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**Diplomacy and the Design School: The Ford Foundation and India's National Institute of Design**

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**Biography**

Dr Claire Wintle teaches History of Art and Design at the University of Brighton, UK. Her research focuses on cultural institutions and examines the ways in which the material world interacts with the politics of empire, nationalism, decolonisation and the Cold War. Her monograph, *Colonial Collecting and Display: Encounters with Material Culture from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands* (2013), is published by Berghahn, and she co-edited, with Ruth Craggs, *Cultures of Decolonisation: Transnational Productions and Practices, 1945-1970* (Manchester University Press, 2016).

## **Diplomacy and the Design School: The Ford Foundation and India's National Institute of Design**

### **Abstract**

This article explores the Cold War context for the relationship between India's National Institute of Design and its US funders, the Ford Foundation. Drawing on Ford Foundation archives to examine the complexities of philanthropic funds for US diplomacy with India, US hegemony in design and modernization discourse is acknowledged but also balanced with attention to the reciprocal flows of knowledge between the West and the global South. This article examines the impact of design networks and expertise on international political and economic negotiations, and argues that Indian nationalism, at government level and in the design school, influenced Ford Foundation activities.

**Key words:** Cold War, cultural diplomacy, design, pedagogy, National Institute of Design, India, nationalism, expertise

Despite being a *National* Institute of Design, independent India's original design school, founded in 1961 and based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat, is in fact well known for its international outlook. The first design school in the global South, the National Institute of Design (NID) famously emerged from the philosophical blueprint provided by the US designers Charles and Ray Eames (Kirkham 1995: 279-285; Mathur 2011: 44-47; Adajania 2014: 77-78). Well known, too, is that the largest private US philanthropic foundation of the Cold War era, the Ford Foundation, funded the study tour upon which the "Eames Report" on the feasibility of design education in India was based (ibid; Eames

and Eames 1958). Indeed, while the Government of India and the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation supported NID's local costs, nearly all the foreign exchange costs involved in NID's inaugural years were borne by the Ford Foundation. This article will examine the nature of that funding relationship and its political and social contexts.

One of the first suggestions that an Indian higher education institute might "serve as a centre for creative studies in design and fashion" came in 1954 in an earlier report funded by the Ford Foundation, intended to evaluate the potential of village and small industries in India, and chaired by Sven Hagberg of Stockholm's vocational craft school, the Statens Hantverksinstitut (Ensminger 1954: 5). The Ford Foundation also funded a 1960 report by Danish architect Vilhelm Wohlert and Swiss filmmaker Ernst Scheidegger, designed to develop the Eameses' initial suggestions and put their ideas into practice. In 1961, 1962 and 1963 the Foundation sanctioned three further grants for the National Institute of Industrial Design (as it was originally known): monies totalling \$1,082,391 and released in instalments between January 1962 and March 1971 paid for foreign designers and educators, including Louis Kahn, Ivan Chermayeff, Armin Hofmann and Henri Cartier-Bresson, to act as visiting faculty at NID and support its emerging curriculum (NID 1972). The grants also paid for the costs of Indian staff and students to undertake fellowships in design schools and practices across Europe and North America, and the purchase of library materials and technical equipment not available in India (NID 1972). A "terminal report" concluding the Ford Foundation/NID funding relationship was produced in December 1972 (ibid.)

From the publication of the Hagberg Report in 1954, through to the

termination of the funding agreement in 1972, Indian industrial design education and design practice engaged with the encouragement, suggestions, and explicit directions proffered by the foreign philanthropists. Accordingly, in order to develop a nuanced understanding of Indian design history and glean a full sense of the financial and political conditions under which it emerged, a richer picture of the motivations, perspectives and contributions of those at the Ford Foundation is required.

It has been noted that these philanthropic funds for NID – and the wider programme of support for post-independence Indian economic and social “modernization” of which they were a part – were a “soft power” initiative related to US Cold War diplomatic strategies designed to tempt non-aligned hearts and minds towards the US version of capitalist democracy, and away from Soviet-led communism (Adajania 2014: 77; Clarke 2015: 50). Often understood as “conscious instruments of covert US foreign policy” (Saunders 1999: 116), US philanthropic foundations like the Ford Foundation, which also financed many other “modernization” projects in the global South, have been described as “directly engaged in extending and consolidating US hegemony around the globe” (Parmar 2013: 2). Their work has been termed “informal imperialism”, “broadly congruent with [US] national and state objectives”, if not specifically directed by them (Livsey 2014: 253) [1]. Yet, little is known about the Ford Foundation’s actual involvement in Indian design pedagogy and NID’s history. The political interests of the Ford Foundation as “an important conduit for American soft power initiatives” (Adajania 2014: 77) are sometimes assumed to be self-evident.

