Rural Pedagogy as a Tool of International Agricultural Development: IEB’s Club Work in Three Nordic Countries, 1923-28

by David Nally

University of Cambridge

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Introduction: Foundations for Internationalism

On Tuesday February 13 1923, Søren Sørensen, the agricultural attaché of the Danish Legation in Washington, joined Wickliffe Rose and Wallace Buttrick for an evening dinner at the prestigious Cosmos Club in Washington D.C. Founded in 1878 to advance “science, literature, the arts and public service,” the private social club was an inspired location for a meeting to discuss the terms for future collaboration between American philanthropists and the Danish government.¹ An earlier conference with Sørensen in December, plus two ad hoc meetings with officials at the United States Department for Agriculture, convinced Rose and the leadership of the International Education Board (IEB) that Denmark offered the “most favorable conditions for first demonstration abroad.”² Since getting the green light to pursue his agenda on international philanthropy, Rose had been busy contemplating where best to begin implementing his vision of agrarian improvement. Denmark, the Board reasoned, was the “most highly developed in general intelligence, in agriculture, in cooperative activities, in democratic government.”³ If properly conducted, the programme would serve as a symbol of accomplishment, “a training center from which to extend the service to other non-Slavic European countries.”⁴ It would be, in Rose’s phrase, “a bird of passage.”

The promise of Rockefeller support must have been music to Sørensen’s ears. Charged with studying US efforts to promote rural development, Sørensen devoted several profitable months to touring rural America where he observed first-hand the popularity of club work. The result of those travels was a lengthy report for the Danish government titled, Agricultural Education Among Young People in the United States (1921), in which he lavished praise on the programmes of instruction devised to teach children “independence and economic responsibility” and to make agricultural life “more attractive” for the next generation of farmers.⁵ Sørensen was aware of Seaman A. Knapp’s pioneering work as well as the crucial support and backing provided by the General Education Board. Knapp’s genius, Sørensen readily grasped, was to wage a quiet
revolution against tradition and parental authority. Whereas adults tended to resist the forces of modernisation, rural youth, when properly instructed, appeared to embrace new farming methods. Moreover, their exuberance and enthusiasm, not to mention their successes in applying the principles of scientific farming, meant that adults soon saw the advantages of applying the latest techniques to their crops. The spectacle of “Champion Boys” and “Champion Girls” embracing the tenets of self-improvement and the “spirit of competition” filled Sørensen with hope. He posted Rose a copy of his report and made clear his view that the ideas behind the “intellectual awakening” of America were eminently transportable. The time was “ripe,” he said, for planting Club Work Denmark.

These conversations took place at a time when Rose was in discussion with his colleagues about widening philanthropic activity to include overseas operations. In this vision, he was not alone; Frederick T. Gates, confidant and advisor to John D. Rockefeller, Sr., also framed the philanthropist’s mission in avowedly global terms. However, the shock and material disruption caused by the First World War (halting international trade, disrupting production, and impeding the flow of scientific exchange) added geo-political arguments to ongoing debates about the propriety of operating internationally. Notwithstanding some differences, most reformers saw governing the global borderlands, especially the rural fringe, as a first step in a larger campaign to cure social maladies and spur improvements.

Soon after their deliberations at the Cosmos Club, Sørensen appealed to the Danish government to formally request the assistance of the IEB in establishing local programmes dedicated to farm demonstration work. Meanwhile Rose sought to secure the service of Frantz P. Lund, a Danish émigré and employee of the USDA, whom he and Buttrick had met and spoken with regarding the prospects of running a General Education Board-style programme in Europe. Lund was exactly the kind of dedicated and conscientious administrator that Rose sought: schooled in languages and the natural sciences, and raised to admire the teachings of Bishop Nikolaj Grundtvig (a Lutheran minister who pioneered educational reforms designed to prepare schoolchildren for active participation in national life). Lund mixed strong humanistic ideals with a remarkable faith in the curative powers of science and technology.
Crucially, Lund also had direct exposure to the teaching methods of Seaman Knapp. Shortly after moving to the United States in the mid-1890s, Lund was approached by the Danish Peoples’ Society of America to help found a colony, known as ‘Danevang’, in southern Texas. Accepting the challenge, Lund remained with the colony for 8 years, acting as a preacher, teacher, and agricultural advisor. After his eye-opening stint at Danevang, Lund moved briefly to the Virgin Islands to assume the post of principal at an all-boys high school, before finally settling again in Texas, where he was hired to superintend an experimental farm. During his sojourns in Texas and the Virgin Islands, Lund experimented with preserving tropical and semi-tropical fruits, meat, and fish; and he took to instructing locals on new food preservation methods. And it was these labours as a quasi-itinerant farm instructor that eventually brought him into contact with Seaman Knapp. As Lund later told Rose:

