

A report from British Officer drafted in early 1952 about the construction of a camp in Johore State illustrates this dynamic. Before their resettlement into the camp, the Malay families were miles apart 'in secondary and primary jungle and it was a tedious and exhausting business getting the headmen together for a meeting. It took over an hour and many threats to persuade them to move into a safe area.'[88] To erect the camp itself, the military and the home guards needed to uproot and remove more than five thousand trees, six gates needed to be built and a major road to be constructed. Together with the barbed wire around the entire compound these measures should have provided sufficient 'safety' for the new inhabitants.

Apart from the peculiar fact that this officer found it strange that it took him more than an hour to force these families to isolate themselves entirely from the forest and thus completely change their way of living, the document illustrates the distinct framing of jungles as an object of rural social engineering in late imperial development planning. These forests were not only increasingly synonymous with political violence in the evolving Cold War context,[89] but they also constituted a planning preference for the comprehensive agenda of social change through resettlement and the modernisation of village life. This new village life was not entirely removed from nature, but it accepted and accommodated a distinct, controllable form of nature such as plantations, allotment gardening and other forms of small-scale agriculture. At the same time, this new life needed to be carefully separated from uncontrollable forms of nature such as the jungles and swamps, which constituted an administrative-bureaucratic problem for rural social engineering and an imminent security threat for the colonial army.[90]

The power-driven, spatial agenda of the authorities targeted not only the geographical peripheries of the forested areas of the territory but also the socially marginal spaces of society. Interviews conducted during the early 1950s among war prisoners with ethnic Chinese background, many of them former members of the Communist Party, perceived the government as 'completely apart from the Chinese community'. In their view, the government operated 'in distant and limited spheres' largely remote from the live realities of this community.[91] A central objective of the war was, therefore, to make these groups subject to comprehensive governmental regulations including social policies, the inclusion into the state-controlled education system, family planning, and geographical concentration in more confined areas and permanent settlements.

A second spatial logic that played an important role in Malayan rural social engineering through resettlement was urbanisation during and after the Emergency. Already since the nineteenth century the British had profoundly transformed towns and urban centres in Malaya.[92] However, the context of accelerated urbanisation during the counter-insurgency war illustrates that, similar to India, the reordering of rural life was not separated from urban transformations but closely connected with them. More specifically, the resettlement of rural communities and the construction of new (model) villages in colonial Malaya derived its inherent dynamic and course

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to an important degree from the objectives of urban planning. In contrast to India, though, reorganising rural life and connecting rural social engineering with the transformation of urban space was a goal of warfare, not the result of mass migration as a planning opportunity. As a result, the Malayan (colonial) authorities were more comprehensive and forceful in their approach, which also determined rural social engineering after independence.

One of strategies of the authorities was a form of semi-urbanisation of rural areas, that is to locate new villages in the outskirts of already existing larger urban centres. The idea was that the economies and social services of these new settlements should benefit from the geographical proximity to these cities. Particularly in the early years of the Emergency, when the government struggled to provide many of the new villagers with adequate supply, semi-urbanising these areas appeared as an appropriate means to tackle the at times disastrous conditions of living.

Some of the most important new villages such as Salak South or Sungei Buloh were located around Kuala Lumpur, more precisely 5 miles and 13 miles outside the city in 1953.[93] For the Christian missionaries who worked in these villages to provide health care, education, and other social services, the proximity to the capital city facilitated organisational experiments and logistics to address the severe shortcomings of these villages' social infrastructure. In return, it was in the interest of the government to make the missionaries' engagements in these settlements a success. In the view of local missionaries in Salak South, 14 new villages emerged 'like mushrooms' in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur in the early 1950s driven by strong dynamics of demographic change: 'There are hundreds of new houses, (old houses and shops re-erected) going up all over the spreading hill opposite us. … In consequence, we are constantly seeing groups of new faces at our windows and all along the road. We are to increase from 600 to 1200 or more houses so the population will also increase from a formerly estimated 3,500 to 7 or 8 thousand. There seem to be that many children, without adults!'[94]