While Ford Foundation planning and practice relating to NID did indeed mirror the political and economic policies of the US Government in important ways, in others it contravened them. In what follows, the substance of the Ford Foundation's interactions with NID will be analysed in some detail. First, the undeniable characteristics of cultural and economic imperialism so often associated with Ford and other US foundations during the Cold War will be examined. Then, by investigating the individual practices and motivations of the various Foundation representatives who worked on the NID project, the inconsistencies of this "informal imperialism" will be discussed. In their involvement with NID's establishment, the Ford Foundation's staff necessarily worked in close cooperation with educationalists, business leaders, and practitioners from an increasingly globalized design world. It will become clear that in these specific relationships and in its involvement with design education, the Foundation went beyond government initiative. Moreover, Foundation representatives demonstrated a surprisingly sophisticated interest in design and design education that impacted on the project in various ways. As we shall see, the networked nature of the design world, and a culture of professional respect and esteem amongst designers and design educators beyond national borders, created a unique tenor to this particular form of "Cold War diplomacy".

This attention to the US funders of design in the global South is not to side-line the important strides that have been made towards acknowledging the agency of local designers in developing their own design cultures, or the impact of designers in the global South on modern design more broadly [2]. An important and burgeoning scholarship on design in India is now revising

understandings of the one-way influence of US “development” discourse on Nehruvian nation-building and the wholesale “importing” of Euro-American modernity into Indian design practices, including at NID [3]. Indeed, the Foundation archives also help demonstrate the extent to which Ford Foundation aims intersected with India’s policies for its own national economic development, and the influence that Indian (as well as European and US) designers, industrialists, administrators and politicians had on Foundation officials. This localised study of development provides an important insight into the nuances and efficacy of US authority during the Cold War, revealing how specific institutions in the global South were inflected by but also influenced the dynamics of US philanthropic funding in varying ways.

In historical research on NID, there has been very little focus on the Ford Foundation archives, held in the Rockefeller Archive Center in New York. Memoranda from staff at the Foundation’s New York headquarters and its major station in New Delhi, letters between Foundation representatives, designers, academics, politicians and industrialists, and the oral histories of key members of the Ford team in India, are crucial documents that provide a rich perspective on the complexity of US philanthropic interest in design in India during the Cold War. The archives, of course, provide a partial account of NID’s emergence: they contain only what the Foundation saw as worth keeping, and those documents that were meant for the eyes of Foundation staff. The extensive oral history of Douglas Ensminger, the Ford Foundation’s Representative in India, in which he described his experiences of the inauguration of NID, is a crucial resource, yet it relies on memory rather than diaries. It is subject to the constructions of memory, as well as Ensminger’s

desire to align himself with the shared values of the present and to protect the reputation he had forged during his career. But the correspondence in the many files on specific grants relating to NID also reveal a surprisingly candid version of the role that the Foundation played in Indian design practice during these years, and contemporaneous archival material at NID and other repositories, such as the Eames collection at the Library of Congress, help mitigate some of the perils of focusing on the Ford Foundation archive.

### **Ford, NID and “informal imperialism”**

There are many ways in which the Ford Foundation’s presence in India and its funding of NID directly supported US foreign policy objectives to “contain” Soviet expansion in South Asia. The original basis for the Foundation’s presence in India, for example, was the conviction of Paul G. Hoffman, the Foundation’s president from 1950 to 1953, that the “peace of the world for generations to come might well be determined by what happened in India” (Ensminger 1971b). Specifically, Hoffman’s interest in India and his particular understanding of “world peace” were rooted in a growing official awareness that developing a series of economically and politically stable nation states (with Western sympathies) would be a key strategy for confounding the Soviet antagonists (Gandhi 2001: 9). This was also the overarching motivation of Douglas Ensminger. With a background in agricultural sociology, Ensminger was based at the Ford Foundation’s station in New Delhi between 1951 and 1970 and, at the station’s zenith in 1968, was responsible for over one hundred members of Foundation staff (Gordon 1997: 113). In a talk for a US farming charity, he explained:

Frequently, people ask me, 'Why have you spent eleven years of your life in India and why are you going back?' My answer is: If India can demonstrate to itself and to the rest of the developing nations in Asia that it can through democratic methods and democratic institutions eliminate disease, poverty, and hunger, then democracy will have a home in Asia. If India does not succeed in that task, the implications are clear. All of Asia might well go communist (1962: 11).

