One Step Forward, Two Steps Back in Farmer Knowledge Exchange: ‘Scaling-Up’ as Fordist Replication in Drag

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Research Questions

- What is nature of the ‘scaling up’ approach to extension embedded in the New Green Revolution for Africa’s emphasis on value chain construction?
- How is this approach similar to, or different from, previous methods, and how does this tactic resolve or accentuate agro-development challenges related to gender, poverty and participation?
Mali

- Had been darling of aid community
- 2012–2013 coup and rebellion, disruption of aid
- 70% depend on agriculture
- 51% live on less than $1.25/day
- 27% of children under 5 underweight
- AGRA, USAID Feed the Future, World Bank
The evolution of extension in tropical agriculture & development

- Early extension in UK & USA
- Colonial extension
- Training and Visit (T&V) extension method
Participatory research & extension methodologies

Proportional piling in Zimbabwe

Community mapping in Mali
New Green Revolution for Africa & Reversals in Agricultural Extension

- 1st Green Revolution bypassed Africa
- Improved seeds, pesticides & fertilizers
- Focus on women & food crops
- Commercial orientation, value chains, public–private partnerships
Alliance for a Green Revolution in Africa (AGRA)’s value chain approach for agricultural products

- Land Preparation
- Input Supply
- Farm Production
- Processing
- Distribution & Trading
- Retailing
- Consumption

Seed Systems

Soil Health

Policy & Partnerships – to create an enabling environment

Market Access Program
The Private Sector Influence and ‘Scaling’

- Scaling denotes mass replication akin to assembly line or Fordist reproduction
- Scaling suggests need to jump from local, to national, regional & international scales by integrating small producers into value chains that cross these levels
- Local knowledge and control take a back seat: 1) no money to made from local knowledge; 2) need large numbers and efficiency; 3) metrics.
Malian farmers, if connected to the right inputs, markets and affordable financial services, can get out poverty, and help feed a growing country and region in the process.

As [YourFarmer] scales, we’ve generated some important lessons that influence how we operate. Lesson 1: Each person we add should be more efficient and lower our costs over time. We are aiming to serve over 450 farmers per field agent by 2022, up from 118 farmers in 2013.
Maize (men) & peanuts (women)
Innovative layaway plan
Extension
Conclusion

- Under the New Green Revolution, extension has returned to older models seen during colonial & T&V eras
- Top down
- Sell inputs
- Scaling, efficiency
- Masquerading as gender sensitive
Theoretical Framing

- Cultural and Political Ecology
- Contested Agronomy, aka Political Agronomy
- Knowledge politics

FIGURE 2.2 Concentric circle diagram of local, national, and global scale.