Whereas in more remote rural locations the government's measures to allocate land to new settlers and create agricultural plots remained 'slow and chaotic',[95] the new settlements in the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur and other cities quickly developed their own economic and social dynamics, which in return altered the cities themselves. In a White Paper published by the government in Kuala Lumpur in mid-1952, the authorities sold the enforced resettlement as a new basis for development and an opportunity for 'increased agricultural production and, with it, greater prosperity'.[96] The actual situation, though, was determined by a massive disruption of the rural economy, galloping internal inflation, and severe problems to provide agricultural settlers with arable land.[97] The Christian missionaries reported to their authorities in London that the government had repeatedly requested them to assist in getting the agricultural activities going again on the new land.[98] As a consequence, the missionaries and local church workers stepped up their measures to teach agricultural techniques including animal husbandry, field husbandry, and agricultural economics to the inhabitants of the more remote new villages.[99] In doing so, the missionaries turned into an integral element of a Foucauldian form of governmentality that characterised the Malayan Emergency. In this art of government, political power is not limited to the state but centrally depends on knowledge, expertise, and infrastructure beyond the state and thus transcends classic oppositions between state and civil society, public and private, and local and translocal.[100] In that sense, the missionaries constituted an important segment of political power through their active contribution to the political rationalities of the Emergency.

The long-term effect of these processes was a profound alteration of Malaya's human geography, in the light of which we should interpret the course and historical role of rural social engineering under the circumstances of late imperial warfare. The total number of urban centres, that is, the settlements with more than one thousand inhabitants, increased significantly from 163 to around 400 between 1947 and 1957.[101] This represented an increase of 105 per cent in the overall urban population of the colony during these years, even though the Malayan authorities complained in the early 1960s that this process had not gone far and quick enough.[102]

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In practice, however, the socio-economic consequences of this urbanisation drive were severe for rural communities and the structure of Malayan agriculture. While the war against the communist 'terrorists' was still ongoing in the second half of the 1950s, the government estimated that around three-fifths of the relocated population were agriculturalists including vegetable gardeners and livestock rearers.[103] The experience of uprooting, the harsh living conditions in the new settlements, and the shortage of essential resources including land forced a large number of these agriculturalists to change their occupation and, for example, work as rubber tappers or accept the trainings offered by missionaries to acquire altogether new skills.[104] The total share of agriculturalists in Malaya seems to have dropped from 60 per cent to 27 per cent in the first few years of the Emergency.[105] In brief, rural social engineering as a strategy of imperial counter-insurgency diminished the role of agriculture in Malaya's economy and redirected a significant number of rural communities towards semi-urban and urban centres.

Scholars of development research argued that the historical roots of economic success in Southeast Asia are to be found in pro-poor agricultural and rural development. This pattern would demarcate success stories such as Indonesia and Malaysia from several sub-Saharan economies, which relied on the trickling down of wealth derived from the rising incomes of a limited number of already prosperous.[106] The contemporary judgements on Malaya's agricultural policies during and after the Emergency, however, were much more critical about the political priorities and strategies to uplift the rural poor applied by the colonial and post-independence authorities.

The first large-scale plan drafted for Malaya was the Draft Development Plan of the Federation (1950–5). This plan was part of a broader initiative from the British colonial authorities to stimulate economic growth and social improvements in its remaining colonies under the Colombo Plan for Cooperative Economic Development.[107] For Malaya the British recognised that the improvement of rural life would require more financial means and political attention, especially as the impact of the war disrupted primarily rural communities. In spite of the awareness and critique among British elites of the strong urban bias of the existing welfare distribution within Malaya, the actual changes on the ground and the achievements of rural social engineering during the first half of the 1950s remained moderate. Contemporary observers criticised the Plan for its failure to expand hospital facilities in rural areas, the uneven provision and quality of social welfare services for rural communities,[108] the persistence of rural poverty, and, consequently, the soaring prosperity gap between rural and urban areas.[109] The First Five-Year Plan of the Federation (1956–60) continued a strong nominal commitment to agriculture and rural social engineering. In actual terms, though, the Plan shifted the planning focus to 'more advanced, urban sectors while trusting in backwash effects to convey development into the rural economy'.[110]