In line with the broader US promotion of modes of modernization that aimed to direct "emerging nations" towards an endpoint that both stabilised them against communist encroachment and echoed the superpower's version of industrial capitalism (see Latham 2011; McMahon 1994), the Ford Foundation saw India's economic development as particularly important. NID's foreign currency costs were granted as part of a wider industrialisation programme that saw the development of small-scale industries as "essential for India's internal social and economic stability" (Ford Foundation 1957: 2). As plans for NID began to gather speed, J. Wayne Fredericks, one of the Foundation's South and South East Asia team in New York, argued that the NID project was "one of real importance in India's future to develop its economy and arts within a democratic society" (1960).

If, as George Gant, director of the Foundation's South and Southeast Asia programme (1958-1967), also suggested, NID was to "serve the future of India's industrial development and production" (1959), it would do so in three main ways. First, NID was part of a wider intention to professionalize



designers in India according to a Euro-American model: as Ensminger (1956: 3) put it, the aim was to generate “entrepreneurial and managerial talent” that would act as a US-style capitalist, middle class of “self-reliant small industrialists” to create private initiatives and “active competition in fields where many people now fear monopolistic tendencies”. Ensminger (1971a) wrote, the growth of such a class through the wider small industries programme would be “the foundation and the backbone for the working of democracy in India.” Second, based on the research of various Foundation-funded study groups, Ensminger understood “one of the principal problems” in Indian industry to be Indian “competence in design”, since consumer goods were in demand but not available (1959 and 1971a: 5 and 29). For Ensminger (1959), a design institute where students could learn from cutting-edge research, and work towards professional commissions in industry, would “offer the most effective means of stimulating good design”. When Jean Joyce, Ensminger’s assistant, wrote to Gant to justify the need for a service-to-industry aspect of the Institute, she stressed the apparently nascent state of Indian design, “where ‘design’ tends, in the present pattern, to be very far removed from practical function” (Joyce 1961). Based on these initial pathways, Ensminger’s aim was to fund programmes intended to give “direction and leadership to the development of many more small industries so that an increasing amount of the consumer goods could be produced... thereby providing employment for many people presently idle” (Ensminger 1971a: 8). In short, for Ensminger and his team, “good design” at NID would result in new employment and production opportunities for India.

## **The Ford Foundation and “Good Design”**

In these ideas, and in their specific terminology, Foundation staff were drawing on a particular understanding of post-war US “good design” influenced by the “rationality, practicality and integrity in form” championed by European emigrants associated with the interwar modern movement in architecture and design [4]. This was not surprising: Ensminger and Joyce worked extensively with Monroe Wheeler, the Director of Exhibitions and Publications at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA), and MoMA had famously promoted this approach, both before the war and in the *Good Design* exhibitions that they hosted in the 1950s. Together, Wheeler and the Ford Foundation had been involved in the development of the exhibition, *Textiles and Ornamental Arts of India* (1955), also held at MoMA, and a second exhibition, this time of European and US modern design, which toured India between 1959 and 1961. Throughout the entire phase of NID’s planning, Wheeler was a source of advice for the Ford team, helping with the administration of contracting US citizens to work on Ford Foundation projects in India (Wolf 1957) and suggesting the names of designers who could contribute to the NID project, including Charles and Ray Eames (Wheeler 1956). As central proponents of this type of “good design”, the Eameses would also make clear how that ethos could be applied in the Indian context, both through their eponymous report (Eames and Eames 1958), and in direct correspondence with Foundation staff (e.g. Eames 1958a).

Ensminger further built up his understanding of the “competence in design” he envisioned for India through his own specially conducted research in Sweden and Denmark in the early 1950s. Here he was impressed by the

numbers of people employed in small industries as well as with governments that “were oriented to markets and understood the importance of design”, ensuring “that the small industries had available to them the most recent technology” (Ensminger 1971a: 10). Additionally, he looked to Japan, Italy and South America, where he understood that “exciting work” was being done, encouraging Gautam Sarabhai, the Indian industrialist and founding Chairman of NID, to consider these regions during the recruitment of NID’s foreign visiting faculty (Ensminger 1964a).