> While he impressed me strongly, I did not see the value of his educational system until I was at the Virgin Islands. My contact with the colored population there (in my school I had pupils of all shades from pure white to darkest black) caused me to realize the practical value of his ideas, although I had unconsciously applied many of them, while working to improve conditions for the new settlers at Danevang, Texas.¹¹

Knapp tirelessly preached that the real value of demonstration was its ability to reach and teach recalcitrant subjects: those deemed less able, rather than less willing, to embrace progressive change. Having travelled and personally mentored peoples of “all shades,” Lund observed first-hand the challenge of instructing people thought to have very different competencies and capacities.¹² Knowledge of such differences – which significantly Lund racialized – fed the conviction that reformers ought to adopt a gradated approach to rural development. One size did not fit all, so the challenge was to design a model that could be adapted for different peoples across a range of geographies. In this sense, Lund’s vision of enlightened international cooperation involved subtle but important acts of human sorting and classification. We will return to this theme momentarily.
Sørensen agreed that Lund was the right person to direct the programme, and after another luncheon at the Cosmos Club in May, a memorandum of understanding was drawn up and the International Education Board applied to the US Secretary of Agriculture, Henry Wallace, to secure Lund’s release for one year (without pay) to begin work in Denmark. In typical fashion, Rose empowered Lund to determine the precise arrangements for the programme.

Earlier conferences and correspondence made clear that Rose hoped to extend the work to other European countries, but when and how this should be done was a matter left for Lund to decide. Lund was made aware that the IEB always worked in partnership with governments and local authorities. Since funding and support from the IEB was finite, the expectation was that after a determined period – in which the programmes had convincingly demonstrated their success – control of operations would cede to local public authorities. Thus, the goal of philanthropy was to act as “mother and nurse” to new ideas, projects, institutions and dispositions. In theory, funding would end with the realization of a permanent public infrastructure dedicated to promoting development in rural areas. Indeed, as Rose saw it, the task of philanthropy was to be a “partner not patron,” and to aid states in “organizing and bringing into activity their own forces.” While “self-reliance” was considered both the means and ends of successful planning, the policy always assumed that poor and peripheral peoples were ill-equipped to supervise their own development. On show here is what Daniel Immerwahr terms “backhanded authoritarianism” - a means of enacting transformative plans through the mandarin of extended “participation.”

**Beginnings: Denmark**

With secondment from the USDA secured and the terms of his contract agreed, Lund set sail for Copenhagen, arriving on September 18, 1923. Lund lost no time in meeting and becoming acquainted with leaders on Danish agricultural matters. After a convivial meeting with the Minister for Agriculture, Mr. Thomas Madsen-Mygdal (who Lund said was “exceedingly nice to me and offered me all the official cooperation possible,”) Lund visited the Danish Agricultural Council, met with
local businessmen and newspaper editors, conversed with academic experts in home economics’ schools and agricultural colleges, and made arrangements for an extensive speaking tour on the national benefits of club work.

Lund formed his impressions quickly. Although keen to stress the importance of indigenous efforts to engage the youth in agriculture – such embryonic work, he said, forms “a nucleus that must not be overlooked and upon which we can build,” he hastened to add that existing programmes lacked central coordination and an overarching vision. Privately, he complained to Rose that farm boys are typically hired out and put to work without ever being told how to work or why one way of working is better than another. This made the acquisition of ‘poor habits’ a fait accompli. The agricultural schools and colleges he visited were no better; “theoretical knowledge” designed for the benefit of “scholars” bore no relationship to the practicalities and daily requirements of family farms. Notwithstanding giant technological strides, Lund found that nothing had been done to “lighten and simplify women’s work,” and consequently, rural girls “carried on traditional work similar to what was done 50 years ago.” There was, Lund concluded,

...no definite idea about how to carry into practical life the teaching of home economics to the people at large. Social conditions, class distinction and education, old traditions, the difficulty in approaching the home itself, financial conditions, all conspire to make the work exceedingly hard.

