

# CEPAL

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## The environment in the political arena

*Marshall Wolfe\**

Most reports on current environmental problems usually describe the problems, indicate their causes and outline the technical guidelines to be followed for a reasonable solution to them; but only very rarely do they pose the political questions of who should take the relevant action, how they should do so, who should bear the cost, how effective the action of those agents may be expected to be, and what the response would be of the various social groups. In the author's opinion, if environmental recommendations do not go together with political actions and studies they are likely to add to the already towering mountain of 'committee-room utopias' drawn up in international forums, which fail to achieve any practical consequence beyond their manifest goodwill.

The author raises these political dilemmas and, in the light of the present features of the structure, functioning and trends of Latin American States and societies, his conclusions are not optimistic. The presence of dependent capitalist development patterns and the excessive burden of demands placed on the State by heterogeneous societies lacking in consensus in the face of those acute problems make it probable that in the short run the balance will tilt towards inadequate and authoritarian solutions. However, the stability of both the prevailing development pattern and the social forces sustaining it is precarious, and this may give rise to changes orienting the social process towards a sound environmental policy. In these circumstances, rhetorical, formal or utopian environmental strategies may take on a new lease of life and become effective instruments of social change.

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## Perspectives: The environment in the political arena

### 1. *The starting point*

The questions before us are *what* is to be done, *why*, *who* is to do it, and *how*. The present paper deals only incidentally with the first two questions, leaving them to other contributors to this number of the *CEPAL Review*. It explores some aspects of the third and fourth, that is, the political dimension of the entry of the environment as a missing ingredient into the debate over development.

Our starting point is a conjuncture of conflictive mutations in the international political and economic order, strain on the capacity for 'crisis management' in political systems of all kinds, and confusion or disillusionment over 'development' as a central focus for policy. During the past few years the 'transnational' variant of capitalism has penetrated and increasingly dominated national societies, even those most incongruous with it culturally and ideologically, making them more homogeneous and interdependent than ever before, excluding options for autonomous national styles of development that seemed viable only recently, but generating inequities, contradictions and resistances that make its future appear both precarious and maleficent.

One consequence has been a dissociation between utopian-normative strategies for development oriented to human welfare, promoted by international organizations and formally endorsed by many governments, and real trends in the structures of production and distribution, in the expectations and tactics of the groups able to make themselves heard, and in governmental actions. This dissociation has been visible since the 1950s or earlier, but has become more pronounced as industrial production has become internationalized, resource exploitation has intensified, and the consumer society for minorities has entrenched itself, on the one side; and as the internationally-endorsed requisites for authentic development have become more comprehensive and detailed, on the other. The international strategies have constituted a protest against the real

trends; but they have also become a ritualized substitute for effective change in the trends.

The nation-State and the international order made up of States have lost credit as potential instruments for the application of such strategies. At the same time, a common consequence of the mounting contradictions has been the resort to authoritarian simplification by the forces controlling the State, in order to exclude from political expression the resistances to the prevailing style of 'development'; or, in fewer cases, in order to eradicate this style, silence or expel the groups committed to it, and impose another blueprint on the future.

Neither the comprehensive and harmonious normative strategies nor the authoritarian simplifications seem likely to be able to shape the future on their own terms. For present purposes, it seems most promising to view what is happening in terms of *processes* or societal mutation that may or may not be perceived as *problems*, and that are imperfectly and precariously susceptible to rational action —rational from the viewpoint of some definable social interest or vision of the Good Society. If we accept the proposition that 'development' must curb its aggressions against the ecosystems of the world, moderate its appetite for non-renewable resources, and prefer enhancement of the quality of life to proliferation of consumer goods, the technical means to this end may not be too hard to elaborate. The question is how such a fundamental challenge to real trends can relate itself politically to our starting point of conflictive mutations and precarious ascendancy of the transnational style of development.

## 2. Process and problem

Let us define *process* as any major ongoing evolution in social organization, distribution and use of power, livelihood, exploitation of resources, technology, settlement patterns, capital accumulation, or distribution and content of consumption.

Let us define *problem* as any situation or aspect of the society that some social force or group capable of acting perceives as unsatisfactory. In this sense, dissatisfaction with a given level of consumption or share in power is a

problem, as are concrete threats to personal well-being or national survival.

Processes may or may not be perceived as problems, or may be so perceived by some societal actors but not by others. One can expect an unending series of interactions between perception of problems, responses, and modifications of ongoing processes. One can also expect a certain lag in the perception of problems and in responses to them behind the processes to which they refer, suggested by the saying that generals are always prepared to fight last war.

Perceptions of processes as problems, leading to the generation of controversy, pressures for action and policy responses may be indirect-intellectualized or directly derived from experience. Generally but not necessarily, strong indirect perceptions are associated with some degree of direct perception. (A person may be militantly concerned over the extermination of whales who has never seen a whale nor hopes to see one.) Indirect perceptions reach the individual through the mass media, through organizational affiliations, through contacts with like-minded people and, in the case of small but influential minorities, through activity as scientists, futurologists, planners, and publicists. Indirect perceptions will be filtered by the informational channels themselves, which will transmit some messages but not others, and through the ideological preconceptions or world-view of the recipient. These preconceptions colour the perception of new problems and may exclude some from consideration; but also if the impact of the problem is strong enough it may colour or even transform the ideology.

Since the environment, perceived as a problem, is a latecomer in Latin America, one can expect its reception in different quarters to be subordinated to various preconceptions and preoccupations already on the stage: to economic growth, to access to the consumer society, to social revolution, to national security, to human rights, etc. At the same time, its impact is probably strong enough to modify the perception of these questions.