This economic performance of the first development plans during and after the Emergency was echoed in some serious political concerns among Western elites within the evolving Cold War context. In the second half of the 1950s, the United States Information Agency repeatedly expressed its concern that, due to the persisting misery among the rural poor, the problem of communism was not solved in Malaya.[111] This mattered to the United States not only in relation to Malaya. The failures of rural social engineering in several decolonising Asian societies including India were a much larger geopolitical worry which saw this failure as an imminent problem for global anti-communism.[112] The US Information Agency reasoned, for example, that the lack of support from Washington for the initiatives to reorder rural life in postcolonial societies would damage the reputation of the United States and create suspicion towards its anti-colonial commitment with potentially severe consequences for Washington and its Western allies.[113]

Conclusions

To conclude then, I summarise the main findings of my comparison between early postcolonial India and late imperial Malaya. My starting point was Foucault's argument that, since the

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eighteenth century, modern European governmentality was essentially about urban planning with its inbuilt drive to universalise its paradigms and practices across the entire national territory. I confronted Foucault's argument with the hypothesis that an important difference between modern France/Europe and Asian societies in the twentieth century is the colonial origin of planning in the interwar period and the course of decolonisation after 1945 with its deep impact on rural communities and distinct forms of rural social engineering. In summary, the examples of post-Partition India and the Federation of Malaya during the Emergency suggest a few qualifications not only to Foucault's reasoning but also to my own hypothesis.

First, both the humanitarian disaster of Partition and the counter-insurgency warfare had indeed a profound impact on rural social engineering. Both processes triggered massive disruptions among rural communities and made the reorganisation of rural life the order of the day. People on the move had to be resettled, provided with economic opportunities, and engineered in their social and mental outlook. The mental dimension of rural development played an urgent role in Malaya's anti-communism campaign[114] but was also present in India's struggle against (rural) backwardness. In both India and Malaya, the uprooted population was considered some form of raw material for the engineering of a new nation. Consequently, elite priorities were not only about strategies to overcome regional and communal divisiveness[115] but more importantly about ways to turn the disruptions of rural life into a political point of departure for an alternative socio-economic order and a new form of statehood that indeed penetrated communities outside the cities.

Second, both cases illustrate that rural social engineering and urban planning are better understood as a dialectic rather than two distinct spheres of development policies. The model villages in northern India and some of the most important new villages in Malaya were manifestations of an evolving development paradigm that interwove the reorganisation of the countryside with the transformation of cities. More specifically, the comparison illustrates that in both cases rural social engineering was centrally about the design and propagation of a particular kind of village as the lighthouse for late imperial and early postcolonial state making and social transformation. The new villages were imagined as places of rationalism, order, visibility, coherent morphology, and economic efficiency set up to overcome traditional and largely impenetrable social-economic and cultural patterns beyond state control. In the context of decolonisation, this dynamic seemed even more important than the dialectic of rural-urban, per se.

With regard to this argumentation, though, the comparison also highlighted some important dissimilarities between the two cases. In some respect, rural social engineering in early independent India seems to actually confirm Foucault's argument about the paradigmatic character of urban planning for the reorganisation of rural life. Examples such as Faridabad and other model towns, particularly those located at the outskirts of major cities such as Delhi, are indeed in line with Foucault's reasoning as they indicate a privileged status of urban planning within modern, postcolonial governmentality. At the same time, the planning of Indian model towns was intrinsically connected with the specific context of rural post-Partition (northern) India, which confirms the dialectic mentioned above. In British-Malaya, by contrast, the redesign of the village was one of the core purposes of the anti-communist war but also there (semi) urbanisation was a feature of rural transformation. Overall, then, my hypothesis that rural social engineering and rural planning constitute a distinct form of modern governmentality strongly determined by the course of decolonisation does not neglect the importance of urban planning but offers an alternative perspective on it.

Third, the differences in decolonisation can explain some important long-term changes in human geography at the costs of rural life. The war-related disruptions in Malaya triggered rapid urbanisation processes, which determined the country's socio-economic achievements in the long run. Although both India and Malaya focused largely on urban development since their First Five-Year Plans and underfunded rural projects, this approach was more successful in rapidly urbanising Malaya than in India, where three-fourths of the workforce remained in agriculture.[116] At the

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same time, both societies neglected the provision of social welfare services of good quality to its rural communities. But whereas significant parts of Malaysia's population moved into (the outskirts of) larger urban centres and thus benefited from (semi-)urban transformations, the vast majority of India's citizens remained rural. The model townships initiated by the Indian authorities to stimulate a new life for the displaced communities in the proximity of larger cities were in virtually every respect too limited to become indeed models for anything but themselves.[117]