In short, lots of work had been done, but it had not been done well. A fresh approach was needed and this is precisely what Lund proposed in the budget and plan of work he presented to the IEB for approval. The strategy was to train field agents in the art of demonstration and to set them to work in “favorable communities” where the programmes stood more chance of success and were more likely to serve as a practical model for neighbourly emulation. As in the United States, activities would be differentiated by gender: the girls were to undertake gardening and other work that “can be expected to fall under the housemother’s sphere,” while boys were taught to grow commercial crops and engage in profit-making activities on the farm. There was also a chronology to how the work should be introduced. For girls, the work would begin with
demonstrations in home economics work, and later when the harvest was in they would receive demonstrations in how to preserve and store produce from the farm. For boys, club work typically started with garden and field crops, but in time they would progress to more complex tasks such as animal husbandry and breeding. In the winter, the work would concentrate on livestock and dairy farming, whereas, in the summer months, club work should focus on arable farming and horticulture.

In letters and reports to Rose, Lund outlined his hopes and expectations for the work, as well as his anxieties about potential future conflicts. These letters offer striking insights into the theory of change then being developed by Lund. At what rate, Lund wondered, do local populations process and absorb alien ideas and practices? And are such absorption rates open to control and discrete manipulation? Clearly partners were necessary to ensure the work could begin quickly and remain in place when the IEB eventually withdrew. However, Lund worried that local groups outside his control might become flashpoints for resistance, a home for “fractious” elements to organise and disrupt the progress of the work. While the Danish minister of agriculture had promised his personal help in preventing “premature criticism,” Lund was most anxious to make a swift and successful start. The peninsula of Jutland seemed an optimal site to launch club work. “[A] large part of Jutland has recently been brought under culture [tillage?] after having laid for centuries as heath,” Lund explained, “the conditions resembled more new settlements in America; there was little or no social distinction between children and servants; and there was more willingness to attempt anything that might make it possible for the young people to increase their earning capacity.” Consequently, embodying the spirit of the “New” rather the “Old World,” Jutland appeared free of the crust of custom, not to mention the sparks of protest that might disrupt the nascent programme. Here was a place, Lund thought, where philanthropists could mould social structures with greater license, and crucially, less resistance. This brand of spatial selectivity, so central to Lund’s designs, might be termed “enclaving.”

Lund spent the next few months on the “constant go.” He gave more lectures, made more introductions, authored pamphlets and bulletins advertising club
work, and stepped up his inspection of local agricultural and horticulture societies. Beginning in January 1924, he also set up short courses for training instructors in home economics and pressed local associations to supply additional instructors to assist with demonstration work. Lund also rolled up his sleeves and engaged in propaganda work. At a regional fair in Haderslev, Jutland, for example, he built and demonstrated a display showcasing the latest labour-saving devices used in American kitchens. This bespoke kitchen included a cabinet, teacart, fireless cooker, iceless refrigerator, sponge box, cupboard (to house newly canned fruits and vegetables), as well as an ironing cabinet (see Image 1). “Nothing expensive or elaborate was shown,” he took care to tell the International Education Board; indeed, most of the appliances could be made by “any village carpenter or by any intelligent boy who had had elementary training using saw, plane and hammer.” Just like field-based demonstrations, expositions were conceptualized as moments of ambient production and socialization. On the face of it, Lund and his team were demonstrating the uses of practical devices, such as steam pressure canners, but the real aim was to make scientific principles part of the lexicon and routine of farm household management. Much of the power of the club method, as Gabriel Rosenberg has astutely noted, was the ability to present technocratic tools and concepts in non-threatening, theatrical form.

Initially thirteen sites were chosen for club work and more than 20 agents were dispatched to teach the new farm programme. To participate in club work, rural youth had to be at least 10, and typically no older than 22 years old. Club workers were expected to secure their own land, usually between 100 and 500 square meters for garden work and at least 100 square meters for field plants. Ideally, experimental plots should be located on the home farm or nearby. (“[T]his way the work becomes more personal.”) In cases where plots could not be procured, leased ground was supplied. On garden plots, club workers were shown how to grow celery, peas, beans, root crops, cabbage, cucumbers, pumpkins, and strawberries; in the fields, the youth learned how to seed and tend various root crops (rutabagas, sugar beets, chicory, and carrots) as well as potatoes, peas, oats, barley, and mangold. Record keeping was mandatory and scrupulously monitored: each member received a booklet with the “main rules” for cultivation, as well as log pages for club workers to record crop yields, product sales,
expenditures, fertiliser usage, observations on disease and pest management, rotation cycles, and so forth.33 These logs and records acted as a stimulant to self-study by encouraged the youth to continuously evaluate and quantify their activity and progress. Learning methods were self-consiously styled in opposition to the “stilted pedagogy” that characterised the lecture hall and classroom.34 By demonstrating the everyday, practical utility of accounting and quantification, Lund and his army of field agents were slowly and methodically immersing the youth in what Rosenberg terms the “epistemology of the industrial agriculture.”35