## 3. Perceptions and responses

The perceptions of problems and responses to

them likely to characterize different societal actors can be distinguished as follows, in a very simplified fashion:

(1) The State or government facing demands that it 'solve' the problem. Even if this is an authoritarian State, new problems are bound to be perceived as complications jostling for attention and for scarce resources, to be evaded or put off if possible, or to be dealt with according to the relative strength of political pressures and the feasibility of using the problem as a rallying point for political mobilization. As long as the capacity of the State is as overstrained as it is at present, the forces controlling it must prefer, in regard to most problems, 'satisfying' rather than 'maximizing' solutions—that is, doing just enough to keep the problem from reaching unmanageable dimensions.

The environmental questions has imposed itself on world attention at a time when governments are trapped between continually diversifying demands that they solve problems, or transform themselves so as to become able to solve problems, on the one side; and a contradictory combination of rising disillusionment at their failure to act coherently and rising resentment at the costliness and bureaucratic rigidity of the measures through which they try to respond to demands, on the other. In this respect, governments in the industrialized countries resemble governments in the periphery more than might have been expected a few years ago; the 1970s have cruelly exposed the pretensions of the former to effective economic planning, administrative efficiency, and harmonious arbitration of the interests of their citizens.

The overloading of the State and its loss of credit as arbiter have implications that will be discussed below. Ideally, environmental concerns, affecting as they do practically all aspects of life styles and productive processes, should generate planned responses linking the perceived interests of different groups in the national societies to some coherent common image of a possible and desirable future. In practice, advocates of environmental reforms have had to fight, at the cost of intransigence and exaggeration, to keep their concerns from being submerged each time the State confronts

a new crisis or their adversaries find an effective new tactic.

(2) The modern productive and commercial enterprises, national and transnational. For these, the perception by the State or other societal actors of the environment as a 'problem' represents potential hindrances, costs and dangers. Their natural responses are to deny the importance of the problem; to assert that it will eventually solve itself through market mechanisms, technological innovations and the untrammeled growth of production; to shift the costs of whatever solution are unavoidable to the State or the society; and finally, if the problem will not go away, to take the lead in devising solutions that will be profitable to themselves.

(3) Intellectuals, scientists, ideologists and 'concerned citizens'. This rather heterogeneous category has a bias toward comprehensive rationalistic long-term solutions and clear priorities. It also has a bias toward solutions that will give leading roles to its own members, as technocrats, planners and mobilizers of public opinion. Within this category of actors, different academic disciplines, professional-technical specializations, and movements oriented by political, religious or ethical ideologies naturally perceive the problems and conceive relevant solutions quite differently. These perceptions influence change processes through their reception by the State, organized interest groups, political parties and the mass media. Generally, as was suggested above, the perceptions are simplified and distorted in transmission and exert influence with a considerable lag.

(4) Social groups directly experiencing the impact of current processes through environmental degradation, insecurity of livelihood, or frustration of consumption expectations; or suffering more diffuse anxieties, without a scientific or ideological frame of reference through which to interpret their origin. These groups can be divided according to many criteria, the most fundamental probably being their perception of capacity to participate in and benefit from the current style of development, or their perception of marginalization and powerlessness.

For the most part, their perception of problems and possible solutions can be expected to be ambivalent, coloured by the state of mind that Alvin Töffler labelled 'future shock'. A generalized feeling of anxiety, insecurity and resentment deriving from the impact of accelerating economic, social, cultural and technological change can focus on alarm over menaces not directly experienced but encountered through the mass media: nuclear holocaust, climatic changes induced by contamination of the atmosphere and leading to a new ice age or melting of the polar ice caps, introduction of noxious extraterrestrial organisms through space exploration, etc. Such indirectly perceived menaces, combining with feelings of powerlessness against manipulation by economic monopolies, politicians or scientists, can generate paranoid fears or movements devoted fanatically to single issues.

The better-off groups in any modern or modernizing society cannot help perceiving a series of environmental problems deriving from the massification of their privileged patterns of consumption: crowded highways, polluted beaches, the deterioration of urban centres and the expansion of suburbs to a point negating the advantages of suburban living. At these social levels, the role of the mass media in linking direct to indirect perceptions is particularly important.

The urban working class is more exposed to easily perceived menaces such as polluted air, overcrowding, dwindling access to open spaces for recreation, long journeys to work, and job-associated illnesses. It also has fewer possibilities for escape or mitigation. The workers, however, encouraged by their employers, can also be expected to perceive environmental regulations as threats to their employment and their access to the consumer society. The underemployed and marginalized poor, or their political spokesmen, may perceive environmental concerns and public allocations as competitive with attention to their own immediate needs.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Lucio Kowarick has pointed out that the mass media can divert the perception of the urban workers and the poor from problems peculiar to themselves (contamination in the factories, lack of water and sanitation in their settle-

The relative importance of the different societal actors for the character of the aggregate societal response to perceived problems will naturally differ according to the specific problem. So will their perceptions of suitable channels for responses. In relation to some problems, the perceptions and actions of technobureaucracies within the State, negotiating with profit-motivated private enterprise, may be decisive, as long as other forces do not perceive environmental processes as problems, or do not perceive any way of influencing the outcome. In relation to others, the responses of groups within the society, whether spontaneous or stimulated by the mass media, expressed through the market, the vote, migration, active or passive resistance, or otherwise, may determine what happens, at least in the short run.

