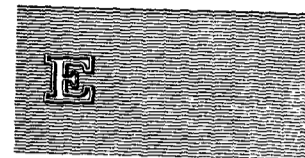


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THE OUTLOOK FOR MUNICIPAL PLANNING IN LATIN AMERICA

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Summary

This document has been prepared primarily on the basis of contributions by the participants in the consultations among experts in methodology of human settlements planning at the municipal level, which were held at Cali, Colombia, under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Municipality of that city, from 1 to 4 August 1983.

What might be regarded as positive effects of the current world crisis include the growing consensus that the crisis is based on a number of structural factors which have had a chronic and negative impact on the development of all the countries, being to a large extent responsible for their environmental and human settlements problems and limiting the range of possible solutions to them.

This means that the action taken to bring about the changes needed to modify the current crisis situation, and, in particular, to solve these habitat and human settlement problems should be based on an innovative attitude so that it will be possible to leave behind those approaches and concepts which have shown themselves to be inefficient and to transcend the search for more financial resources (which will always be inadequate) and the use of remedies which are generally burdensome and have not proved very successful.

The crisis has also made it clear that the development models adopted during past decades were not particularly applicable to the actual situation in Latin America. In order to produce real and sustained development in the region it will be necessary to adopt different values from those on which these models are based and to bring about a dynamic change in the structures of production and consumption, adapting them to the potential and resources of each country. What is needed therefore is to provide incentive for a process of conceptual reconversion, in which concern for the quality of life of the entire population is related to the housing conditions, basic sanitation system, provision of basic social and infrastructure services, community equipment and security, etc., which are in the last analysis essential components of the constructed environment. Understanding that living conditions are related to the constructed environment or habitat and are necessarily dependent on the degree of overall development, on the social organization and on cultural patterns in constant flux may be the most important thing to be gained from the teaching of this critical decade.

The ways in which the cities in the majority of the Latin American and Caribbean countries are managed and administered at present are based on concepts, experiences and institutions which emerge from a situation in which centralism could be justified by the need to concentrate power in the State and in a functionally indispensable elite; the urban population grew slowly providing the migrants with opportunities for cultural adjustment, and the needs for urban services could be satisfied with relatively modest facilities.

The situation in the Latin American cities, and in the big metropolises in particular, results from singular and even exceptional conditions which must be reflected in theories and practices of special planning geared to them and different from those which have so far been applied, which have for the most part been transferred, virtually unmodified, from the countries of Europe and North America in spite of having been designed to meet the needs of different situations. The maintenance of traditional views and practices may in this case be a cause of delay
/considering the

considering the need to rationalize the organization, equipment and utilization of the space in the light of the needs associated with economic growth and the social development of the population.

Reference to such broad issues as to this crisis and decentralization may seem unnecessary in considering the urban planning methods which are used in Latin America. However, it must be borne in mind that any methodological review in this connection loses its meaning without an analysis of the role assigned to the municipal bodies in the development process in general and not just in the limited confines of the monitoring of urban growth. Actually, most of the functional defects in current planning practices are due to the roles assigned to the municipal authorities and the resources available to them.

The references made to the effectiveness of the local authority and to the institutional limitations so frequently encountered in critical thinking concerning the approaches to planning which prevail in the region show that there is virtually a consensus as to the need to find a new way of distributing responsibility between the central government and the local authorities, which of course makes it necessary to consider such important problems as the representativeness of the municipal authorities and community participation -regarded by all the experts as being a requisite of planning- in various activities, including the election of those authorities.

The most serious obstacle which local governments can run up against and one of the main restrictions laid on municipal planning is inadequate financial resources. In present conditions, the municipal authorities elected directly by the population are not autonomous enough to be sufficiently effective, and, in some cases, their financial dependence on the centre puts serious restrictions on the freedom they enjoy in the decision-making process and is used as an instrument of pressure to benefit interests outside the orbit of the local community.

The nature and field of action of and circumstances surrounding municipal planning must therefore be redefined within the global context of socio-economic development. In the first place, the relevance of municipal intervention in any field of activity within its territorial jurisdiction must be recognized. In this space it must be understood that the action taken by the municipal authorities is directed towards a general improvement in the quality of life and not only towards the objectives of physical planning or the structuring of public works plans.

The mobilization of collective participation in the taking of decisions relating to the satisfaction of social needs and the selection of appropriate technologies must be a part of planning at this level, and with this end in view, some successful experiments have been made and information concerning them might well be gathered and examined in a broader context.

