



# Chile, The Country of Philanthropic Delights



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## Abstract

In this short communication I show that the binary categories used to interpret relationships between philanthropic institutions and the US government are not always coherent with subordination or autonomy, especially for some countries and situations. Chile is a case study that shows some of the complexities of this phenomenon.

**Keywords:** Chile; Ford foundation; Rockefeller foundation; Agrarian reform; University of Chile

## Introduction

Since the middle of the twentieth century, Chile became a great recipient of philanthropic funds. In the forties, Rockefeller Foundation awarded fellowships to professionals and scientists and institutional grants to universities. In the fifties started an operative program in agriculture, similar but smaller to the Mexican Agricultural Program. After the Cuban Revolution in 1959, Ford Foundation began to be interested in Latin America and, in the context of the Alliance for Progress increased its funds to Chile. US philanthropic foundations are generally studied through the complex relationships they had with US foreign policy. Generally, analysts observe these relationships with the categories of subordination or autonomy. On one hand, Francis Stonor Saunders believes that these US institutions were subordinate to US foreign policy and were its "conscious instruments" [1]. Some authors focus on the ideological similarities of US philanthropic institutions and the US government during the Cold War [2]. On the other hand, some researchers discuss the bureaucracy of these philanthropic institutions rather than their ideological foundations, which allows them to see institutions' greater autonomy from the US government [3].

An interesting perspective on this matter is provided by Ludovic Tournès. This author articulates four dimensions to evaluate the actions of philanthropic institutions, which problematizes the binary of subordination–autonomy, and uses these dimensions to analyze the relationship between the two spheres. He defines philanthropic actions as a particular form of "transnational intellectual diplomacy," which has a dynamic that was sustained by intellectual networks that they themselves

built and by the possibility of moving knowledge on four spheres: the realm of philanthropy, the US as a nation, in international disputes and tension, and finally, in transnational dynamics [4]. Analyzing two different philanthropic programs in Chile –Chilean Agricultural Program of the Rockefeller Foundation and the Agreement between the University of Chile and The University of California with the Ford Foundation's financial support-, I try to show that the binary categories used to interpret relationships between philanthropic institutions and the US government are not always coherent with subordination or autonomy, especially for some countries and situations. Chile is a case study that shows some of the complexities of this phenomenon.

## First Case: Divergences on the Agrarian Reform in Chile

The Rockefeller Foundation Agriculture Operative Program in Chile started in 1955. This program consists in the financial support to agronomists and state experimental stations to improve crops, forages and animal production. But also, Rockefeller Foundation supported agricultural sciences and awarded agronomists and veterinarians. This institution never supports investigations on land reform. The land reform claims were mainly mattering of peasant groups, some members of the Catholic Church and some political parties. In 1961, when the U.S. president John Fitzgerald Kennedy launched the Alliance for Progress, one of the most important objectives was the land reform as a way to stop the advance of communism in the region. The U.S. foreign policy encouraged philanthropic foundations and international organizations support the processes of land reform in Latin America and especially in Chile, because in

this country the electoral flow of the left parties had grown. The Rockefeller Foundation did not support the land reform and the Director for Agricultural Sciences Albert H. Moseman communicated to William J. Myers, a member of the Board of Consultants for Agricultural Sciences: "The principal interest in Chile at the moment appears to be in land reform. This, of course, is not a field in which we would wish to participate actively and discussions have been held with the Ford Foundation about their possible support for studies" [5].

## Second Case: The Ford Foundation in Chile

The Ford Foundation arrived in Chile at the end of the 1950s, motivated by the radicalization of conflicts throughout Latin America. In the early the 1960s, the foundation articulated with the Alliance for Progress' geopolitics in the Americas and made Chile one of its preferred countries to allocate funds. During the political events of 1970, which brought the Popular Unity coalition to power, led by Salvador Allende, the Ford Foundation was consistent in its democratic vision, maintained its modernization agreement between the Universities of Chile and California, and even financed some government projects. The reason behind this attitude was based on the perception of the foundation's directors and officials of the "Chilean path to socialism," which they believed had emerged through the popular vote and not a revolution.

In this sense, the Ford Foundation's position differed from that of the US State Department's, which cancelled all subsidies for Chile and only continued funding the army, the principal agent in the 1973 coup. With the fall of the democratic government in Chile, the Ford Foundation positioned itself against the new authoritarian regime, abruptly reduced many of its projects, including the agreement between the University of Chile and the University of California, closed its office in Chile, and started a human rights program with the goal of supporting scientists and

students who were persecuted by the government. In this way, the Foundation distanced itself again from the foreign policy of the US, which openly supported the regime led by General Augusto Pinochet. Interpretive frameworks that reduce the actions of philanthropic foundations to subordination or independence from US foreign policy do not fit the data presented here. Hence it is preferable to problematize these relationships and deduce the facts, historical processes, and empirical evidence, rather than adopting preconceptions bound to political or ideological interests. In this sense, Ludovic Tournès' perspective seems relevant and promising.

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