At this point, it may be worthwhile to introduce two examples of the changing interplay of perceptions and responses in relation to two of the problems that are forcing themselves on the attention of State and society in Latin America.

First, let us consider the 'civilization of the automobile'.<sup>2</sup> The privately-owned gasoline-powered automobile has prevailed over alternative means of urban transport for various reasons other than its efficiency for this purpose: it gives a wider margin of personal freedom to the individual, it provides a highly visible means of demonstrating social status and income, manufacturers and oil companies seeking new markets have intensively promoted its use, etc. The concentrated expansion of automobile use has generated problems perceived differently by owners, non-owners and city governments. For the owners, the main problems have been to obtain better highways and more parking spaces, so as to offset the advance of congestion, and to keep the vehicle, fuel and maintenance costs at levels they can

inents) to problems they share with the better-off (air contamination, in particular). ("El precio del progreso: crecimiento económico, explotación urbana y la cuestión del medio ambiente", E/CEPAL/PROY.2/R.8, August 1979.)

<sup>2</sup>Ian Thomson, "An analysis of some of the social consequences of the automobile in Latin America", E/CEPAL/PROY.2/R.8, September 1979.

afford. For the non-owners the problems have been deterioration of public transport, smog, congestion, accidents and patterns of urban spatial organization and services that discriminate against them. For city governments, at earlier stages, the perceived problem has been how to adapt the city to the needs of the automobile and finance the infrastructure required for this. At a later stage, the problem becomes increasingly one of devising regulations to reduce the disbenefits of concentrated automobile use in the face of resistance from automobile manufacturers, vendors, oil companies, and users.

At one stage, market forces determine urban sprawl, deterioration of city centres and predominance of large automobiles with high fuel consumption, without any significant perception of these phenomena as problems. At another, the State begins to intervene to control certain land uses, rehabilitate public transport, hinder the entry of private automobiles into the city centre, and regulate the characteristics of automobiles in the interest of lower fuel consumption, lower emission of fumes and greater safety. These interventions generally are improvisations intended to reduce the most urgent problems to manageable dimensions. They also represent compromises between the views of urban planners, political leaders, and the sectors of the public that are able to make themselves heard.

Eventually, the new problem of sudden and steep increases in the price of oil, making the automobile a much heavier charge on family income as well as on the balance of payments of countries that are not self-sufficient in oil production, sets in motion new perceptions of the role of the automobile in transport and in the consumer society itself, new processes of adaptation and regulation, and new tactics designed to shift the cost and preserve existing privileges and sources of profit. Contradictions between the policies and actions of different public agencies probably become more pronounced.

Meanwhile the greater part of the urban population in Latin America has little or no hope of acquiring an automobile and no coherent perception of the impact of mass automobile use by minorities on its own living

conditions. Its one intermittently effective intervention in the contest is to preserve cheap but uncomfortable public transport by political pressures or by rioting to protest fare increases.

Second, let us consider the land deterioration and chronic poverty associated with minifundio cultivation.<sup>3</sup> Agricultural technicians, planners and bureaucrats have perceived these problems through surveys and have tried to respond to them, according to their own professional backgrounds and values, by efforts to expel the minifundio population from eroding land and reafforest it, by regulation of grazing, by agrarian reforms to give the cultivators more adequate land resources, by supervised credits, by educational campaigns, and by provision of local employment opportunities outside agriculture.

The more 'modern' large landowners and agribusinesses have perceived the problem as one of inefficient land use and immobilization of labour. They have used various tactics to gain control of the land held in minifundios, to the extent that this could be incorporated into their own plans for production, and to convert the cultivators into wage labourers. Alternatively, they have accepted the minifundio as a source of seasonal wage labour that can be paid less than its cost of subsistence.

Other groups in the national power élite have informed themselves to some extent and have responded in function of other priority preoccupations, through ecological or humanitarian values, or not at all. (E.g., the military leadership might be concerned about the poor physical condition and illiteracy of recruits from the minifundio population or about its propensity to harbour guerrilla movements; the urban authorities might be concerned about the dimensions of the flow of migrants.) Counterelites have seen in the contradiction between the interests of impoverished cultivators and those of the forces nationally dominant possibilities for revolutionary mobilization.

The minifundio cultivators themselves have perceived the problem through diminish-

<sup>3</sup>Nicolo Gligo, *Estilos de desarrollo, modernización y medio ambiente en la agricultura latinoamericana*, E/CEPAL/PROY.2, R.11, 1979.

ing capacity of the land to give them subsistence, increasing pressure from modernized capitalist agriculture, and decreasing acceptability of their meagre and precarious livelihood in the kind of society growing up around them. They have responded according to the alternatives they could perceive in specific local settings, through further intensification of land use, shifts to cash crops, mobilization to demand State aid and better land, temporary migration to obtain a supplementary income, migration to frontier zones, or abandonment of the land permanent migration to towns and cities.

The accelerating loss of arable land and rural impoverishment are presumably more important to the national future than the trials of urban transport users, but it is evident that in this case the combined technocratic, political and popular perceptions of the problem, while of long standing, have not added up to pressure on the State for action on a scale matching this importance. Still less have they enabled the minifundio cultivators to participate effectively in determining their future livelihood and role in the national society.

In this case as well as in that of the automobile new factors are forcing various societal actors to revise their perceptions, without necessarily helping the cultivators to make their own views of their interests heard. The increasingly dangerous dependence of the countries on imports of basic foods combined with the increasing costs and environmental disbenefits of modern large-scale agriculture (fuel, fertilizers, pesticides, heavy machinery) make the dominance of such agriculture and its export-orientation increasingly precarious. A policy shift toward domestic food production using relatively labour-intensive methods may become unavoidable, and in one way or another the societal actors able to influence policy will have to take the land and labour power of the minifundio cultivators into account.