By July 1924, Lund and his small cadre of demonstrators had enrolled more than 500 boys and girls in club work.36 He wrote in confident terms to the International Education Board, and separately compiled a report for the Danish government extolling the unique brand of cultural pedagogy being rolled out in the Danish countryside. The “underlying principle” of the work was to train rather than teach, to instil good habits through “competent instruction,” rather than hectoring and patronising the youth.37 Targeting adolescents was a deliberate strategy, designed to shape the social orientation of the next generation. In a revealing and quite typical passage, Lund likened citizens to crops that could be raised and improved through careful tending:

The age of adolescence is more suited to physical work than to studying and the peculiar psychological instincts or inclinations present during this time are rightly led to and utilized in the development of the young person himself both as an individual and as a future citizen. It has again and again been experienced that the young people who take part in club work grow and develop mentally just as fast or faster than the crops they cultivate.38

In much the same way that plant scientists manipulate environments to control the growth of biotic life, philanthropists thought, through a series of discerning interventions, that they could cultivate better and more efficient living. This effort in political husbandry hinged on a theory of the human subject in which “personality” and “character” were thought to be infinitely malleable.
The much-fêted plasticity of youth, so central to IEB’s international programme, was made an instrumentality in a wider project of orientating citizens for rational commercial living. The objectives of socialization were clear from the beginning: to overcome the enervating forces of custom; to re-make the domestic economy of families; to inspire confidence in agricultural technologies; to impart the principles of scientific cultivation; and to shift from subsistence living to commodity production. The field reports presented to the IEB were peppered with glowing testimony from agents “amazed” to witness new attitudes and habits filter through the countryside. Several agents observed that the youth were learning to handle money and now appreciated what one agent termed the “remunerativeness” of the farming enterprise. “Their sense of economy has received an often needed shove in the right direction,” commented Viggo Kristensen, a demonstration agent working in Brønderslev, a town located in the north of the Jutland peninsula. Other demonstration agents positively remarked on the new impetus for farming and farm living, noting the pull of independent earnings and the inclination to spend less time in “idle” leisure.

A central plank of the work was to enable the youth to undertake tasks for themselves. From planting seed to disbursing fertilizer, club workers were expected to develop – through participation – their capacity for intelligent self-direction. Moreover, the work was specifically designed to activate and nurture feelings of pride, happiness and self-fulfilment. The discovery of independence through economic responsibility, and reward through endeavour, taught the youth to see farming as a freedom-enhancing enterprise, as well as a source of personal growth and betterment. To experiment on the farm was to thus to experiment on the self. Youth were encouraged to see personhood as a continuous, therapeutic project – the first step toward what Lund termed “progressive economical development.”

Of course, the bigger picture was social rather than personal transformation. At the centre of the project stood the figure of the child-youth as an instrument or “catalyst” (to use the idiom of philanthropists) in the restructuring of rural relations. This theory of change went all the way back to Seaman Knapp who pointedly wrote:
It is realized that the great force which readjusts the world originates in the home. Home conditions will ultimately mold the man’s life. The home eventually controls the viewpoint of man; and you do all that you are a mind to do in the schools, but unless you reach in and get hold of that home and change its conditions you are nullifying the uplift of the school. We are reaching for the home. The matter of paramount importance in the world is the readjustment of the home. It is the greatest problem with which we have to deal, because it is the most delicate and most difficult of all problems.42

It seems clear that hearth and home were “delicate problems,” precisely because they were dominated by adults – recalcitrant subjects wedded to vernacular traditions and practices passed on to them by their parents and their parents’ parents.43 The paradigmatic innovation of club work was to reverse the flow of custom by having children train adults.44 Thus the girls’ work was done in the home, where adults could follow the new methods, while boys’ work was carried out in fields on, or adjacent to, the family farm, where parents could directly observe their progress. Initially, many parents viewed their children’s “work” with wearied indulgence – and in some cases, outright scorn – but as allotments matured and homes were re-fashioned into functional, efficient spaces, the adults soon admitted, at least in Lund’s version of events, the utility and superiority of the children’s methods.45 Indeed, in much the same way that the agents self-consciously used “pride” to stimulate youthful cooperation, they now mobilised “shame” to coax adults to adopt their children’s practices. This potent cocktail of pride and shame – a “structure of feeling,” to borrow Raymond Williams’ redolent term – was the animating force driving club work. Thus, Lund’s reports are peppered in Damascene conversions: idle adolescents metamorphose into entrepreneurial youths and doubting parents reappear as “enthusiastic believers” in modern science.46 In one district, Lund reported the near-complete destruction of the potato harvest by blight, the exception being the crops of the young boys who followed the agent’s advice about spraying their fields (and as scarcity gripped local food markets, club members could expect to sell their harvest “at a fancy price.”)47 As ever, Lund tended to present such anecdotes as convincing evidence that American agricultural science could be transplanted to Danish soil. “Such results,’ he wrote, “cause considerable comment and are the best means of securing increased interest in club work.”48
Expansion: Sweden