Fourth, my hypothesis that we can explain rural social engineering through the course of decolonisation makes particularly sense when we consider decolonisation's variegated manifestations of conflict and repression. In Malaya, the colonial state's military campaign and the use of force were integrated elements of rural social engineering with provided both the necessary context and the central means to achieve the political objectives of both anti-communism and the reordering of rural life. Redirecting people towards the cities was an accepted and, in some cases, intended element of these measures. In postcolonial India, on the other hand, the context was a humanitarian disaster triggered by the flawed policies of Partition. In the eyes of the new state elites, this circumstance turned rural social engineering into a humanitarian requirement and an opportunity for the state to integrate uprooted communities into the broader framework of nation building and postcolonial modernisation. In contrast to Malaya, where rural social engineering was a strategic necessity meant to serve the long-term restructuration of society in favour of higher degree of urbanisation and state efficiency, the Indian planners approaches it as a challenging but historical momentum to gain political legitimacy among rural communities after the end of the British era.

Finally, my investigation into rural social engineering provides two general lessons on modernity, development, and state making. Dipesh Chakrabarty argued that the equation of a certain vision of Europe with modernity 'is not the work of Europeans alone' since Third World nationalisms have been essential partners in this endeavour.[118] Stronger even, the Indian and Malayan histories of rural social engineering suggest that after 1945 the notion of modernity and its brainchild development were the result of a global aggregated history of local formation processes increasingly bound together by the evolving international aid industry and the distinct forms of expertise it facilitated. In that light, it looks ever more inadequate to write the history of modernity and development as an incarnation of Western history and the superpowers' Cold War.

The other more general lesson concerns state making in the twentieth century understood as the forcible process to centralise the control over people, information and resources within a given territory.[119] To recognise the variety of state forms in Asia and their evolution particularly since the nineteenth century, scholars of Asian history have previously criticised established state theories for their shortcomings to capture distinct processes beyond Western history.[120] Building on this critique, decolonising India and Malaysia suggest that state-making processes during decolonisation were neither simply derivations of imperial statehood nor altogether different manifestations of statehood. By contrast, state making meant contested and continuous negotiation processes between local political specificities including the setup of the imperial state, the long-term cultural and intellectual textures of these societies, the new relevance of political secularism as well as religious protagonists after 1945, and, once again, the course of decolonisation itself. We thus need to work towards a state theory that incorporates both imperial-European inheritance and local struggles in order to capture state making in its numerous manifestations during and after (Asian) decolonisation.

As for its limitations other than the ones mentioned above, my hypothesis has little explanatory capacity when it comes to the translocal trends in development planning during the first two or three decades after 1945. The unalike courses of decolonisation in India and Malaya cannot explain the overall priorities of industrialisation and urban development in the long-term course of planning. For those aspects it seems indeed more convincing to look at the global intellectual and political history of development after 1945.

Abbreviations

CDP = Community Development Programme (India)
CMS = Church Mission(ary) Society (Oxford, UK)
FAO = Food and Agriculture Organization, United Nations (Rome, Italy)
NMML = Nehru Memorial Museum & Library (New Delhi)
SOAS = School of Oriental and African Studies (London)
USAID = United States Agency for International Development (Washington, DC)

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Notes

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23 On this understanding of decolonisation, see Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-determination* (Princeton, NJ, 2019), p. 2. On decolonisation as a project of liberating the nation and humanity, see Prasenjit Duara, 'Introduction: the Decolonization of Asia and Africa in the Twentieth Century', in Prasenjit Duara, ed., *Decolonization: Perspectives from Now and Then* (London and New York, NY, 2004), p. 2. Similar on the 'postcolonial moment' as an era of future making but also insecurity and turmoil in the region covered here, see Gyan Prakash,

Michael Laffan and Nikhil Menon, eds, *The Postcolonial Moment in South and Southeast Asia* (London et al., 2018), esp. Introduction.

24 Willem van Eekelen, *Rural Development in Practice: Evolving Challenges and Opportunities* (London and New York, NY, 2020), pp. 23–4; D. B. Dalal-Clayton, David Dent and Olivier Dubois, *Rural Planning in Developing Countries: Supporting Natural Resource Management and Sustainable Livelihoods* (London and Sterling, VA, 2003), Introduction; Deepak Nayyar, *Resurgent Asia: Diversity in Development* (Oxford, 2019), ch. 7.