#### *4. Perceptions of environmental problems: some lessons from the central countries*

It is commonly asserted that industrialized countries and Third World countries perceive environmental problems differently. Certainly

the configurations of problems differ and so do the dominant perceptions of them, but the formulation can be misleading. 'Countries' as such do not perceive any more than they 'choose' styles of development. Social forces and groups within them have quite different perceptions and choices, and the aggregate national responses to problems, as was argued above, emerge from the interaction of different perceptions, from the channels through which the different actors perceive the problems, and from the degree to which these different actors are in a position to act on their perceptions. The dominant perceptions themselves are never completely coherent. Even the most powerful and purposeful régime encounters resistances and pressures that it cannot altogether disregard.

In relation to the viability of environmental policies (or of development policies in general) for Latin America, it may be enlightening to contrast the distribution of perceptions able to exert influence with their distribution in the central industrialized countries, in particular the United States. One of the most striking features of these latter countries during the recent past has been the extent to which conflicting perceptions of environmental problems, ranging from the complacent to the catastrophist, have become explicit, have entered into public opinion, have been debated in the mass media, and have been advanced by specialized organizations trying to influence legislation, allocations of public resources and private behaviour, through a wide range of tactics. The more organized and articulate sources of perceptions and public positions can be classified roughly as follows:

Industrial and agricultural enterprises in general.

Transnational enterprises in particular.

Energy producers and vendors in particular.

Trade unions.

Ecological, conservationist and consumer movements.

Organizations of sportsmen, campers, and hunters.

Journalists.

Economists.

Other social and physical scientists.

Religious bodies.

'Enlightened' public opinion (academics and professionals).

Mobilizers of groups experiencing marginalization or discrimination.

The State itself (in principle the final arbiter of policy, but in practice a conglomerate of bureaucracies and legislative factions allied with different social forces advancing their own perceptions and policies).

Naturally, none of these categories is monolithic in its perceptions; most of them are deeply divided. Some are concerned almost exclusively with environmental problems. In others the environment competes with or is subordinated to perceptions of other urgent problems and demands. Several of these latter problems and demands are storm centres of equally complex and conflictive organized perceptions; equal rights for women and ethnic minorities; abortion; consumer protection; employment; enhancement of national military power. In some quarters, also, the environment or the other problems may be perceived entirely opportunistically, for their potential in advancing political careers, providing employment for professional mobilizers and publicists, or offering a field for profit-making enterprises.

In the United States, in particular, the various perceptions confront one another through institutionalized adversary procedures, in which it is expected that the proponent of each position will advance it in the strongest terms—generally in a tone of moral indignation and warnings of doom—and that policy will emerge from differential capacity to convince, mobilize and overcome the inertia of the political process. Such policy, however, will represent a series of compromises. No contender will achieve all objectives, and interests that do not choose to join in the public contest will influence the result by backstage negotiations.

Some consequences of this way of arriving at policy are a proliferation of regulations originating in legislative compromises; considerable increases in the range of interventions by government bureaucracies, not only in the functioning of enterprises but also in everyday life; and a projection of the initial contest,

through the courts, into the interpretation of laws and the allocation of public funds. The proliferation of environmental regulations coincides with a proliferation of regulations responding to other problems and arrived at by similar paths of conflictive promotion and political compromise. In their combination they clash increasingly with a general disillusionment with the welfare State as over-regulative, over-costly and incompetent.

Thus, important sectors of public opinion are torn between distaste for environmental degradation and fear of highly publicized future hazards, on the one hand, and distaste for bureaucracy and taxes, on the other. Industrial and commercial enterprises now use this factor in their publicity, declaring themselves practicing environmentalists, but insisting on the costs of excessive regulation and the intransigence of their opponents. The adversary procedure of policy-making has up to the present generated substantial gains in environmental protection, but there are signs that the overload of perceived problems can lead to paralysis in many aspects of decision-making: the contending parties are better able to block or dilute decisions favouring their adversaries than to advance decisions suited to their own perceptions.

This kind of policy-making perpetuates a kind of schizophrenia in government actions: costly programmes that directly contradict each other may be introduced to satisfy different interests and perceptions: one public agency subsidizes tobacco growing while another mounts intensive propaganda campaigns against smoking as a cause of cancer. At the same time, adversary campaigns are only slowly and erratically effective against large public agencies that have linked their own self-aggrandizement to the reproduction of certain activities that have arguably already been carried to excess, as in the case of the dam-building of the Army Corps of Engineers and the Tennessee Valley Authority, of the Federal Highway Programme.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup>For the TVA, see Peter Matthiessen, "How to Kill a Valley", *The New York Review of Books*, XXVII, 1, February 7, 1980.