/These experiments

These experiments show that whatever concrete participation techniques are used (which in the last analysis will depend on the conditions in each individual country), participation will be greatly facilitated by the recognition that the community forms a fourth branch in the structuring of political decision-taking. Actually, after the central government, the regional organizations and the municipal authorities, the community should constitute a legitimate forum of political organization with its own field of competence in the taking of decisions which affect its immediate circumstances and its own capacity to organize action within the territorial area it occupies. Decentralization does not in fact end with the municipality but must be extended to lesser units in which there is a certain amount of homogeneity of interest.

/Introduction

Introduction

This document has been prepared primarily on the basis of the contributions made by the participants in the Consultative Meeting of Experts in Methodology for the Planning of Human Settlements at the Municipal Level, held at Cali, Colombia, from 1 to 4 August 1983, under the auspices of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Municipality of that city and has been divided into four chapters. In the first entitled "Crisis and professional paradigms", some points are made which seem necessary for putting the debates held in the meeting in their context and interpreting them. In chapter II a summary is given of the situation with regard to urban planning, based on the contributions by the experts invited and on some studies prepared by ECLA. In chapter III some thoughts are presented which were formulated in the course of the debates on the best kinds of municipal planning systems for the future. Similar observations are presented in greater detail in chapter IV, which contains some ideas on participative planning.

The document examines planning more from a political than from a technical angle and places it within the context of local government. Responsibility for it rests entirely with ECLA although it could not have been drafted without the invaluable co-operation of the mayors, central and municipal government officials, private advisers and international officials who participated in the meeting at Cali.

I. CRISIS AND PROFESSIONAL PARADIGMS

Among what could be classified as positive effects of the current world crisis, attention should be drawn to the growing consensus that responsibility for the crisis is ultimately due to a number of structural factors which have had a chronic and negative impact on the development of all the countries, being largely responsible for such problems as those related to the environment and human settlements and narrowing the range of possible solutions to them.

Recognition of this fact means that action taken to produce the changes needed to modify the prevailing crisis situation and, in particular, to solve the habitat and human settlements problems mentioned above should be founded on an innovative attitude so as to set away from schemes and ideas which have proved ineffective and to do more than merely seeking more financial resources, of which there will never be enough, and applying remedies which are usually expansive and have not been very successful.

Against this background, consideration should be given to the question of municipal planning, which, by the same token, cannot be regarded as an end in itself, but must be treated as an instrument related to a higher category of political objectives including fields traditionally known as housing, urban and rural development, urban services and equipment and community development.

/The energy

The energy crisis and the crisis in the world economic system have made it dramatically evident that the development models adopted during the past 10 years were by no means applicable to the reality of Latin American life. In order to generate real development of an equitable and sustained nature in the region, values other than those on which these models were based must be adopted, and the structures of production and consumption must be thoroughly overhauled to adapt them to each country's potential and resources. What is needed then is to set in motion a process of conceptual reconversion, in which concern for the quality of life of the whole population is brought to bear on, among other things, housing conditions, basic sanitation, the supply of basic social services and infrastructure, community equipment, security, etc., which are, in the last analysis, basic components of the constructed environment or habitat. The most important lesson to be learned in this critical decade may well be that living conditions relate to the constructed environment and are necessarily dependent on the overall level of development, social organization and constantly shifting cultural patterns.

The recognition that these limitations affect society as a whole and not only those sectors with less purchasing power may be another practical result of the crisis. The idea that a social sector will renounce certain privileges voluntarily to benefit a marginated majority usually living in makeshift housing on the periphery of cities and in the countryside begins to seem less plausible when brought face to face with just one social group living in conditions of critical poverty, which not only will not change but will grow worse unless a new economic order and full social justice based on participation and solidarity are established. This way of looking at things is the opposite of the traditional view that society (or rather the government) should concern itself, almost as a favour, with improving makeshift settlements and districts inhabited by the poorest groups. The idea of gradual improvement belongs to an age in which this approach could still be used to redress or attenuate social disparities and is based on the assumption that the formal sector is able to absorb and change the so-called informal sector of the society. Actually these ideas have also come into crisis in a world divided by growing social and economic cleavages but at the same time imbued with a firm feeling for participation and justice.

The ways in which cities are usually run in the majority of the Latin American and Caribbean countries, are based on ideas, experience and institutions born out of a situation in which centralism was justifiable because of a need to concentrate power in the hands of the State and the elite needed to operate it; the urban population grew slowly, providing opportunities for migrants to adjust to the culture, and the needs for social services could be met with relatively modest resources. In the 1940s, the urban population of the region began to grow explosively, and demands were created which far outweighed the resources available for bringing the urban infrastructure up to date and improving it. In the past three decades, not only has urban development proceeded at a different rate which at times has been many times higher than the rate of national population growth, but at the same time there has been an exceedingly rapid cultural change and a technical revolution, especially in the communications and transport media, which

/has been

has been imported from the exterior without being adapted to local characteristics. Although the ideas and institutions dating back to before the period referred to appear not to work in the current situation, in many cases they are still applied.