25 Katar Singh, *Rural Development: Principles, Policies and Management* (New Delhi et al., 1986), p. 18, fn. Singh argued that rural development is a 'comprehensive and multidimensional concept and encompasses the development of agriculture and allied activities' such as village and cottage industries and crafts, socio-economic infrastructure, community services and, above all, human resources in rural areas. On the lack of a shared definition of the rural, see also Adam Pain and Kjell Hansen, *Rural Development* (London and New York, NY, 2019), p. 3.

26 My definition is inspired by Pain and Hansen, *Rural Development*, pp. 5–6.

27 See Peter van der Veer, 'Introduction: Urban Theory, Asia, and Religion', in Peter van der Veer, ed., *Handbook of Religion and the Asian City: Aspiration and Urbanization in the Twenty-First Century* (Oakland, CA, 2015), p. 2.

28 This 'urban bias argument' had already been a contested subject since (Asian) decolonisation when this discussion intensified once again in the early 1980s. See Michael Lipton, 'Why the Poor Stay Poor', in John Harriss, ed., *Rural Development: Theories of Peasant Economy and Agrarian Change* (London and New York, NY, 1982), pp. 66–81; Robert Chambers, *Rural Development: Putting the Last First* (London, Lagos and New York, NY, 1983), pp. 7–10; a more distanced account provides Cristóbal Kay, 'Development Strategies and Rural Development: Exploring Synergies, Eradicating Poverty', in Saturnino M. Borras Jr, ed., *Critical Perspectives in Rural Development Studies* (London and New York, NY, 2010), pp. 101–06.

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31 NMML Individual Collection, (Lord) Mountbatten Papers (Microfilm), Reel 13, File 117/13/3, 'Private Armies' Report, Secretary to the Governor, Central Provinces & Berar, 26th May 1947. See also Six, *Secularism*, pp. 92–6; William Gould, *Religion and Conflict in Modern South Asia* (Cambridge, 2012), pp. 184–93.

32 Quoted in P. B. Desai, *Planning in India, 1951–1978* (New Delhi, 1979), p. 18.

33 Ramachandra Guha, *Patriots & Partisans* (New Delhi, 2021), p. 125.

34 The term 'Dalit', also 'untouchables', refers to the lowest class in the traditional Hindu social hierarchy. In an essay, Ambedkar compared Indian Dalits with modern slaves and concluded that the fate of Dalits was even worse. While salves could (at least theoretically) escape their status, untouchability was 'obligatory', knew no escape and thus constituted an 'indirect form of slavery'. Quoted in S. D. Kapoor, 'B. R. Ambedkar, W.E.B. DuBois and the process of liberation', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 38:51–2 (2003–04), 5345.

35 B. R. Ambedkar, 'Basic Features of the Indian Constitution' (orig. 1948), reproduced in Valerian Rodrigues, ed., *The Essential Writings of B. R. Ambedkar* (New Delhi, 2002), p. 485.

36 Ibid., p. 486.

37 Jawaharlal Nehru in an address to a special convocation of the University of Allahabad, 13th December 1947, reproduced in Government of India, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches, Vol 1, 1946–1949* (New Delhi, 1983), pp. 329–38.

38 Sukhamoy Chakravarty, 'Nehru and Indian planning', *South Asia Research*, 9:2 (1989), 99.

39 Eric Stokes, *The English Utilitarians and India* (Delhi et al., 1959), p. 55, and Clive Dewey, *Anglo-Indian Attitudes: Mind of the Indian Civil Service* (London and Rio Grande, 1993), particularly the Introduction. For a more detailed discussion on the Indian village in British colonial discourses between idealisation and condemnation, see Clive Dewey, 'Images of the village community: a study in Anglo-Indian ideology', *Modern Asia Studies*, 6:3 (1972), 291–328.

40 Walter C. Neale, 'Indian community development, local government, local planning, and rural policy since 1950', *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, 33:4 (1985), 685.

41 The Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) Debates, Official Report, Vol. II, 1947 (29th November to 10th December, 1947), First Session of the Constituent Assembly of India (Legislative) 1947, New Delhi, p. 859.

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43 Ibid., p. 26.