The geographical provenance of Ensminger’s understanding of design and his attempts to install new design aesthetics and methods into India’s design culture can be seen as a central link between the Ford Foundation and the US Government’s Cold War “containment” policies. Throughout the 1950s, post-war design in Scandinavia, East Asia, Europe, and South America had also been influenced by US foreign assistance programmes designed to stabilise countries apparently in danger of communist encroachment (Kikuchi 2008: 361). Funds were directed through the US State Department’s International Cooperation Administration (ICA) to help specific countries to foster economic growth, expand exports (and cultural ties) to the US, and propagate the US idea of modernism as a central pillar of the non-communist “free world” (see Kikuchi 2008: 361; Er, Korkut and Er 2003: 22-24). So when Ensminger looked beyond the US, to Scandinavia, Japan, Italy and South America as exemplars that would be able to provide India with the expertise needed to train its designers and shape the modern nation, he was locating India, design and the modern nation within the framework of a US political and economic ideology. In some ways then, in their hopes that NID

would help to stabilize the Indian nation through “good design”, and that a middle class of designers that would bring employment to the masses, Ensminger and his colleagues were planning for an informal imperialism closely linked to US government policy that would frame India in its image.

### **Beyond the Cold War: Design, Expertise and the Ford Foundation**

However, Ford Foundation policies did not always align with US government objectives [5]. If, encouraged by the Ford Foundation’s archives, we place NID’s gestation as beginning in April 1954 with the publication of the Hagberg Report, it is clear that the Foundation’s activities in India actually precede rather than follow US foreign policy in the Subcontinent. As David C. Engerman (2013: 70-71, quote 70) notes, throughout the Truman administration (1945-1953), India was regarded with “official apathy that began at the top”, and this neglect continued during the early years of the Eisenhower presidency (1953-1961). It was not until November 1955, when Khrushchev led a Soviet delegation to India, that US government efforts in India’s development, stimulated by direct Soviet communist competition, accelerated. Even after US government strategy shifted towards India, staff at the Ford Foundation displayed an ideological flexibility far beyond Cold War policy, which allowed a range of actors to influence their perceptions of how India should develop (Engerman 2013: 77). In the case of NID, Ford Foundation officials found their policies and actions partly shaped by designers and related experts from India, Europe and the US in profound ways.

Through NID and other interlinked programmes regarding urban planning and industrial development, Ensminger and his junior associate, Jean Joyce, became extremely familiar with the people, practicalities and ideas of the international world of design. As noted, Ensminger's understanding of design had been shaped through his own research into industry and design education across the Nordic countries. He also relied on a large informal network of design professionals to help him make decisions on appointing programme advisors or consultants for many of the projects in which he was involved. Written correspondence with luminaries like Albert Mayer, Catherine Bauer Wurster, William Wurster, Walter Gropius, Ivan Chermayeff, Josep Lluís Sert, as well as Wheeler and the Eameses, held in the Ford Foundation archives, extended his network and understanding of the discipline of design [6]. He also attended NID's governing council meetings, queried specific aspects of its emerging curriculum, and individually assessed the value of every external visiting professor to the Institute before sanctioning their appointment.

As the Ford Foundation's central liaison to the NID project, Joyce, too, gained a sophisticated understanding of design. From 1951, until her return to the US in 1961, Joyce lived and worked in Delhi. Between 1951 and 1953, she was speechwriter to the US Ambassador to India, Chester Bowles, and then, during her time at the Ford Foundation (1953-1961), she became extremely knowledgeable about Indian economic planning and the practicalities of working with the Indian Government [7]. She worked on several projects relating to Indian industrialisation and urban planning. It was through this work, that she developed the fairly nuanced, design-related

vocabulary that allowed her, for example, to counsel Charles and Ray Eames in how they might present their conclusions about India's design potential to the Ministry of Industry and Commerce. She detailed specific suggestions that would help "some of the people here, who will be involved with seeing your report and accepting your plans for an Institute, to understand what such an Institute should be and should do" (1958a). She advised them to

set forth briefly but clearly what modern industrial design is, and even how it is done. I believe that some people who may have to see and approve your report may not know what is involved in high-level industrial design, and may expect the School simply to teach people how to draw prettier new shapes for furniture, bicycles, or crockery. The wider concept – of designing objects with a view to their relation to India's patterns of living, to India's social and economic needs, to a 'national image' of India – may be very new to them, and requires clear statement to make your concept for the School easily understood and accepted (ibid.).