The prevailing situation in the Latin American cities and in particular in the big metropolises is the result of conditions which are peculiar and in some cases exceptional and must be dealt with in appropriate spatial planning theories and practices different from those which have so far been applied and have usually been transferred, virtually unchanged, from Europe and North America although there they apply to different situations. In this situation, the maintenance of conventional ideas and practices may turn out to be a delaying factor in view of the need to bring the organization, equipping and use of space into closer harmony with the population's needs for economic growth and social development.

A good example in this connection is that of makeshift settlements which in general constitute a distinguishing feature of third world cities; in Latin America they have become the usual mode of settlement for a large part of the population. However, no consideration is as yet given to the problem in planning the urban policies of many countries of the region.

The capacity to produce housing and related services shown by the population living in makeshift settlements (60% of the total production of urban housing) should have given rise to radical changes in many traditional policies; however, such has not been the case. Sufficient light has not yet been thrown on the reasons why the public sector has resisted incorporating the resource represented by this capacity and introducing the innovations allowing for its utilization as a positive factor and a dynamic element in the mobilization and participation of the population. In this connection, the decentralization not only of the municipalities from the central government but also of the communities from the municipality should be regarded as being of major interest in the quest for new topics for planning. Actually, an attempt is being made to promote a new way of looking at human settlements in which human and material resources are used to build a just and united society.

With this approach, the purpose and quality of human settlements ceases to be a merely technical question and becomes a matter of public interest which engages the body politic as well as the government. However, in traditional political ideologies these factors are not regarded as an essential component of all social projects aimed at bringing about collective well-being. The participation of the community in questions relating to daily life existence constitutes a new political space which has begun to appear in people's movements in urban areas and neighbourhood associations, in which the traditional political parties do not find it easy to move.

It should be noted that although one of the basic elements of local planning should be a long-term object-image, in the large majority of urban development plans there are no proposals with regard to such an image or to the corresponding spatial context. In this connection, it is significant that the documents in

/which such

which such urban plans are supported is usually made up of lists of sectoral problems or of projected needs, which are commonly drawn up on the basis of technical criteria implicitly related to arbitrary models or patterns. Actually, these plans are in many cases confined to repairing the negative effects produced by social changes not foreseen in the economic and social development strategies, thereby reducing the role of urban planning to that of proposing corrective action. It seems, however, that the absence of an object-image which can serve as a long-term guide to urban development can be blamed not only on the planners but also on the limitations placed on the municipal authority.

Reference to such sweeping issues as the contemporary crisis and decentralization may seem unnecessary for examining the urban planning methods which are applied in Latin America. However, it must be borne in mind that a review of the methodology applied in this field makes no sense without an analysis of the role to be assigned to the municipal authorities in the development process in general and not just in the restricted area related to the monitoring of urban growth. Actually the majority of the functional defects in current planning practices are related to the duties and resources assigned to those authorities.

Prior to analysing the methodologies of urban planning applied in the region, it seems necessary to inquire into the professional paradigms of planners, town planners, architects, engineers and social scientists working in either the private or the public sector in jobs directly related to the formation and enhancement of the human habitat.

All professional activity is institutionally oriented on the basis of sets of ideas, ethical codes, customs and ways of transmitting knowledge which people who subscribe to the same social practice agree, usually implicitly, to share. These paradigms ^{1/} tend to be maintained indefinitely in spite of the fact that the social and political contexts in which they occur are in constant flux due to the historical change to which any society is subject.

The contradictions between the dynamic of social change and the static nature of professional paradigms result in periodic crises, especially in societies which are rapidly evolving. Sometimes, the contradictions referred to appear in the form of maladjustments between the educational system and the legal and institutional facilities which lay down the conditions within which the professional activities must operate. This seems to have been the case of planning in Latin America as a whole and in the individual countries.