44 I. P. Desai and Banwarilal Chaoudhry, *History of Rural Development in Modern India, Vol. II* (New Delhi, 1977), p. 21. On the distinction introduced by the modern (colonial) state between 'farmers' or 'agriculturalists' and land owners, see David Ludden, *The New Cambridge History of India, Vol IV.4: An Agrarian History of South Asia* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 186. On the (colonial) construction of a modern peasantry in Southeast Asia compare R. E. Elson, *The End of the Peasantry in Southeast Asia: A Social and Economic History of Peasant Livelihood, 1800–1990s* (Houndmills et al., 1997).

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53 V. N. Datta, 'Panjabi Refugees and the Urban Development of Great Delhi', in Mushirul Hasan, ed., *Inventing Boundaries: Gender, Politics and the Partition of India* (New Delhi, 2000), p. 278.
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71 K. Deb, *Rural Development in India since Independence* (New Delhi, Bangalore, 1986), p. 6.
72 The print media in the United Kingdom largely adopted this terminology. See, for example, 'Resettlement in Malaya: Policy Questioned', *The Manchester Guardian*, 28th April 1952, p. 3.
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83 Federation of Malaya, *Malaya-The Facts* (Cambridge, n.d.), pp. 12–13.
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86 SOAS Archive, London, CBMS Box 459, File 2, Rev. J. H. Haines, Chairman, NV Committee, Churches' New Village Co-ordinating Committee, n.d., p. 2.
87 SOAS Archive, London, CBMS Box 462, File 4, Folders 22–26, Federation of Malaya, Paper to be laid before the Federal Legislative Council by command of His Excellency the High Commissioner, No. 33 of 1952, Resettlement and the Development of the New Villages in the Federation of Malaya, 1952, p. 7.
88 University of Birmingham, Special Collections, Cadbury Research Library, CMS, AS 59 G1 MY1 1950–1, Letter 'Malaya, Sept.–Dec. 1951', B. B. Officer, 'formerly China, not CMS', 6th February 1952, pp. 1–2.
89 Nancy Lee Peluso and Peter Vandergeest, 'Political ecologies of wear and forests: counterinsurgencies and the making of national natures', *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, 101:3 (2011), 587–608. On the painful memories of victims of the reordering of the land and jungle, see Zhou Hau Liew, 'Ecological narratives of forced resettlement in Cold War Malaya', *Critical Asian Studies*, 52:2 (2020), 286–303.

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93 The proximity to (big) cities is an issue in, for example, University of Birmingham, Special Collections, Cadbury Research Library, CMS, AS 59 G1 MY1 1953–4, CMS London, 'Report on C.M.S. work in Malaya', 12th February 1953; Kathleen Carpenter, *The Password is Love: In the New Villages of Malaya* (London, 1955), pp. 51, 65, 75–6.

94 University of Birmingham, Special Collections, Cadbury Research Library, CMS, General Secretary, G59 Y7MY1 1952–63, Round Robin No. 8, Edith Tindall, CMS Dispensary New Village Salak South, KL, Malaya, 25th January 1953, p. 1.

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96 White Paper, Federation of Malaya, quoted in N. N., 'New Villages are Economic Hope for the Future', *The Straits Times*, 12th June 1952, p. 1.

97 Ibid.

98 SOAS Archive, London, CBMS Box 462, File 4, Folders 22–26, ('Ex-missionaries for Govt- service in Malaya' 1950/52), 'Nature of the help required by the Federation of Malaya', Government statement from Malaya re. Missionary Service for re-settled Chinese: Malayan Establishment Office, Kuala Lumpur, Federation of Malaya, approx. March 1951, p. 1.

99 See, for example, SOAS Archive, London, CBMS Box 462, File 4, Folder 24 (N.V.C.C. Minutes, 1956–60), Gordon L. A. Scott, Recording Secretary, Malayan Christian Council, Minutes of the New Villages Co-ordinating Committee, held in KL on 13th May 1960, n.d., p. 2.

100 Nikolas Rose and Peter Miller, 'Political power beyond the State: problematics of government', *The British Journal of Sociology*, 61 (January 2010), 271–303. Foucault himself characterised government and power as 'a sort of complex composed of men and things' manifest in 'governmental apparatuses' and 'a whole complex of *savoirs*', which leads beyond the confines of state structures in a narrow sense. See his 'Governmentality', in Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, eds, *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality* (London, 1991), pp. 95, 103.