She also – with some resistance from the two sets of designers involved – edited the reports by the Eameses, and by Wohlert and Scheidegger, before they were presented to the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Industry, motivated both by what she described as a "pragmatic" desire to see the Institute match-funded by the Indian Government, and also by her thoughts on the relative merits of Wohlert and Scheidegger's plans for product design compared to graphics and spatial design (Joyce 1958b; 1960a; 1960b).

Both Joyce and Ensminger learnt a great deal from the designers they engaged with. Tentative relationships between the Foundation's staff and

these designers emerged, and Joyce in particular seems to have revelled in the friendships forged as a result of her participation in the NID project [8]. Indeed, armed with their new design knowledge, they found themselves defending the ideas of the NID team to their sceptical superiors in New York, working as advocates for their Indian and international design colleagues on several occasions (e.g. Joyce 1961; Ensminger 1971c). In one of NID's classic origin myths, the designers Charles and Ray Eames are described as presenting their report to Manubhai Shah, the Indian Minister of Industry and Commerce, and a "puzzled" Ensminger, also in attendance, is characterized as unable to understand the document which places "human needs" over "drawing pictures" [9]. Yet the evidence from the Ford Foundation archives suggests that this projected division between those familiar with design on the one hand, and the Ford Foundation on the other, is not entirely accurate.

Further, although Ensminger's perspective was guided by a "good design" ethos shaped by anti-communist "containment" policies, his understanding and network was not simply led by colleagues based in the US. Gautam Sarabhai was an Ahmedabad-based industrialist and Pupul Jayakar was an author, cultural administrator, and close confidant of Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru and his daughter, Indira Gandhi. Both were seminal figures in developing NID and had a major impact on Ensminger's comprehension of design and what NID should be. Ensminger held a great deal of respect for both individuals, crediting the foundation of NID to their leadership (Ensminger 1971a: 35). He praised Sarabhai's "sensitivity towards and about design" (ibid.) and was easily persuaded by Jayakar's influence. In September 1964, for example, a visit from members of the Eames Office to work on NID's

memorial exhibition to Nehru was in jeopardy after Ensminger threatened to withhold funds, ostensibly due to the “incidental” benefit the visit would have on the organisation (e.g. McVicker 1964). However, a meeting with Jayakar soon convinced him of how – in his words – their “visit in preparation of the Exhibit would in fact make a major contribution to the training of the Institute staff” (Ensminger 1964b).

Both Sarabhai and Jayakar were at the centre of a substantial international network of designers, artists, industrialists and politicians (Hodson 2009; NID 2013: 8-9; Guth 2016: 373) [10]. As they drew on these contacts for the benefit of the NID project, Ensminger and Joyce, and the directions in which they channelled their funds, were also guided by their Indian colleagues’ internationalism [11]. While Indian hostility towards foreign, Foundation-appointed consultants stymied many of the Ford Foundation programmes on the subcontinent (Ensminger 1972a), the consultants who helped develop the founding principles of NID, and the visiting faculty who worked there once it had opened, were not viewed in this way. The internationalist world of design in the 1950s and 1960s (Pulos 1988: 209-221), meant that collaborations across national borders were highly prized by NID’s founders, faculty and students alike. Jayakar had already collaborated with the Eameses during the MOMA *Textiles and Ornamental Arts of India* project, and her role in securing the US designers’ participation in NID is known (Hodson 2016: 501; NID 2013: 9). Ensminger (1971a: 36) credits Sarabhai with NID’s focus on prioritizing international over Indian faculty in the early years. Sarabhai himself undertook recruitment trips across Europe and to the US which the Ford team then capitalized upon.



In his account of the Ford, Rockefeller and Carnegie foundations as drivers of US hegemony, Inderjeet Parmar (2013: 5) argues that the US foundations *created* forums for elite expertise. This was true, but in design, these forums and networks were already well established and in the case of NID, the Ford team were indebted to them. While Eugene Staples, in his internal review of the Ford Foundation programme in India (1992: 67), argues that India “looked on the Foundation as a window on the world”, a firmly internationalist Indian elite also informed the horizons of the US philanthropists in terms of their design knowledge, networks and global reach.

