

What does the great leap forward tell us about smallholder farming?



Lecture 12

ANAR 100: Feeding the World

Netting's (1993) Small holder model

- Practice intensive farming
- Not economically isolated.
- Not dependent on the market economy even if a part of it. Always provide a portion of own subsistence
- Sustainable farming: sufficient and predictable
- Wide range of technology
- They work hard! High labor input
- Expert knowledge
- Often have land security
- Run by households
- Differences in wealth exist

What does high modernism look like in agriculture according to Scott (1998)?

- 1.) Does not consider anything beyond crop yield and farm input.
- 2.) Soil structure, water quality and land tenure not taken into account until they affect production.
- 3.) Standardizes the way that agricultural production takes place
 - Monocropping
 - Uniformity in crop varieties (loss of landraces) for easy fertilizer uptake/for eye appeal
 - Select varieties that don't interfere with mechanization
- 4.) Module style farming that can be put in any geographic location
- 5.) Legible architecture: must conform to western aesthetic standards

Why does traditional agriculture bother high modernists?

- Cant easily be placed on a map
- Fugitive populations that move
- How do they pay taxes?
- Traditional farmers don't have scientific training
- Need to consolidate institutional and economic market of governments and private enterprise (often at the expense of small farmers)

What are the simplifying assumptions of Agricultural Science?

- Can only consider a few variables. Polyculture has too many variables.
- Blindspots: applications can have unintended results that are difficult to model (i.e DDT)
- Weak peripheral vision: profit to the enterprise is the main goal
- Shortsightedness: Only run for a few seasons, not a long term trial.
Interest= immediate yields.

What are the simplifying assumptions of Agricultural Science?

- All yields are equal
- Experimental plots are not actual fields
- Fictional farmers vs. real farmers
- Starting with the field vs. starting with the potato

Mao's great leap forward 大跃进

1958-1960

23-48
million
people
dead



- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r33Q8cl87HY>