101 John Coates, *Suppressing Insurgency: An Analysis of the Malayan Emergency, 1948–1954* (Boulder, CO, San Francisco, CA and Oxford, 1992), p. 93; Hamzah Sendut, 'Patterns of urbanization in Malaya', *Ekistics*, 17:98 (1964), 32–3. According to the British-colonial censuses, the share of urban population in the Federation of Malaya stagnated during the interwar period at around 23–26 per cent. On the census data from 1911–31, see Lim Heng Kow, *The Evolution of the Urban System in Malaya* (Kuala Lumpur, 1978), p. 42. Immediately after the Second World War, though, contemporary observers already noticed the growth of urban centres but explained it (mainly) through immigration from outside the Federation. See, for example, Eunice Cooper, 'Urbanization in Malaya', *Population Studies*, 5:2 (1951), 117–31.

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105 Kernial Singh Sandhu, 'The saga of the "squatter" in Malaya', *Journal of Southeast Asian History*, 5:1 (1964), 167–9.

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107 Cassey Lee and Lee Chew-Ging, 'The evolution of development planning in Malaysia', *Journal of Southeast Asian Economics*, 34:2 (2017), 439.
108 Martin Rudner, 'The draft development plan of the Federation of Malaya 1950–55', *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 3:1 (1972), 91–2.
109 E. K. Fisk, 'Rural development problems in Malaya', *Australian Outlook*, 16:3 (1962), 248–50, 259.
110 Martin Rudner, 'Malayan quandry: rural development policy under the first and second five-year plans', *Contributions to Asian Studies*, 1 (1971), 190–1.
111 Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middleburg, NL, Microfilm photos, Reel 12 of 18, Records of the US information Agency, Part 1: Cold War Era Special Reports, Series A: 1953–63, University Publications of America, ProQuest, USIS, Office of Research and Analysis, 'The Communist Threat to Malaya', 25th September 1959, pp. 5–6.
112 Wolf Ladejinsky, for example, a key US advisor on agrarian reform in South and Southeast Asia at that time, demanded the actual implementation of land redistribution particularly among the landless, better methods of cultivation, adequate credit and other measures of rural reform as central measures of effective anti-communism. He saw the main failure so far in the lack of political will and conviction among local elites. See his 'Agrarian reform in Asia', *Foreign Affairs*, 42:3 (April 1964), 445–60.
113 See, for example, Roosevelt Institute for American Studies, Middleburg, NL, Microfilm photos, Reel 4 of 30, The Dwight D. Eisenhower National Security Files, 1953–61, Part 1: Subject Files, University Publications of America, ProQuest, United States Information Agency, Report, 'Part 6 – The USIA Program', 1st January 1955 to 30th June 1955, NSC 5611 (n.d.), p. 2.
114 For more details, see Susan L. Carruthers, *British Governments, the Media and Colonial Counter-Insurgency 1944–1960* (London and New York, NY, 1995). The question of how to influence 'stereotypes, assumptions, and ideas of appropriateness about people, their behaviour and their culture (i.e., values)' remained relevant also after independence among state elites and scholars; see Peter J. Wilson, *A Malay Village and Malaysia: Social Values and Rural Development* (New Haven, CT, 1967), esp. preface.
115 Diane K. Mauzy, 'Two rural development strategies: organization, administrative performance and political priorities in India and Malaysia', *Philippine Journal of Public Administration*, 1:2 (1975), 105.
116 Ramachandra Guha, *India After Gandhi: The History of the World's Largest Democracy* (New York, NY, 2007), p. 209. Sunil Khilnani argues that this was the reason why there was so little impetus in India to effectively transform the rural economy and pursue comprehensive social reform. See his *The Idea of India* (New Delhi, 2004), p. 75.
117 Already in the early 1950s (Western) scholars of urban planning were sceptical about the impact model towns and pilot schemes could have on 'underdeveloped regions'. Rather, 'groups or chains of villages' would be more efficient than 'the concentrated towns and cities of the West'. See the article by the German urban planning advisor Otto H. Koenigsberger, 'New towns in India', *The Town Planning Review*, 23:2 (1st July 1952), 95.
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