The following season, Lund added three objectives to the IEB’s programme: first, to expand the ambition and reach of the Danish work; second, to ensure the responsibility for the programme would be assumed locally (and as soon as possible); and finally, to use the Danish work as a catalyst for a Pan-Nordic campaign of farm education. Expanding the Danish programme seemed to be a relatively straightforward task. By the end of 1925, club membership had tripled to 1,618 participants (1,120 boys and 498 girls), and Lund was now regularly submitting reports to the Danish Ministry, as well as to Rose and the IEB. Mindful that the IEB considered itself a partner, not a patron, Lund constantly emphasized the respect shown to existing customs and mores, even as the clubs expressly targeted both for reform. He wrote:

In the adaptation of the young people’s work to Danish conditions, it has been the object to have the work appear not as something foreign which in ready-made form was introduced and forced upon the country young people, but to apply the underlying principles in such a way that the whole work with the young people would grow and develop slowly and in a natural way, as if it had its origin in the very soil and national character of the Danish people.

Appearances mattered, and Lund was desirous that his mission could not be construed as a project of appropriation and control.

The opportunity to expand the International Education Board’s work came in the summer of 1924, when the Jordbrukare-Ungdomens Förbund (JUF), a newly-minted youth agricultural federation, approached Lund about starting club work in Sweden. Privately, Lund described the JUF as a poor “imitation” of the Board’s youth club programme. It failed, he said, to “go down to the very fundamentals” and he was concerned by the “aristocratic feeling of superiority among men of the more educated classes towards the farm population.” However, in the countryside among farmers, “I met greater understanding as to the value of the
work ... than I had dared hope for, and this gives faith as to the future.” Rose urged cautious collaboration, reminding Lund that “work in one or two places well accomplished is a more effective demonstration than forced progress over a large area.” He shared Lund’s worries about the gulf between the “educated classes” and the “farm population,” but viewed the “proper training of native persons to direct this work” as the obvious antidote. To ensure the programme’s long-term viability, one needed to train the trainers in methods of “personal help, instruction and guidance that [are] so important and essential in our work in the United States.” To ensure effective cultural transmission, the agents had to learn the protocols, etiquette and nuances of rural pedagogy.

The JUF was fully on board with this mission. In a context where “farming is not [held] in high esteem, is often fighting against economical difficulties, and the young people seek in large numbers to go from this to other things,” wrote the JUF secretary to the IEB, it was vital “to create in the members love for their home community knowledge ... received through person[al] studies of the community and environment.”

It was agreed that work in Sweden, as in Denmark, would commence on the principle that the local agricultural societies in each county (län) would fund, in whole or in part, the salary of club agents. On this point, Rose was emphatic: from the very beginning, the work must be undertaken on the clear understanding that the IEB could be no more (and no less) than a “bird of passage.” Initially, the work was modest and confined to Skaraborg län, where club agents guided 114 youth, spread across 10 clubs, in horticulture and arable farming. As in Denmark, all boys and girls over the age of 10 could participate in the clubs, provided they could secure adequate farmland (100-500 sq. meters for garden products, and preferably, at least 1000 sq. meters for field crops). The field crops included mangel beets, rutabagas, turnips and carrots; on the garden plots, potatoes, strawberries and field peas were trialed. Lund complained that it was often difficult to secure parents’ consent to let the boys follow the agent’s instructions, particularly regarding the application of fertilizer (see Image 2). In addition, the support structures for commercial agricultural were in an infant state and basic farming equipment was in short supply. Still, Lund held hope that the tools of rural reform – shaping and orientating youthful habits – could overcome these deeper structural problems. At Vara agricultural college, he organized an end-of-
year agricultural exhibition that was visited, at his own reckoning, by more 300 adults. Prizes and agricultural books, typically bought with money donated by local banks, were distributed to those who accomplished the best work during summer. Lund was satisfied that the work had become an “object lesson for the whole surrounding countryside.”