### **The Ford Foundation and the Indian Nation**

If the relationship between US government policy and Ford Foundation practice was complicated by the internationalist world of design, it was also influenced by the nationalist nature of NID. The Indian nation was at the heart of the self-assured global outlook of NID’s founding figures and their ambitions for the organisation: Sarabhai and Jayakar, and the first two Indian faculty members at NID, Dashrath Patel and H. Kumar Vyas, were entirely dedicated to the Institute as building “a dream of national and self-reliant industrial design” (Menon 1998: 20). Their international gaze, and enjoyment of design as a “global activity”, did not contradict or compromise their commitment to India’s own history, or its future (Vyas 2009: 208) [12]. Indeed, if Ensminger and his staff hoped to stabilise India, buoy up employment and develop Indian design as a buffer to communist encroachment, this was entirely in line with the Nehruvian desire to do exactly the same for the benefit of the Indian nation.

In his oral history, Ensminger credited the influence of the Ford Foundation in India to the personal relationships that he and – in the first instance – Paul G. Hoffman had been able to cultivate with Nehru and other Indian politicians (e.g. Ensminger 1972b). He knew that the success of each of the Foundation’s projects was predicated on Nehru’s personal approval, and saw the role of the Foundation as helping Nehru “as the leader and his Government in being successful in designing creative and imaginative programs which were always to be under the leadership of the people of India” (Ensminger 1971d: 4 and 10). Ensminger’s reminiscences were clearly intended to crown his career, and emphasise the access to Nehru of which he was so proud [13]; as he noted, much of the ease with which the Foundation operated in India was related to its willingness to attribute jurisdiction to Indian leadership rather than seek credit for specific projects (Ensminger 1971d: 27). Nevertheless, it is certainly the case that Foundation activities were, as Leela Gandhi puts it for the wider Ford Foundation programme in India, “circumscribed by the expectations of the postcolonial Indian State” (2001: 17). Recent scholarship on Cold War alignments has recognized the role of the recipient nation in development projects (see Livsey 2017: 21 [final p. tbc]), and the building of the NID with Ford Foundation support can also be characterized as local (or national) agency in international development.

For example, Ensminger and Joyce adopted the language of Nehru in their descriptions of the future of Indian design: where Nehru saw design as “a catalyst for change, newness and creativity for Indians” (Mathur 2011: 44), Ensminger hoped to act as his “change-agent”, and saw the Foundation as helping the people of India to “think and act as change-agents” (Ensminger

1972b: 1). As we have seen, in her advice to the Eameses, Joyce (1958a) placed “the ‘national image’ of India” at the heart of the NID project. If some of this was a case of dressing the Foundation’s plans in Nehruvian garb, Ensminger was entirely convinced by Nehru’s ideas to generate employment for the Indian masses through the sensitive industrialisation of the so-called village and small industries. Recalling a meeting with Nehru in New Delhi in 1952, Ensminger described how the Indian prime minister’s counsel on “the dimensions of India’s problems of unemployment and underemployment... had a great impact on my mind” (Ensminger 1972c: 2). In fact, Ensminger credited the Foundation’s entire village and small industries programme (of which NID was a part) to Nehru’s clarity of conviction, as expressed in that meeting, that “the development of small industries would provide employment opportunities for a great many people”, and that “there should be no two views about the importance and necessity of his Government giving leadership to modernizing India’s village and small industry through an application of technology and modern methods of management” (cited in Ensminger 1971a: 1-2). As a result of these discussions with the Indian prime minister, the Hagberg Report was commissioned and the seeds of NID were sown. Nehru and other Indian elite figures directed the actions of the Ford Foundation in important ways.

### **Diplomacy and the Design School**

The relationship between the Ford Foundation and India’s design history thus emerges as a complex one. In their support of NID, the foreign philanthropists’ actions were often aligned with US Government Cold War foreign policy

objectives. Design practice was partly understood as a method of imparting US values to India. Yet in the nuance of their perspectives, and in their relationships with those involved with NID, Foundation representatives also differed from their government's approaches: Douglas Ensminger and Jean Joyce in particular were led by designers and other cultural and scientific elites in India, Europe and the US to form alliances, viewpoints and disciplinary knowledge that were substantially liberated from government influence. This is a transnational entanglement that is based on reciprocal flows of influence and understanding on the one hand, and a confident, decolonising Indian nation on the other. This reframing of the role of US philanthropic funding in India in the 1950s and 1960s is not an ode to "Americanization" or a defence of modernization theory, but it does give us a sense of the productive and nuanced state of some development projects at specific points in time as experienced by those who took part [14]. The perspectives of individuals in guiding what are often assumed to be organisational or even national positions are also revealed as being of critical importance.

