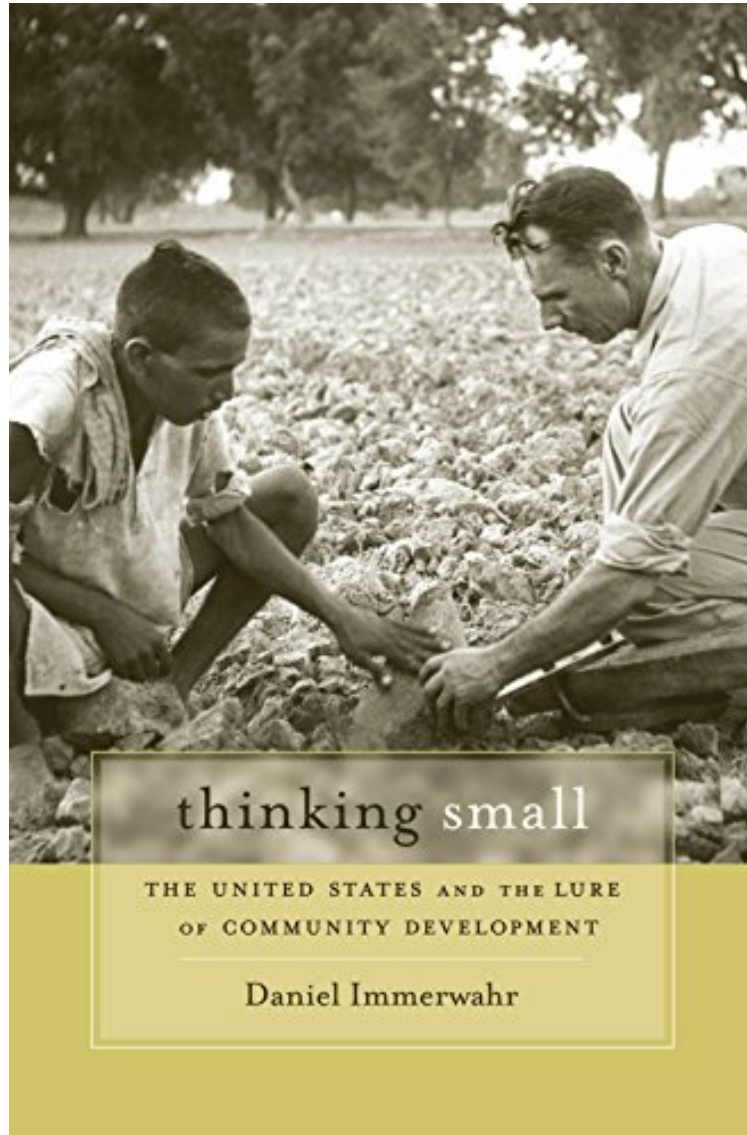


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Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development

Daniel Immerwahr

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Daniel Immerwahr : Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development:

13 of 16 people found the following review helpful. I don't normally review, but I had to put ...By J. Fattal I don't normally review, but I had to put a different voice than the other reviewer who clearly doesn't know how to read

properly. The book is fascinating and is not simplified in the way that that reviewer suggests, at all. In fact, it is full of nuance and lessons for academics and people in the field. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. An Historical Perspective Unknown to Today's Development (and Counterinsurgency) Practitioners By Culture Wars Vet
This history of community development in the 20th Century makes clear that the current enthusiasm among development practitioners and donors for bottom-up, participatory, community-based or community-directed projects is not new and that much of what is touted as the benefits and outcomes echoes the promises of similar interventions decades ago both overseas and in the U.S. The World Bank and other funding institutions are committing billions of dollars to these projects which are held up as examples of how the code has been cracked for doing humane, efficient development which not only improves the beneficiaries' material well-being but also builds their stock of social capital for other matters such as improved governance. Although several recent rigorous, large-scale reviews of scores of these projects have cast doubt on the promised outcomes, this has not slowed the enthusiasm for and momentum of such projects. Immerwahr presents three cases from the middle of the last century where large-scale community development had been tried and then abandoned or drastically scaled back. He also lays out the context for these in terms of trends in social philosophy, intellectual history, and the social sciences. While development practitioners may insist that they are too busy and too focused on the nuts and bolts of their projects to delve into the history of development and what they view as proven, humane, and effective approaches, they risk repeating what Immerwahr shows were also seen as promising, transformative approaches but which didn't deliver. This readable volume is strongly recommended for those involved in development policy and practice and also those in the military concerned with counterinsurgency and stability operations. In Afghanistan, for example, since 2001, tens of development programs including the \$2.5 billion National Solidarity Program have adopted the community development approach in sectors including health, education, natural resource management, and poverty reduction. The military has applied the same approach for its much-touted Afghan Local Police program. Growing evidence however suggests that the ALP is beset by the problems and weaknesses that Immerwahr describes have afflicted community development programs decades ago. The U.S. military and civilian organizations are currently pursuing costly, ambitious "lessons learned" exercises in order to make sure that the mistakes made in Afghanistan won't be repeated. As "Thinking Small" makes clear, one lesson which development organizations and governments have yet to learn is that such exercises are pointless if nobody bothers to look at available information on what has been tried before and then to learn from it. 0 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Two Stars By Sarah E Garcia Very hard read for me. Kept falling asleep every time I had to read it.

Daniel Immerwahr tells how the United States sought to rescue the world from poverty through small-scale, community-based approaches. He also sounds a warning: such strategies, now again in vogue, have been tried before, alongside grander modernization schemes; with often disastrous consequences as self-help gave way to crushing local oppression.

Daniel Immerwahr's "Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development" pours a bucket of cold water on this type of thinking, now experiencing a resurgence among development agencies, policy entrepreneurs, and influential foundations. It uses three case studies (in India, the Philippines, and the United States) to upend the stock portrait of mid-twentieth century development, which focuses on the evils of top-down intervention. In the conventional story, development is a field dominated by "modernizers" whose hubristic efforts result in catastrophic consequences for those they were designed to benefit; Unfortunately, far from eliminating deprivation and attacking the social status quo, bottom-up community development projects often reinforced them; This is a history with real stakes. If that prior campaign's record is as checkered as "Thinking Small" argues, then its intellectual descendants must do some serious rethinking; How might those in twenty-first-century development and anti-poverty work forge a better path? They can start by reading "Thinking Small." (Merlin Chowkwanyun Boston 2015-02-23) An impressive history that will quickly become required reading for the growing ranks of historians interested in topics ranging from modernization to the War on Poverty. Immerwahr's rich and insightful book has much to offer to anyone interested in twentieth-century America and, especially, its efforts to combat poverty at home and abroad. (David C. Engerman, author of "Know Your Enemy") Persuasively fills a major gap in both the study of American interventions in the developing world and the history of the Cold War. Immerwahr demonstrates that the inspiration for community development projects was not simply the product of social science research and domestic initiatives, but "particularly in the case of the War on Poverty" was shaped by the nature and outcomes of programs in developing nations, especially China, India, Mexico, and the Philippines. "Thinking Small" should be read not only by historians, sociologists, anthropologists, and economists, but also by policymakers, activists, planners, and field agents. (Michael Adas, author of "Dominance by Design") As the historian Daniel Immerwahr demonstrates brilliantly in "Thinking Small," the history of development has seen constant experimentation with community-based and participatory approaches to economic and social improvement; Immerwahr's account of these failures should give pause to those who insist that going small is always better than going big. (Jamie

Martin The Nation 2015-04-08)About the AuthorDaniel Immerwahr is Assistant Professor of History at Northwestern University.