To the extent that the perceivers of environmental problems are unable to influence the State through arguments or votes, or question the ability of the State to meet their demands, they may resort to direct action, boycotts, civil disobedience or sabotage. Their expectations from such tactics are generally mixed. The participants may hope to make continuation of environmentally hazardous industrial processes or resource exploitation impossible through the intensity of their action, but generally they are more concerned to mobilize wider support, and to convince the State or the entrepreneurs that meeting their demands will be cheaper politically and economically than resisting them. In the industrialized countries, action of this kind now centres on nuclear power installations and has drawn in sizable minorities of youth, disillusioned with more conventional forms of political action.<sup>5</sup>

The last response to environmental preoccupations, in groups skeptical of action by the State and of the effectiveness of extralegal tactics, is change in personal life style or withdrawal from the prevailing style of development. The withdrawal may be limited, inspired by sentiments of personal responsibility for getting changes under way, and combined with participation in the different forms of political action, as in groups or individuals that try to limit their own use of contaminating energy sources and convert to solar power, regardless of comparative costs, or that scrupulously save waste materials for recycling; it may encompass a systematic effort to make oneself independent of the economic and political order and prepare for survival after expected catastrophe. In recent years, manuals giving instruction for this kind of preparation have achieved

wide circulation, and some religious sects have added an environmental dimension to their conviction that doom is at hand for the unconverted majority.

### *5. Perceptions of environmental problems in semi-developed peripheral countries*

In the Latin American countries, perceptions are also quite diverse and difficulties in the way of coherent policies are formidable, as the two examples given above indicate, but the social forces involved are more restricted and with very different relative weight. The perceptions that have counted for environmental policy up to the present have been those of transnational and national enterprises; and those of the circles of economists, engineers, planners and other professionals who advise governments and direct programmes on the basis of their claims to specialized knowledge.

The mass media have begun to pay attention to the environment and middle-class public opinion is at least uneasy, unable to ignore urban degradation in the pursuit of modernized consumption, but thus far public perceptions are far from the intensity and organized combativeness of those evident in the central countries.

The transnational enterprises may transfer a certain concern for the environmental impact of their activities from their present forced adaptations in their home countries, and may perceive advantages in keeping such impact within tolerable limits. Their predominant interest, however, is probably in preserving as long as possible situations of low costs and freedom from regulations such as those cramping them at home. The record of dangerous products and processes disseminated in peripheral countries after being prohibited in their countries of origin demonstrates no aptitude for environmental self-restraint. National enterprises are even less likely to view, of their own accord, environmental impact as a problem to which they must subordinate their calculations of profitability.

In rapidly urbanizing and industrializing countries such as Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela, however, the greater differentiation of inter-

<sup>5</sup>In spite of the profusion of perceptions of environmental problems, some menaces fall into oblivion, whether because of manipulation by the State or the mass media, or because the environmentally concerned groups find them so intractable that they prefer to forget them. As Jorge Sábató pointed out in the 1979 CEPAL/UNEP Seminar on Styles of Development and Environment in Latin America; during the increasingly militant campaign against nuclear power, the much more menacing possibilities of accidents from the manufacture and transport of nuclear weapons, and the greater contribution of their manufacture to the accumulation of nuclear wastes, have been practically ignored.

est groups and public opinion coincides with a very rapid intensification of the kinds of environmental problems that have a particularly direct and evident impact on the well-being of the population, including the parts of the urban population that are able to make themselves heard. Under these conditions, one can expect environmental concerns to penetrate a wider range of social groups, to become formalized in organizations, to seek political expression and, if they cannot find relief through governmental actions, to generate violent extra-legal protests. This trend will be speeded up by the ease of borrowing interpretations, slogans, and remedies from like-minded groups in the central countries. The State will come under irresistible pressures to act, but the diversity of these pressures will continually inhibit action. For a time, as has happened in relation to other major problems, one can expect the undertaking of elaborate surveys and the drafting of comprehensive plans to serve as a means of demonstrating good intentions while postponing the fixing of realistic priorities.

What are the possibilities for the awakening of a wider policy-oriented environmental perception that can escape the domination of privileged minorities and keep within limits the adversary procedures, interest-group tactics and regulative entanglements that now plague the central industrialized countries? This amounts to asking whether alternative styles of development, recognizing the environmental imperative, can become accessible. In seeking a plausible answer, let us examine first the roles of the technobureaucrats, then the prospects for popular participation in what is done, and finally the question of planning.

#### *6. Technobureaucrats*

The label 'technobureaucrat', for present purposes, lumps together specialists with quite different ideological and disciplinary frames of reference who have in common their claim to show the State how to bring about 'development' on the basis of correct theories and professional expertise. The rise of technobureaucrats has been a relatively recent phenomenon, as the range of responsibilities of the State and the range of expertise supposed to be needed

have widened simultaneously. The technobureaucrats have aspired to a more autonomous and innovative role in policy-making than the more traditional bureaucrats, who based their claim to authority on mastery of precedents, procedures and regulations, have done, at least openly. As far as they and their political sponsors have been able, the higher technobureaucrats have separated their status and rewards from those of the remainder of the public administration. It was to be expected that when the theme of the environment came to the fore the technobureaucrats already on the scene should try to assimilate it to their prescriptions for development, and that different professional specializations should use it to support a claim to a more prominent place in the technobureaucratic ranks.

The ways in which the technobureaucrats intervene in policy suggest the following hypotheses:

(1) The professional or disciplinary specialization and institutional socialization of the technobureaucrats largely determine their ability to perceive and assimilate new problems, or broaden the 'system' of interventions they consider relevant to their policy prescriptions.<sup>6</sup> When a major problem area, such as the environment, comes to the fore, different categories of technobureaucrats may reject it as a dangerous diversion of attention from what is important, transfer responsibility for action to some other professional specialization, or redefine the problem in terms permitting them to incorporate it into their previous professional or disciplinary terms of reference, possibly distorting the reality in the process. In general, technobureaucrats have shown poor capacity to adjust to major changes in problems, or to fore-

<sup>6</sup>According to a very pertinent definition, "the *environment* consists of the residual variables not incorporated into the system, and values which have not been considered relevant for the system variables". "Environmental development", then, "is the constant expansion of system boundaries... The goal is to convert the 'unthinkable' into something thought about, and address the 'impractical' by means of new policy issues and measures." (Warren Crowther, *Technological development, development styles and environmental problems*, E/CEPAL/PROY.2/R.35, October 1979.

see the long-term consequences of national styles of development.