The major funding relationship between NID and the Ford Foundation ended in 1972, and today the role of the Foundation in India is viewed in a very different light. In April 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Ministry of Home Affairs placed the Ford Foundation on a "watch list" of organisations requiring prior government clearance for grants to individuals and NGOs. The decision was linked, according to the *Times of India* (April 24, 2015), to recent claims by the Government of Gujarat that the Foundation's funds had been used to support two NGOs associated with the activist Teesta Setalvad,

famed for her public critique of Modi, and for her advocacy of the victims of the 2002 intercommunal violence in Gujarat (largely against Muslims and reportedly stoked by Modi who was chief minister of the state at the time). In this context, the Foundation was accused of “direct interference...in the internal affairs of the country and also of abetting communal disharmony in India” (ibid.). More recently, a working relationship between the Government of India and the Ford Foundation has resumed, based on closer regulation of the US organisation by the Indian government. However, under Modi we see a renewed identification of the division between the activities of “India” as a national entity and the philanthropic foundation as external organisation intervening in and imposing alien ideas upon “internal” affairs. Yet historical instances of cultural diplomacy, such as the allocation of US philanthropic funding to help build NID, show us that long-term projects do not always discretely separate foreign philanthropic foundations from the nation. National identities play a role, and hegemony is undoubtedly present, but personal and professional relationships, subject expertise and shared knowledge can create links beyond geopolitical posturing.

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conference from which this special edition stemmed was a rich and thought-provoking day and I am grateful to the participants and organisers for creating such a stimulating environment for discussion.

## **Notes**

1. In his discussion of the Ford and Rockefeller foundations' impact upon Nigerian universities, Livsey draws on R.J. Gallagher and Ronald Robinson's conception of Britain's "informal empire" in the nineteenth century (1953), in which they argue that economic influence beyond the boundaries of empire was as important as formal methods of control in the official colonies.
2. Key contributions to this broader project include, Margolin (2005), Er, Korkut and Er (2003), Adamson, Riello and Teasley (2011) and Fallan and Lees-Maffei (2016).
3. On NID, see Karim (2013), Mathur (2011), Adajania (2014), Wintle (forthcoming), Hodson (2009), Hodson (2016). More broadly, see, for example, Brown (2009), Prakash (2002) and Karim (2011).
4. On the diplomatic uses of "good design", see Nilsen (2011: chapter 6).
5. Tim Livsey (2017: 157 [NB final page number needs to be noted when published]) has argued the same point in the context of US philanthropic funding of universities during the Cold War in Nigeria.
6. See correspondence from these individuals to Ensminger, or Joyce, in papers attached to grant numbers 06100383 and 05990464, Ford Foundation records, Rockefeller Archive Center.
7. For a brief biography of Jean Joyce, see Rutherford 2003: 245-246.

8. See, for example, correspondence between Joyce and Charles and Ray Eames: 'its nice to know you still love us' (Eames 1958b) and 'Dear wonderful people,' (Joyce 1958b).
9. The oft-referenced story of the "chaos of communication" that occurred between Shah and Ensminger on the one hand, and Charles and Ray Eames on the other, on the occasion of the presentation of the Eames Report to the Indian Government, is based on Pupul Jayakar's retelling of the event and described in her biography of Indira Gandhi (1992: 151). Examples of references to the story include NID (2013: 11), Chatterjee (2005: 5); Mathur (2011: 46) and Karim (2013: 127).
10. Christine Guth (2016) mentions Gautam Sarabhai but her focus is on the international networks of his sister, Gira Sarabhai, who was also central to the development of NID. Remarkably, Gira is almost entirely omitted from the Ford Foundation archives.
11. Here I refer to Adajania's conception of internationalism as "a dynamic, unpredictable process based on mutual transcultural curiosity, in which one engages with the cultural other in a meaningful manner" (2013: 180).
12. In this, they were similar to their Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, who balanced his nationalism and internationalism in similar ways (see Prakash 1999: 203-214).
13. On Ensminger's admiration for Nehru and "idiosyncratic Nehruvian affectations" see Gandhi (2001: 20).
14. This is not to say that perspectives on this period haven't shifted with hindsight: following Nehru's death in 1964, and increasingly in the 1970s,

disillusionment with modernisation plans for India developed, including at NID (Mathur 2011: 49). See also Clarke (2016).



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