In the case of human settlements, the paradigms crisis makes it immediately necessary to undertake a thorough review of the training programmes now underway and not just to introduce some partial improvements.^{2/}

II. THE MUNICIPAL PLANNING SITUATION

1. Municipal planning in current practice

In general it may be said that urban planning as practiced in Latin America was initiated as a kind of response to the need for a way of "putting order into the growth of the cities", which had begun to accelerate automatically in the 1940s. At that time, the urban development process of most of the countries of Latin America accelerated violently as shown by the sharp inflexion in the urban population growth curve from 1940 on.^{3/}

This idea of ordered growth was implicit in the application of corrective measures or of measures to "regulate" physical or material growth, primarily by extending the urban boundaries delimiting the city's legal-administrative jurisdiction, where basic services are supplied and official building codes are enforced. The regulatory plans therefore focus primarily on the use of the land, the density of its occupation, the road system and the location of public buildings and areas for public use. The pre-eminently physical or spatial nature of these regulating plans meant that the local authorities were not competent to put them into effect and precluded the possibility of participation by the population. It seemed that on technical grounds alone the planners felt justified in demanding that the plans should be made legally binding, which was the planners' main concern for years.

More recently, however, the way in which planning is viewed has been changed appreciably; this change really began to be noted some 15 years ago, when it began to be obvious that the planning methods used to "put order into urban growth" were insufficient. This change has basically made itself felt first in scepticism regarding the general efficiency of planning within the institutional, jurisdictional, financial and technical context within which the municipalities now perform and second in demands that the nature and contents of municipal planning and the theories on which it is based should be rethought.

There is also a broad consensus that the efficiency of planning lies basically in the ability of the local authorities to represent the community; the necessary decentralization of the power to take decisions on matters directly related to the human habitat, and the inclusion of community planning in locally managed plans and projects. Participation should be regarded as the organized and collective intervention of the population with a view to seeing that social needs already defined by it are satisfied.

Decentralization and participation are the two concepts most insistently referred to by the exponents of a current of thought which has really taken hold and increasingly finds support in by changes in legislation and by the emergence of new approaches to popular organization in many countries.

/Question has

Question has arisen concerning the nature of municipal planning also because its focus is strictly technical and material. In other words, it is argued that municipal action is confined to redressing the adverse material and environmental consequences of a development model based on concentration and dealing with the symptoms rather than the causes of technical and social maladies. In addition, in present conditions, planning is part of government programmes in which the role of the local bodies is that of serving as channels for the application of national policies which are not always consistent with the needs of the population. When the central government monopolizes the generation and application of urban development policies, problems are bound to be diagnosed in such a generalized fashion that municipal development plans are rendered unoperational, especially with regard to the technologies and the design applied to the production of habitat goods and services. In present circumstances, technology and design have become factors which contribute to cultural alienation and to the wastage of natural resources and human abilities and have a negative effect on the organization of local economies.

When plans and programmes are only a necessary means for gaining the assistance of national government agencies, they acquire a centralist and bureaucratic character in which more importance is attached to rules than to the use of criteria which respond to local conditions, depriving the municipal authorities of the opportunity to be creative and discouraging community participation.

Within this pattern, not only do central governments establish investment priorities but frequently their agencies prepare local development plans themselves. In other cases, local plans are the responsibility of decentralized local bodies which actually act as agents of national service entities or of regional corporations which administer national technical and financial assistance policies.

Local authorities for their part, frequently work on plans relating exclusively to physical rather than social processes; they are engaged in material tasks rather than with improving the quality of life and the habitat of all the communities under the jurisdiction of the municipality - a target on which national policies usually impose arbitrary criteria which do not take local interests into account. These criteria, which are more often than not of a sectoral nature, are usually not even co-ordinated by a national body which applies a single policy with regard to human settlements.

Sometimes discrepancies are noted both between the political objectives of the municipal authorities and those of the central government and between central government policies and the technical criteria of the local bodies responsible for extending and administering public services. The first of these discrepancies is due to the lack of machinery for reaching a consensus concerning local and national objectives when they deviate. The second is a serious lack of articulation between the technical criteria and the policies and a difference between transitory objectives, some of which are a matter of political prestige while other longer-term objectives focus on unsatisfied needs of the population.

/Participation offers

Participation offers an opportunity, which has yet to be used to its full advantage, to overcome this situation; to do so, it is, however, necessary to recognize that the community must be in a position of decentralization with a high degree of autonomy, which is outside the orbit of regional and municipal bodies. If this is not the case, the participation of the population is limited as frequently happens, to public consultations and hearings which might be held in connection with specific projects when important decisions must be reached on investment and location and public intervention, from which the lower-income strata are generally excluded, is a practical way of solving differences of opinion.

In any case, local initiative alone is not enough to bring about better co-ordination of the functions of the central government and those of the municipal authorities; there is also a need for explicit national policies in connection with development and management and administration of human settlements and the environment. Unfortunately there are very few Latin American countries which apply such policies in the fields of activity referred to.