(2) Technobureaucrats commonly assume that there must be one optimal technical solution to every problem and that political or other resistances to the application of this solution are to be condemned. The technobureaucratic rationality continually clashes with the rationalities of politicians, administrative bureaucrats and organized interest-groups. Unless the technobureaucrats gain exclusive access to authoritarian sources of power, such as military régimes, their interventions become either ineffective and ritualistic, as in the case of much formal development planning, or deliberately narrow in focus, as in the case of most development projects. In trying to strengthen their influence, technobureaucrats commonly exaggerate the infallibility of their specialized knowledge and blame failures on irrationalities elsewhere in the political, administrative and economic systems.

(3) Technobureaucrats generally are biased toward standarized, universally applicable solutions to problems and large-scale technologically advanced capital-intensive projects. This bias has supported the myth of development as a uniform process going through stages that can be deduced from the past of the 'developed' capitalist countries. A good many major environmental disasters have originated in technobureaucratic attempts to standardize national policies and introduce advanced technologies on a large scale without regard to focal conditions or real capacity to control execution. In the case of hydroelectric and irrigation dam-building projects, in particular, a fascination with sheer size and ultra-modernity has had perverse results.

(4) The job market for technobureaucrats consists of governments, international agencies, academic and research institutions, and private enterprises, with transnational enterprises increasingly important within the last market. Many technobureaucrats, especially the most influential, shift frequently from one area of employment to another. Experience in these different areas of employment can be expected to produce different kinds of socialization and different perceptions of developmental and environmental problems.

A recent essay has traced the evolution of bureaucracy and technobureaucracy in Latin America in the following terms:

First, from the 1930s to the 1950s came a stage of steady expansion in bureaucratic employment, stimulated simultaneously by the creation of new State activities in the name of 'modernization' and by middle-class pressures for jobs, overloading the State with assistential tasks it was unable to carry out efficiently, as yet without a coherent development policy focus.

Second, came a stage of confidence in the autonomous capacity of the State to achieve rapid development and reconcile social conflicts through planning: "... if the State wins this autonomy, those who control it, be it only partially, are the political and technical officials of the State who do not directly represent social interests; in other words the technobureaucracy whose power began to take root in the chinks and cracks of the State's margin of liberty, made possible its greater functional diversification and promoted the type of alliances characteristic of the democratic political order in this phase".

Still later, when this order broke down under the pressure of mutually incompatible demands on the State and military-authoritarian régimes imposed themselves, the technobureaucrats (or different technobureaucrats, trained and socialized in other academic settings) gained even more self-confidence. They argued that "politics has no meaning or role in the 'technological era'. Politics corresponds to an era of 'trial and error' when solutions were found through successive approximations. In contrast, the Scientific Method brought with it the era of rational planning and the non-political solution of the problems of society, thereby dispensing with the need for any kind of public discussion or collective deliberation. In the technocratic society, the 'specialists' are the ones who decide 'objectively' with the scientific means at their disposal, in the name of the highest national interests and without public responsibility to the people". Previously technobureaucrats and intellectuals were linked in the aspiration to promote structural changes in the societies. Now, "intellectuals as well as politicians are the archetypes of dysfunctional

groups as regards a technocratic state requires the 'unity of the people'".<sup>7</sup>

The above analysis implies a rather narrow definition of 'technobureaucrat'. For present purposes, it seems preferable to think in terms of a struggle for influence between different schools of 'reformer' and 'conformist' technobureaucrats. The school most conspicuous during the second stage fell into eclipse (although not in all parts of Latin America) because of the inapplicability of its policy prescriptions within existing national power structures, the inability of the political alliances on which it depended to overcome internal contradictions, and the capacity of external forces to hinder or destabilize policies of which they disapproved. More broadly, the ascending transnational style of development was able to impose itself over technobureaucratic efforts to reform national styles. However, the alliance of conformist technobureaucrats with military-authoritarian régimes presumably does not represent an inevitable last stage of technobureaucracy.

Even if all the hypotheses listed above are correct, technobureaucrats (along with their critics) constitute indispensable agents of development, however development may be defined. The State, whatever forces control it, will have to continue to strive to shape the national future, with the aid of experts who will evolve their own status-enhancing and self-justifying tactics. If styles of development more compatible with social justice and enhancement of the quality of life become politically viable, the reallocation of national resources, the drafting and enforcement of environmental controls, the extension of public services to the masses now excluded, and the redressing of local balances of power and opportunities for livelihood will require complex administrative structures and expertise.

The movement for alternative styles of development, in fact, represents an effort by some

<sup>7</sup>Jorge Graciarena and Rolando Franco, "Social formations and power structures in Latin America", *Current Sociology*, 26, 1, Spring 1978. See also Guillermo O'Donnell, "Tensions in the bureaucratic-authoritarian State and the question of democracy", in David Collier, ed., *The New Authoritarianism in Latin America*, Princeton University Press, 1979.

reformer technobureaucrats to solve the 'problem of an excess of problems', all requiring actions that are urgent, administratively complex, and disturbing to current expectations and values. A good many of them turned to variants of this movement as a result of frustrating personal struggles to reshape national development policy, leading to their own exclusion and retreat to international organizations, universities or research institutions. The rising perception of environmental menaces during the early 1970s strengthened their case and brought their conceptions of authentic development into more profound contradiction with current styles.