The following year, Lund undertook a country-wide lecturing tour to raise consciousness. He also authorized the commencement of club work to Hallands län, arranged for Swedish agents to travel to Denmark to observe and learn from the work there, and prepared and published a pamphlet “written to meet a demand for an explanation of Club Work, its underlying principles, its introduction into Europe, and its adaptation to Swedish conditions.” The impetus for club work, the pamphlet professed, did not come from theory, but from practical problems and from the youth themselves: “Club work seeks not only to develop the material side of life, but to awaken a feeling within the young people in regard to the place they are to occupy in the future in whatever community they may chance to belong.” However, it was clear from the remainder of the pamphlet that the youth primarily belonged in the countryside: “To a nation where agriculture is a main resource, the problem of how best to awaken and hold the interest of its boys and girls in this particular means of livelihood, must ever be a problem outstanding in significance.” Above all, the pamphlet promoted the idea that club work stirred and nurtured desire, placing it firmly in the service of rural reform and national development. Ultimately, it was “eagerness and initiative” that made one plot of soil more productive than another. Nurturing “higher level[s] of growth and accomplishment” would yield better citizens. It is clear, then, that pleasure – the pleasure unearthed in setting and realizing goals – was a crucial, if somewhat intangible, ingredient in creating propitious outcomes.

Lund’s campaigns grew, as more counties founded youth clubs. By 1926, the membership grew to 294 youths (87 girls and 207 boys) attached to 26 clubs. The membership more than tripled in the third year to 1,036 youth participants; the following year, 1928, it doubled again to a final tally 2,074 youths (see table 1).
Table 1

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Län</th>
<th>Clubs</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
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<td>44</td>
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<td>207</td>
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<td>294</td>
</tr>
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<td>*</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>345</td>
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* = not reported

Films produced in the United States were screened to the youth and proved enormously popular.\(^6^6\) Animal husbandry – beekeeping and raising calves, sheep, colts, chickens, geese, ducks and rabbits – was added to the list of activities, and agents trained in home economics began instructing girls in “the rudiments of baking, the preparation of palatable, cheap and nourishing meals from home-grown products, the value of vegetables in the daily diet, and the preservation of food by canning, salting and drying.”\(^6^7\) These efforts at home-making were doubly significant in the International Education Board’s eyes. By introducing economic values into homes, agents saw themselves as replacing subsistence principles with the ideals of industry and commerce; in this way, non-capitalist social formations were transformed into sites of enterprise. But more than this, the home was also conceived of as a site of social reproduction, a space critical to the (gendered) reconstitution of society. In the field “men,” as well as crops, were grown; in the home, agents entertained the belief that they were nursing the future into existence. If fields could be surveyed, enclosed and ordered, then so, too, could the home. Society here is conceived as “unmoulded clay” – to borrow a phrase from Arathi Sriprakash – to be fashioned and shaped by a swelling army of agents and rural instructors.\(^6^8\)
Gratified by the progress being made, Rose was nevertheless anxious to transfer the expense and day-to-day administration of club work to local authorities. The youth had been roused in field and home, but the challenge now was to ensure that local elites were alert and aware of their new responsibilities as stewards of their citizens’ futures: “The transfer of technical responsibility is a comparatively simple thing,” Rose commented, “[however] the transfer of the substantial responsibility for carrying out the principles and details of the demonstrated program is not so easy.”

The desire to cede executive powers to local agents was a prominent operational theme from the very start – this was the husk of meaning in Rose’s gnomic phrase, “bird of passage” – but the timing of his interjection was significant, for the International Education Board had recently considered and approved Lund’s request to expand club work to the neighboring state of Finland. While, on the one hand, expansion was read as a sign of success, on the other hand, it raised the sceptre of overreach – what Rockefeller staff sometimes called “scatteration” – as well as the concomitant worry that the IEB might become a cashier for the long-term rural development of the Nordic states. Keen to prevent either possibility, Rose reiterated his conviction that the principal objective of philanthropy was to “prime the pump,” rather than act as a permanent reservoir:

I am particularly interested to see that the work in Finland is being started under the general supervision of the Ministry of Agriculture. This ties the government to the work at once and guarantees their understanding interest from the beginning. This is fundamentally important.

These intercessions make clear that philanthropy should be a goad to, but never a surrogate for, independent statecraft.