Moreover, when such policies do exist, areas of discord can be observed between them and the development strategies, which usually respond to the application of concentration-exportation economic models. Although in some countries there are policies which seek the decentralization of the population and of economic activities and are aimed at improving living conditions in the medium-sized and small cities, in practice the application of development models based on the dynamization of sectors such as industry and export agriculture have resulted in greater concentration.

2. Limitations of municipal management

In practice the experience of a local government is highly limited usually owing to restrictions on its administrative competence and on the availability of financial resources and qualified personnel. In such conditions, planning cannot be used as an effective tool for formulating and executing municipal community development policies, programmes and projects.

Municipal planning objectives are notably limited; in the great majority of cases they are physical in nature and are aimed at the definition and control of the use of the soil, the supply of public services and urban equipment and the construction of the infrastructure. In the first of these fields there are legal limitations and limited facilities for taking action concerning land speculation, which make the municipal authority less effective and are responsible for the fact that the regulations governing soil use have, to a large extent, been phased out. With respect to the latter two functions, municipal administrations very frequently act only as intermediaries for central bodies or decentralized agencies of the central government, from which most of the necessary resources are derived. In these cases, the kind of goods and services which must be produced and the models, procedures and controls are provided for in the terms of the financing or are determined by pressure from the financing body so that the municipal government's planning role is reduced to the minimum. Thus the municipalities end up acting more as agencies for executing national policies than as independent government agencies. Thus, it often happens that the goods and services produced are not compatible with the economic, social and cultural characteristics of the population and often not with the characteristics of specific environments.

/In a

In a survey of nine medium-sized cities carried out by ECLA in co-operation with the Government of Brazil,^{4/} it was found that the main problems experienced by the municipalities were administrative discontinuity, defects in the local administrative apparatus, failure to view planning as a process, land speculation, difficulties in absorbing skilled labour, unavailability of non-recuperable financing and high cost of financial resources from public institutions. These conclusions, which are in general applicable to most of the other Latin American countries also mean that:

- a) there is a widespread shortage of installed technical capacity for planning, execution, maintenance and administration at local level due in particular to the reduced volume of available manpower;
- b) those public services which are available do not always match the needs of the population. In view of the defects in the tools for perceiving these needs, there is some doubt as to whether the community and the municipality are of one mind in respect of urban service needs;
- c) the possibility of a discrepancy between the thinking of the community and of the municipality is largely due to external factors which in and of themselves limit the vantage point from which the needs of the population are seen;
- d) some municipalities are, in certain cases and on account of their own technical deficiencies, in fact unable to consider financial commitments for either now or the future. The budgetary surplus which results in such cases gives a false picture of the financial health of the municipality;
- e) the limited capacity of the population to pay for urban services is the main obstacle in meeting the needs of the population. In some of the cities surveyed, between 50% and 65% of the population are unable to pay water and sanitation rates;
- f) the incomes structure, together with the unsteady economic base of the majority of the cities surveyed, puts severe limits on the municipal tax system, which in turn makes it difficult to tap financial resources from the exterior. It is frequently observed that if new urban services were actually to be made available, municipal financial crises would result, and
- g) federal financial assistance is based on technological models which are not very flexible as to their manning requirements and for whose application local operational capacity is not always available. If these requirements were in fact met, a significant fraction of the population would be excluded owing to the aforementioned limitation in the payments capacity.^{5/}

/As a

As a general rule, only the municipalities of the larger cities have technical departments or agencies able to handle all activities, including those relating to planning, management and participation as opposed to planning alone which in and of itself is insufficient. It is likely that this lack of capacity may be largely responsible for the failures so frequently noted in connection with the management of the local government. In this respect, there is a consensus that the municipalities must be immediately provided with technical-administrative units able to manage these three variables in an integrated fashion.

The condition laid down by some central governments that the municipalities must have development plans if they are to obtain financial assistance, has resulted in the proliferation of plans in which planning is limited to the setting of rules to ensure compliance with the terms stipulated by central government agencies with regard to the financing of projects whose nature and characteristics are often determined by those very same agencies. Sometimes such agencies are themselves responsible for preparing the municipal development plans or they finance the hiring of private consultants for that purpose.

Thus, when a municipality does not have permanent installed capacity, the requirement that there must be a plan if assistance is to be received from the central government has resulted not in the creation of that capacity but in the temporary replacement of municipal planning bodies by private consultants, basically because they have mastered the intricate technological and financial requirements for the transfer of resources from the central government or the banking system. In practice, the assistance machinery is in general highly complex and may inhibit rather than promote local initiative. At the same time, while it should be noted that the intervention of external consultants for a specific task often inhibits the development of local technical capacity to administer and execute the plans, it must be admitted that such intervention may be very useful in the medium and long term if it contributes to the creation or strengthening of permanent municipal technical bodies.

