

THE GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF EVERYDAY LIFE IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

JAPHY WILSON

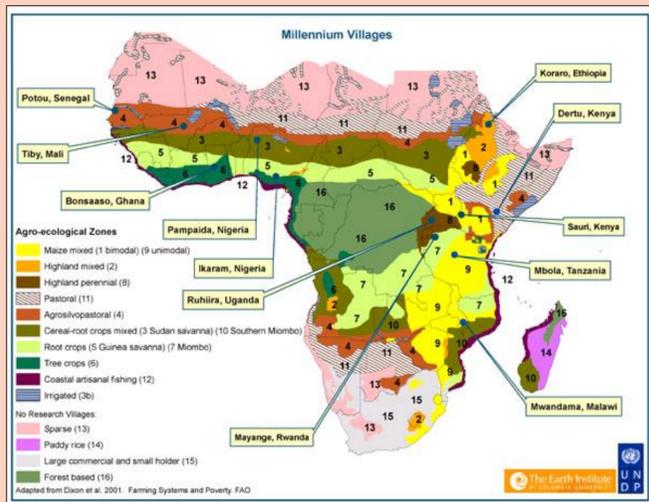
GEOGRAPHY/POLITICS, UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

INTRODUCTION

The Millennium Villages Project (MVP) is an innovative, ambitious, and widely publicised rural development programme, which represents a paradigmatic example of the contemporary relationship between complex networks of 'global governance' and the administration of everyday life in some of the world's most impoverished regions.

Launched in 2006, the MVP aims to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by their 2015 deadline within 80 model villages, located in 10 countries across sub-Saharan Africa.

Through a comprehensive set of integrated interventions at the level of everyday life, the MVP seeks to transform supposedly 'isolated' and 'traditional' African villages into 'entrepreneurial' communities integrated into world markets.



Map of the Millennium Villages Project

The MVP can be therefore be located within the broader tendency for market-oriented development to engage in social engineering, despite its rhetorical rejection of interventionism and *dirigisme*.

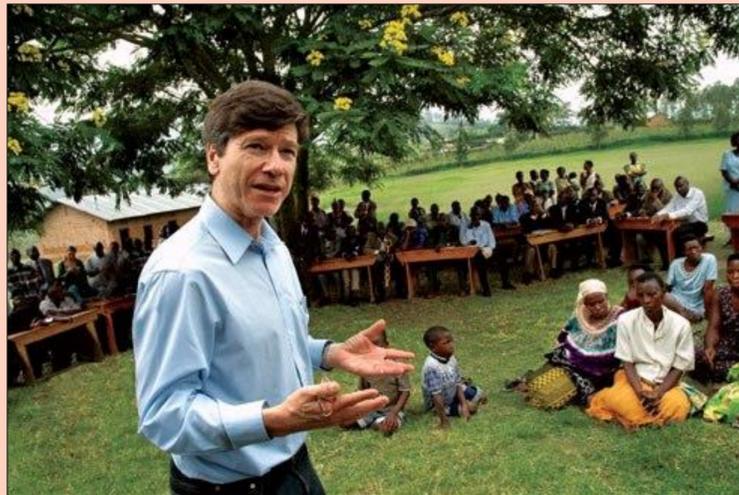
The MVP is the brainchild of the influential development economist Jeffrey Sachs. The Project is being planned and overseen by his inter-disciplinary Earth Institute at Columbia University, and funding is provided by Millennium Promise, a philanthropic foundation established by Sachs and the billionaire venture capitalist Ray Chambers.

George Soros has donated \$US71 million to the MVP, and Tommy Hilfiger has recently launched a Millennium Promise-themed fashion range. Bono and Angelina Jolie are among the celebrity supporters of the Project, and it has also received support from numerous corporate social responsibility foundations, several national development agencies, and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

As such, the MVP embodies the complex nexus of public and private actors characteristic of contemporary global governance.



Ban Ki Moon, George Soros, and Jeffrey Sachs at the launch of phase two of the MVP in 2011



Jeffrey Sachs in the Ruhira Millennium Village in Uganda

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. What explains the seemingly paradoxical trajectory of neoliberal development towards increasingly intensive forms of social engineering? What can the Millennium Villages Project tell us about this process?
2. How should we conceptualise the nexus of philanthropists, celebrities, corporate social responsibility foundations, and national and international aid agencies in the funding and promotion of the Millennium Villages and of development more broadly? How does power operate within this network, and between it and the African villagers whose everyday lives it seeks to transform?
3. What is the nature of the ideal society that the Millennium Villages Project is attempting to create in 'model' form? What does this tell us about the ideological formation of contemporary global capitalism? To what extent is this ideal being realized, challenged, or subverted through its implementation within the Villages themselves?



Hollywood actress Katie Holmes promoting Tommy Hilfiger's 'Promise Collection'

THEORETICAL APPROACH

A contribution to the critique of political economy based on the psychoanalytic social theory of Slavoj Žižek is to be developed in relation to the empirical research. This approach:

- i. Implies a reinterpretation of neoliberalization that problematises its representation in both the mainstream and the critical literature as a hyper-rational technocratic process.
- ii. Suggests a reconceptualisation of the 'post-political' nature of global governance, which takes into account the ideological operation of 'jouissance' – or 'enjoyment' – within its technocratic discourses and depoliticized institutional structures.
- iii. Problematises the representation of 'Africa' in the MVP, and in 'philanthrocapitalism' in general, and contributes to explaining the enduring appeal of model villages and other similarly 'colonial' projects within the moral universe of liberal humanitarianism.

CASE STUDIES

The Millennium Villages Project is currently being implemented in fourteen clusters in ten countries. The countries are : Ethiopia; Ghana; Kenya; Malawi; Mali; Nigeria; Rwanda; Senegal; Tanzania; and Uganda.

Research conducted in three of these clusters with particular relevance to the key themes of the research:

Sauri, Kenya: the first Millennium Village. It has received extensive coverage in the international media.

Ruhira, Uganda: This is the Village that Tommy Hilfiger is sponsoring as part of his new Millennium Promise fashion collection.

Bonsaaso, Ghana: The MVP has inspired the UK Conservative Party's One World Conservatism development agenda, and the MVP is now being 'scaled up' in Ghana by the UK's Department for International Development (DFID).



KEY REFERENCES

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- Swyngedouw, E, 2011, 'Interrogating Post-Democratization: Reclaiming Egalitarian Political Spaces' *Political Geography* 30 pp. 370-380
- Žižek, S. 1989. *The Sublime Object of Ideology* London: Verso
- KEY OUTPUTS**
- i. Research monograph on the Millennium Villages Project in global context (Verso 2014).
 - ii. Co-edited volume with Erik Swyngedouw on governance and post-politics, including the contribution of a chapter on Millennium Promise (University of Edinburgh Press 2014).
 - iii. Peer-reviewed articles in leading journals presenting specific aspects of the research (*Antipode* 2014, *Third World Quarterly* 2014, *Journal of Peasant Studies* 2014).
 - iv. Presentation of research in international seminars and conferences (Montreal 2012, Aberystwyth 2012, Prague 2013, London 2013, Toronto 2014, New York 2014).