**Consolidation: Finland**

The seeds for IEB involvement in Finland were laid in 1925 when, not long after work had begun in Denmark, Lund received a request from the Mannerheim League for Child Welfare to visit Finland and lecture on the theme of Boys’ and Girls’ Club work and its “adaptation to European conditions.” The American
club model of promoting scientific farming had already attracted positive press in Finland. In addition to the circulation of American pamphlets, Arthus Rindell, a professor of agriculture and the chancellor of Åbo University, published a special study of club work and publicly called for its local introduction “under experienced guidance.” Lund arranged a conference with Mannerheim and the Finnish minister for agriculture, at which it was agreed to seek the IEB’s formal approval to initiate a club program in Finland. The IEB considered and approved the request in the fall of 1925, and it was agreed that work would commence the following spring.  

Lund began the work with customary precision and zest. In the first year, he fixed on just three districts, where his agents introduced local youths to scientific methods for growing garden and field crops (potatoes, turnips, beets, carrots, rutabagas, onions, cabbage, peas, cucumbers and tomatoes). After a season of instruction, the youths were trained in the techniques of animal husbandry (pigs, calves, chickens), while several more experienced youths experimented with rotation patterns, new fertilizer regimes, and novel cultigens. The home economics work mirrored this pattern of persistent, incremental improvement. In groups of 5 to 10, the girls learned methods of food preservation and storage (canning, salting, drying), “simple lessons in nutrition” (how to prepare inexpensive, healthy meals from local produce,) and basic accounting to help monitor farm income and expenditure. As the remit of tasks expanded, so too did youth membership, the number of districts involved, and the sum of agricultural agents employed (see Table 2).

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Districts</th>
<th>Boys</th>
<th>Girls</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<td>74</td>
<td>223</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1875</td>
<td>1848</td>
<td>3723</td>
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</tbody>
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In his annual reports to the IEB, Lund continued to provide testimony from parents and agricultural agents on the progress of the youth. One mother told how her daughters learned through the pull of learned aspiration.

Our daughters have through club work learned how to grow many vegetables that we never before have been able to grow, and they have also learned how to use them on the daily diet, and how to can them for winter use. They often speak of Maja, the club girl that we saw in the film from America, and they have decided that they are going to work very hard and learn all the things that she knows how to do, in order to become just as competent a club girl as she is.\textsuperscript{74}

Another farmer described how home and character were transformed together:

I find this club work very useful because it imbues the children with the spirit of agriculture. Our daughter has through her club work also beautified the home surroundings, and is so happy in her club work that she no longer finds any pleasure in merely running around the countryside in her spare time.\textsuperscript{75}

Another witness depicted the economization of habits that commenced with club activity: “Our son pays almost all his school expenses with his club money. This summer I often found him sitting beside his tomatoes, figuring out how much money he would be able to make on them.”\textsuperscript{76} If the birth of enterprising, calculative agents was celebrated, no less gratifying was the knowledge that the work was inspiring independent, auxiliary activities: banks and private individuals sent funds for excursions and prizes; impressed by the focus on diet and nutrition, health workers lent their support to the work; a national home economics group, known as the Martha Association, began using club work to promote artisanal industries, gardening, and home improvements. (The Martha Association continues to this day.) Along the Russian border, where several industries were located, factory owners became interested in the IEB’s ‘educational movement’ and sought Lund’s help to establish “factory villages” in an effort to “divert surplus labor into this important industry.”\textsuperscript{77} But most pleasing to Rose’s ear was the news in November 1928 that the Finnish authorities approved the founding of central authority to administer club work (see Map 1). In the same year, the Finnish Diet granted 300,000 Finnish Mark ($7,615) for the
continued “support and maintenance” of club work. As a “bird of passage,” the IEB had proven its worth.78

Image 1: A kitchen cabinet similar to the one Lund demonstrated with in Denmark
Eva Johansson, 17 years. 250 sq. meters with potatoes.

Image 2: In Sweden, Eva Johansson is pictured tending to her crops c. 1926
Map 1: Location of Boys’ and Girls’ Club Work in Finland, 1926-27. Note the shading to differentiate the work financed by the IEB Board, work financed locally, and work partially financed by the IEB Board and partially by local authorities.
1 Rose to Sørensen, February 9, 1923. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign, Box: 27, Folder: 397.
6 See also the conference paper written by Sørensen titled “Extension Work in Denmark” and dated May 9, 1922. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign, Box: 27, Folder: 397.
10 ‘[T]he greatest thing any one [sic] could do in the world,’ wrote Lund, ‘was to serve humanity and to help the great masses to secure better homes, better education, better understanding of life, and to help them get nearer to their Creator.’ Lund to Rose, May 4, 1923. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 28, Folder: 402.
12 In April 1917, Lund took up employment with the USDA as an extension agent in food preservation. In 1919 and again in 1920, he was released from his obligations at the USDA to teach home demonstration work in France. During his second sojourn, Lund also made brief visits to lecture in Luxemburg, Belgium, Holland, England and Denmark. Lund to Rose, May 4, 1923. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 28, Folder: 402; Lund to Buttrick, Jan 1, 1923, International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 27, Folder: 397.
15 Daniel Immerwahr, Thinking Small: The United States and the Lure of Community Development. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015, p. 93
By June the following year, Lund had personally delivered more than 150 lectures.