In the municipal governments of the largest cities in some countries of the region, planning bodies and decentralized sectoral agencies have been established and provided with sufficient resources to enable them to operate with a considerable degree of technical and administrative efficiency and to be relatively independent from the central government. These experiments, many of which were successful, might provide a base for the organization of planning systems in other cities in similar situations.

In a number of countries there is a tendency to create regional development corporations which frequently include departments whose job it is to support municipal entities. In others, the central government itself has formulated and implemented municipal support policies aimed at simplifying the mechanisms and methods of staff assistance and training with a view to preparing the local governments for solving problems relating to municipal planning and management using their own resources.

/This increase

This increase in the operational capacity of the municipality is an indispensable requirement for decentralization and a fundamental element of any strategy aimed at raising the degree of local autonomy. When there is no increase in executive ability, local management tends to depend on the will of bodies and officials of the central power, which perpetuates centralism and dependence.

The most serious obstacle which local governments must encounter and one of the main restrictions on municipal planning is insufficient financial resources. In present conditions the relative autonomy enjoyed by municipal authorities directly elected by the population is not sufficiently realized, and in some cases, the financial dependence on the centre seriously curtails their freedom to adopt decisions and is used to apply pressure on the behalf of interests outside the local community.

To correct this situation, in a number of countries of the region, bodies and mechanisms have been created for the transfer of extra-budgetary resources to the municipalities. However, with a few exceptions, central government resources which can be transferred in this way by no means match the needs. Moreover, the effectiveness of this measure is also limited by the fact that the municipalities have little scope for indebtedness.

As noted above, in some countries there are municipal bodies which are responsible for specific services and, as a general rule constitute decentralized public enterprises with their own endowment and considerable independence in their operation. This model, used in conjunction with legislative instruments on the basis of which it is possible to recover some of the increased value of private property due to public works, has resulted in urban settlements which are better equipped than in cities without this type of agency. Although an independent agency has the advantage of being generally efficient, it usually becomes a law unto itself and ends up being rigid in its attitudes and maintaining purely economic criteria with regard to municipal planning. Often the extension of the services of these paramunicipal entities is substituted for planning and is partially responsible for limiting its scope.

III. TOWARDS NEW PLANNING SYSTEMS

The experience accumulated as policies aimed at the provision of housing, basic services, equipment and other capital goods in the social sector have been applied for a period of 30 years seems to point to the need to promote radical changes both in the concepts and the instruments applied and in the systems and theories on which national and local planning is based. In both cases, decentralization and participation appear to be key elements in the proposed alternatives to the present situation.

/The effort

The effort to improve the concept and practice of municipal planning would be of little use unless systems of local government were changed in an innovative manner. Actually, as indicated above, many of the differences observed in planning in this area are virtually inevitable consequences of the limited legal attributes of the municipal authorities and of the restrictions on the financial and organizational resources available to them. The planning methodology and the reorganization of the institutions concerned are two sides of the same coin.

Thus, for example, it is important to bear in mind that the very obvious limitations, especially in the economic sector, which affect the municipal level need not necessarily result in a horizontal separation between the spheres of competence of the central and the municipal governments. In distributing functions between these two categories of government, it should be recognized that intermediate levels of government (states, departments, provinces) exist and that they can perform functions relating to co-ordination and arbitration and can also play a more active role as regional development agents.

In addition, local planning should be less technocratic and more participative and should reorient its traditionally physical or spatial character towards the broader sphere of socio-economic development scaled to the territorial communities located within the political jurisdiction of the municipalities. Broadly based municipal planning is planning which manages to attain general development targets on a local scale rather than concerning itself merely with the physical control of local manifestations of economic growth.

It is clear that if decentralization is the aim, it will probably be necessary to think in terms of a division of functions between the central government, which would be responsible for designing and executing physical planning policies at national level, and the local (regional and municipal) authorities, whose task it would be to promote the economic and social development of the local communities and to improve the quality of life.

The nature, character, scope and field of action of municipal planning must therefore be redefined within the overall context of economic and social development. In the first place recognition must be given to the relevance of municipal intervention in any field of activity within its territorial jurisdiction. Within this space, the action taken by the municipal authorities must be understood to be oriented towards the overall improvement of the quality of life and not only towards physical planning or the structuring of public works plans.