In Latin America and other parts of the Third World, environmentalist initiatives, like those for priority to the satisfaction of basic needs, are still largely internationally inspired and led by reformer technobureaucrats more concerned to strengthen communication with functioning national technobureaucrats, who remain deeply suspicious of any diversion of attention from economic growth, than to mobilize mass support. The bias toward standardized comprehensively planned solutions to complex problems persists, tempered by perplexity at the difficulty of relating such solutions to national societies inextricably enmeshed in the precariously dominant transnational style. A major effort of self-analysis seems to be needed if the present perceptions of reformer technobureaucrats are not to be frustrated, like the developmentalist outlook of the past, by misapprehensions concerning their capacity to plot the course of conflictive societal change.

### 7. Participation

In real political processes, technobureaucrats and political leaders with technobureaucratic inclinations, whatever their ideological frame of reference, can be expected to reject the disorder and hindrances to productive efficiency associated with autonomous popular participation and the doctrinaire extremes to which egalitarian and anti-market ideologists are likely to carry their efforts to manipulate such participation. Cycles recur of populist or Maoist leaders generating disorder in the name of societal transformation, and technobureau-

cratic leaders, once they regain the upper hand, imposing the rule of the market or of socialist central planning, depending on the political order in which they find themselves. Campaigns to dethrone the experts only make the experts more intransigent when they return to wield influence.

It would be convenient if technobureaucratic prescriptions could be trusted to bring about socially just and environmentally sound development without the conflictive representation of all sectors of the society. It would also be convenient if the unavoidable tension between technobureaucratic and participationist viewpoints could remain within limits, each respecting the other's legitimacy and recognizing its own weaknesses. From the standpoint of the present paper, however, the conflictive representation of perceived interests cannot be avoided, and it should embrace the groups now powerless or otherwise preoccupied. If they do not gain an effective voice one can expect environmental policy to be shaped by negotiation between State and transnational technobureaucracies, with the latter holding the advantages of better information, clearer purposes, and ability to hire their interlocutors away from the State. One can then assume that the costs of environmental policies and of development policies in general will, as far as feasible, be heaped on the voiceless and the benefits diverted elsewhere.

No environmental policy nor development policy will be politically neutral in its distribution of costs and benefits. In broad terms, this proposition may seem excessively obvious. However, it is worth emphasizing that the real distribution of costs and benefits will depend less on the initial overt purposes and terms of the policy than on its subsequent evolution in specific social and political settings. As long as power and perceptiveness concerning opportunities for self-serving action remain unevenly distributed, new forms of manipulation will continually counter new forms of State intervention. If the groups affected cannot respond in a reasonably vigorous and well-informed way, the very safeguards introduced to insure equity may divert the benefits of policy (at least, benefits in terms of power and employ-

ment opportunities) to technobureaucrats, lawyers, and professional representatives of interest-groups. The underdogs of Latin America have experienced since the colonial Laws of the Indies an interminable series of measures devised in the centres of power, purporting to protect them but used to exploit them.

For a better understanding of the probable vicissitudes of policy and the potential role of participation, one useful tool should be the construction of scenarios on the foreseeable interaction of alternative environmental policies with the life styles and livelihood of specific social classes and groups, within possible future variants of national political and economic systems.<sup>8</sup>

An inquiry now being carried out by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) provides a convenient framework for thinking about participation in environmental policy as well as other aspects of development policy. It defines participation as "the organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control".<sup>9</sup> It views participation in terms of *encounter*, involving many degrees and combinations of mutual adjustment, negotiation and conflict "between the 'excluded' and those elements in the society which maintain or force exclusion"; in terms of *movements* and *organizations* of would-be participants; in terms of *biography* (that is, the emergence in individuals of perceptions of problems and tactics through experience); in terms of *projects*, *programmes*, and national policies aimed by the State or voluntary agencies at the excluded groups; and in terms of *anti-participatory structures and ideologies*.

<sup>8</sup>Hugh Stretton, in *Capitalism, Socialism and the Environment* (Cambridge University Press, 1976), makes particularly interesting use of such scenarios for different industrialized capitalist and socialist societies, demonstrating that different styles of decision-making under either of these labels can lead to environmental policies with quite different impact on the quality of life. Equivalent scenarios are needed for different types of societies and political-economic systems in the Third World.

<sup>9</sup>Andrew Pearse and Matthias Stiefel, *Inquiry into Participation - a Research Approach* (UNRISD/79,c.14, Geneva, May 1979).

In a good many industrialized countries, as was indicated above, environmental questions now constitute one of the more participatory areas of public policy, with participation taking the form of adversary procedures and competitive mobilization, as well as attempted reforms in personal life styles. The intensity of participation is undoubtedly very unevenly distributed by social class and educational level, but even the disadvantaged groups have some capacity to protest against environmental actions and omissions that effect their perceived needs.

In most of Latin America, in the terminology of the UNRISD inquiry, anti-participatory structures are dominant and ideological positions on participation have become ritualistic or manipulative to such an extent that it might seem absurd or hypocritical to argue for popular participation in environmental policy. The precarious and intermittent organized interventions of the masses of the population in defense of their own perceived interests generally focus on questions of employment, access to and prices of basic goods and services, housing, education, health care, and land tenure, rather than on the environment. Their quest for livelihood and shelter, in urban as well as rural areas, forces them into environmentally damaging activities. As Dr. Raúl Prebisch has pointed out, the prevailing style of development and the privileged consumer society can tolerate democratization only up to a certain point, beyond which they react with renewed and intensified exclusion of the strata whose aspirations they cannot satisfy.