Lund also published a pamphlet explaining the practical uses of main appliances demonstrated.


Though, of course, adult agents guided the children in learning new farming and domestic work.

Lund recounted the story of one father who was very annoyed by the agent’s instruction to his son to employ more fertilizer. (The father felt this would not repay the cost and effort.) The boy ignored his father and produced an abundant crop at the season’s end. The father, “chagrined at this state of affairs,” began to furtively sprinkle his own crops with ‘chilisalpeter’ [nitratine]. The boy discovered this ruse and “glorified in the fact that he had been right in following the agent’s advice.” “Report of Boys’ and Girls’ Club work in Denmark During the Calendar year 1925,” p. 4. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 28, Folder: 401.


In October 1924, Lund met representatives from the Department of Agriculture in Stockholm who promised him aid from local agents (konsulenter) and itinerant agricultural instructors. Lund was also encouraged to make a visit with local agricultural associations and meet with their chairmen, secretaries and agents. Specifically, he was advised to contact Svenska allmene fjäderavelsförening (Swedish General Poultry Association); certain breeding associations specializing in purebred hogs and calves; Hemslöjdsföreningarnas Riksförbund, a state-wide association of home sloyd societies, specializing in handicraft in homes; Husmoderföreningarna (societies for home mothers) specializing in food preservation; Svenska Betes – och Vallföreningen (a pasture and grass field association). Translation of “Memorandum Concerning State Agent Lund,” International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 41, Folder: 585. See also Lund to Rose Dec 30 1924. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 41, Folder: 585.

Parents tended to see fertilizer as an expensive input that needed guarding against frivolous waste. In Gävleborgs län, for example, Lund reported the story of a father who only reluctantly permitted his son to use some chilisalpeter, normally reserved for the turnip harvest, as fertilizer for the boy’s potatoes. The boy’s field was sprinkled unevenly with the rows nearest the father’s plots receiving more fertilizer. “Report of Boys’ and Girls’ Club Work in Sweden Calendar Year 1927,” p. 10. “Report of Boys’ and Girls’ Club Work in Sweden During the Calendar Year, 1926,” p. 2. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 41, Folder: 586.

In comparison to rural reform programmes in the US, the dearth of rural development in Denmark led to less emphasis being placed on achieving economical results. Instead, greater importance was on “supplying the needs of the home,” “utilizing the field crops,” and rearing “a saleable animal product.” “Report of Boys’ and Girls’ Club Work in Sweden During the Calendar Year, 1926,” p. 2. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 41, Folder: 586.

“The particular piece of soil the young people cultivate is fundamentally no different from all other soil. It will respond to the application – or lack of application – of certain laws governing all soil cultivation. The seed is actually planted in the ground, the crop produced measured in kilogram, and like every other article subjected to existing marketing conditions.” “Lantungdomens Yrkesutbildning Genom Praktisk Självverksamhet under Vägledning Av Konsulenter: Lantbruksklubbarbete För Ungdom Enligt Det Amerikanska “Boys’ and Girls’ Club Work,”” p. 4. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 41, Folder: 586.
69 Rose to Lund July 14 1926. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 28, Folder: 399. Indeed, as early as 1925, but in relation to conditions in Denmark, Rose was urging Lund to “undertake mediating the transfer to government responsibility.” Rose to Lund, Jan 9 1925. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 28, Folder: 399.
72 Lund to Rose June 3 1925 and Brierley to Minster of Ag, Finland Dec 10 1925. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 33, Folder: 460.
73 In Wöra, for example, several of the older club members, “as a side line,” ran experimental fields in alfalfa, barley, mangel beets and improved pasture grass (timothy-grass). “Report on Boys’ and Girls’ Work in Finland, Calendar Year ending 1927,” p. 8. International Education Board, Series: 1 Appropriations, Subseries: 2 Foreign Countries, Box: 33, Folder: 461.