This being the case, it is necessary to bear in mind that in the great majority of cases this territorial jurisdiction includes both urban and rural communities; however, local or municipal planning is, in practice, oriented exclusively towards urban communities. Actually, the urban sector and the rural sector are two parts of a single inseparable reality, so that development plans which view matters only from the urban point of view tend to fail because they do not call for an integrative view of the space and of the rural and urban economies in it.

/Municipal planning

Municipal planning as a political instrument may be seen from three different angles: a) as a means of making public policies more rational; b) as an administrative resource for achieving a greater efficiency in the execution of government projects and c) as an object-image for the long-term orientation of municipal development strategies and plans.

Planning as a way of making political policies more rational calls for a real increase in municipal autonomy and depends in the first instance on decentralization and people's participation as ways of mobilizing non-conventional organizational resources, labour and even family savings. In this sense, institutional reform is the surest way of rationalizing local policies and ensuring their execution. A reform of this kind would, however, assume different characteristics in each national context, so that it is not possible to make specific recommendations.

Local planning as a means of maximizing the social and economic efficiency of the action taken by the authority acquires the character of operational programming, an area in which the primary need is for simple methods of formulating and evaluating projects managed by the municipality. Of course the technical aspects of such projects vary greatly but they can be implemented by adopting standard procedures for such processes as, for example, the identification of initiatives and needs and the selection of alternative technologies, criteria relating to financing and approaches to operations, execution and administration. It should be noted that as projects managed locally include both projects fostered on municipal initiative and those originating with the people or in informal sectors, the technical and administrative branches of the municipality should be prepared to support the efforts made by communities, and people will depend on their own efforts for meeting their housing and services needs.

The construction of a long-term human habitat object-image is a collective and continuous effort in which the municipal authorities undoubtedly play an important co-ordinating role but for which the whole body politic bears the final responsibility. This image may help in the search for alternative development styles, in the integration of national societies and in changing the patterns of consumption which is so necessary if the social improvements expected from the Latin American economies are to realize their real potential. The idea of a human habitat which is more satisfactory for the entire population may be one way of stimulating local and national identity and self-affirmation and may even foster the belief that they are indispensable for integrated development.

In theory, planning should be oriented towards action more than towards the establishment of rules. There should be full awareness of the instrumental value of legislation, but effective, practical action should not be replaced by action which is merely regulatory, as frequently happens. There is one basic requirement for the realization of such planning: rules must be replaced by an active, self-oriented principle which can be adapted to meet the needs of different communities and geared to the changes brought about by the passage of time.

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Thus, planning, understood as a dynamic principle and not as a set of static rules, is similar to management and has great operational potential. On the one hand, it is compatible with the idea of locally managed projects and on the other, it makes it possible to establish conditions which are favourable for the formulation of municipal development strategies aimed at the attainment, within a period of time in proportion with local possibilities, of a far-reaching object-image, such as the one defined above. This way of viewing planning at local level has the virtue of offering viable alternatives even for municipalities of smaller size, which would be provided with simple methods geared to the technical limitations of such municipalities. In such cases, this object-image could be supplied by regional, provincial or departmental intermediaries and co-ordinated within national human settlements and physical planning policies -a task in which the municipal support agencies of the central government would certainly play an important role.

IV. PARTICIPATIVE PLANNING

Whatever concrete form the public sector may take when it intervenes in the social, economic and cultural processes at municipal level and whatever institutional structures the local government may adopt, it is very possible that if the Latin American societies continue to become increasingly democratic, the innovations made in municipal planning systems will be aimed successively at the following goals: a) improving their methods of detecting communal needs; b) identifying packages of alternative projects for meeting those needs; c) defining criteria for choosing socially more effective alternatives which have a lower opportunity cost and are better suited to the environment; d) organizing the community so that it can assume the role of active agent in the decision-making processes and in implementing the decisions made and e) internally organizing municipal management so that it can put the resources it needs together out of those which are already available to it, those which can be supplied by the community and those which must be sought from the central government.

Within this kind of prospective, community participation acquires two different but complementary roles: a) it helps to define the "felt" needs of the community and for selecting projects to satisfy them and b) it helps to organize communal action for direct participation in the execution of these projects mainly through the organization of labour, individual and collective contributions and the appropriate use of public infrastructures and facilities.

Although it does not seem necessary to say much about the reasons for which the definition of the needs of the community cannot be better expressed than by the community itself, it should be noted that the problem remains of finding the procedures by which a consensus may be effectively established between persons and groups of people who normally represent different and frequently antagonistic interests.

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In the project formulation process, the choice of the technology which must be used in the production of habitat goods and services becomes exceptionally important as a means not only of ensuring that the real needs of the users are satisfied but also of keeping the production processes from having an adverse effect on the local economy, running counter to the cultural patterns of the population and causing the environment to deteriorate. As everybody knows, the production of goods and services can have a very different effect on the society and the habitat depending on the kind of resources and inputs employed, the degree of capital intensity and the quality of the design and the other technical factors which enter into the production process. There is ample evidence that for example, technologies which are based on large-scale production and are capital-intensive usually favour large centralized enterprises over medium-sized and small firms to the detriment of medium-sized communities whose economic structure depends in most cases on the use of smaller enterprises.

The mobilization of collective participation in the making of decisions relating to the satisfaction of social needs and to the choice of appropriate technologies is part and parcel of participative planning (a special kind of planning on which some experiments have successfully been carried out with results which can be collected and examined in a wider context).^{6/}

Whatever the concrete techniques of participation may be (and they will in the last analysis depend on conditions in specific countries), they will be greatly facilitated by the recognition that the community constitutes a fourth level (after the central government, the regional governments, and the local governments) in the political decision-making structure. Actually, the community must establish a legally recognized body for political organization, with its own field of competence in the decisions which affect that community in its immediate circumstances and with the authority specifically to organize action within the territorial sphere it occupies. Decentralizing action does not end with the municipality but should be extended to smaller units in which at least some homogeneity of interest is present. And there is certainly no area in which similarity of interests is more clearly shown than the physical neighbourhood; the street, the block, the quarter, i.e., the territory recognized by a community as being its own, have already been accepted as concrete expression of this community of interests.

It must be noted that the basic communal element defined above is the kernel of a new political space for which no organizational structures have been established and no theories have been sufficiently worked out. Political parties in general have not developed positions in line with their respective points of view on national problems, which has meant that the political debate at municipal level is merely an extension of what is being advocated in formulations of national character; this is reflected in a new kind of centralism in that local demands as projected in daily life are ignored.

The local political space is inevitably tied to the question of the quality of life and therefore to the construction and use of the habitat. Actually, daily experience is the point of interest which mobilizes political participation in

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its most immediate form. Even when there are no institutional channels, experience shows that participation will occur in the form of neighbourhood organizations usually created to speak out against infringement of interests or to satisfy community needs directly when this cannot be done through regular institutional channels. In many of these cases, the specific nature of the objectives and the practical and usually emergency nature of the action results in piecemeal organization which is out of harmony with the objectives sought. In addition, the experience of participation has often been distorted by certain populist practices designed to manipulate grass-root organizations. For this reason, participation must be regarded as a continuous process which cannot be limited to the free expression of views or to occasional intervention in matters of community interest. Participation is an ongoing activity with profoundly didactic implications whose exercise can give municipal management a political content of great importance in bolstering the power of the local authorities, and the non-traditional resources it provides may extend the municipality's capacity for action.

With regard to recommendations concerning methodologies for municipal planning, it seems that before more concrete innovations can be proposed, it will be necessary to come up with a more exact definition concerning the action to be taken in respect of the human habitat, and this in turn calls for a substantive review of the division of responsibilities between the central government and the municipal authorities and a real increase in the resources made available to the municipalities.

It is difficult to come up with practical recommendations for institutional reform because this is an area which depends exclusively on national conditions, which are related to political circumstances, on which opinions and comments would be out of place and which vary notably from case to case. In general, all that can be said in this connection is that a tendency towards decentralization has been noted in a number of Latin American countries, some of which have already introduced basic legal changes in this connection. In the future these tendencies might result in the creation of new institutional structures characterized by greater municipal autonomy which would, moreover, be recognized and protected in all the national constitutions of the countries of the region.

If this happens, we may look forward to a future in which municipal governments will actually have greater power not only to control the use and expansion of the constructed space more efficiently but also to increase their capacity for initiative, decision-making and execution of programmes which call for more decisive forms of action in connection with problems relating to occupation, organization, equipment and use of the territory under municipal jurisdiction.

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1/ See T. S. Kuhn, Structure of scientific revolutions, University of Chicago Press, 1970.

2/ See "Training in the field of human settlements: Analysis of the present situation and proposals for a regional programme of action" (E/CEPAL/SES.20/G.11).

3/ Except in Argentina, Chile, Cuba and Uruguay, where intense urban development had already begun.

4/ ECLA/Brazil, "Sistema financeiro nacional para investimentos urbanos: A demanda e oferta de serviços urbanos nas cidades de porte medio no Brasil", Rio de Janeiro, 1976 (mimeographed version).

5/ Ibid.

6/ An example in this connection is the methodology applied experimentally by UNICEF teams in Ecuador and Colombia in 1981 and 1982.