Nevertheless, direct perceptions of environmental changes for the worse are undoubtedly on the rise among the excluded groups, as these changes affect their livelihood, their physical health and their psychological security. Phenomena such as the indiscriminate use of dangerous chemicals cannot be ignored even by the desperately poor, who are most exposed to contaminated food and water, as recurrent press reports of mass poisonings demonstrate. In some cases, technologies damaging to health and livelihood have been deliberately used against them; e.g., landowners have forced small cultivators off holdings coveted for their own plans of expansion by air spraying of pesti-

cides. In other cases, thousands of peasants have become pawns of shifting technobureaucratic colonization strategies, left stranded when the land once cleared proved unsuitable for permanent cultivation or when public agencies decided to support different lines of production and large-scale 'modern' holdings.

It is probable that less tangible menaces are entering popular consciousness through the ubiquitous transistor radio and word of mouth. It may not be too farfetched to imagine that these combined with other sources of insecurity, in the absence of more adequate channels for perception and organized response, can stimulate mass rejection of technology and its carriers and fuel new messianic or xenophobic movements.

At best, one can expect that the initial participation of the excluded groups will be defensive, using whatever capacity they have through evasion, petition or violence to ward off threatening changes and get a hearing from the centres of power. One can expect most technobureaucrats and practically all entrepreneurs to condemn such tactics as shortsighted and reactionary. In view of their own record of shortsightedness and disregard for the impact of their activities on popular livelihood and well-being, however, the emergence of a popular capacity for militant self-defense against the experts seems to be an indispensable, if insufficient, requisite for the formulation and application of more enlightened environmental policies.

#### *8. Planning and the transition between styles of development*

In considering the formidable agenda of problems, the heterogeneity of the social forces that perceive the problems, and the overloading of the State, our attention unavoidably turns to the elusive ideal of 'planning'. The economists, sociologists and other professionals who identify themselves as 'planners' should have a more comprehensive perception than other schools of technobureaucrats of the environmental and other processes that make the Latin American variant of peripheral capitalism, or of the 'transnational style', at the same time so irresistible, precarious and antipathetic. Can-

not planners devise means of manipulating the State and the society so as to rationalize the unavoidable transition to different styles? Cannot they foresee and keep within manageable dimensions the environmental costs of development before these force themselves on the attention of the State and the society?

Two recent essays exemplify the diametrically opposed conceptions that specialists with experience in Latin American development planning now hold concerning the potential role of planning as a means of bringing about societal change—although it may be that values and aspirations behind the two conceptions are quite similar.

One essay, focussing upon ecodesvelopment, enjoins upon planning that it should:

(a) Accommodate its criteria to the specific and differentiated ordering of the ecosystems.

(b) Incorporate the aspirations of each of the communities and, while establishing a global national strategy, link this to planning determined by the population of each ecosystem.

(c) Formulate planning procedures sufficiently flexible to permit a constant control on the part of the population, so that the planning bodies will handle solely the instrumentalization and compatibilization of the decisions taken by the communities and will not replace these in the exercise of power.<sup>10</sup>

These injunctions are for the future, but imply a high degree of faith in the potential of planning for societal change as well as a negative evaluation of planning's past technocratic and centralized manifestations. The contrasting diagnosis of planning focusses on the recent past, but conveys implications for the future. According to this diagnosis:

(a) Fixed-term plans under Latin American conditions have proved consistently inapplicable. They have had little or no influence on what has happened.

(b) The conception of planners as agents of societal change guided by their own values and images of the Good Society, supposed to

<sup>10</sup>J. Hurtubia, V. Sánchez, H. Sejenovich, F. Szekely, "Hacia una conceptualización del ecodesarrollo" (PNUMA, Oficina Regional para América Latina), p. 17.

be those of the national community, has also proved inapplicable.

(c) The professional planners, unable to act effectively on reality, have paid all the more attention to methodologies for the preparation of plans as technocratic utopias. Partly because of these methodologies, with their rigidity and bias toward evasion of political constraints, the planners were unable to contribute effectively to the realization of their own objectives, even in the few cases in which these objectives were shared by forces dominant in the State.

(d) Meanwhile, the dominant forces do 'plan' according to their own perception of means of strengthening their domination in the kind of society they want to construct, and choose technical advisers accordingly, whether or not these call themselves 'planners'. This kind of planning can proceed practically disregarding the parallel activities of formal planning agencies. However, the planners seeing themselves as agents of societal change have increasingly been excluded even from this harmless and ritualistic activity.<sup>11</sup>

In other terms, conformist technobureaucrats replace reformer technobureaucrats. If this were the whole truth, it would follow that an injunction to incorporate an environmental dimension into planning or to plan for a style of development compatible with such a dimension would simply promote more complex but equally inapplicable technocratic utopias and alienate the planners even more from their sources of employment. Governments that have purged planners advocating cautious change strategies retaining centralized control in the State are not going to open the door to planners who want to hand over control to 'communities'.

The dominant forces, then, can be expected to take the environmental dimension into account only to the extent to which they perceive threats to their own preferred style of

<sup>11</sup>Carlos A. de Mattos, "Planes versus planificación en la experiencia latinoamericana", in *Revista de la CEPAL*, No. 8, agosto de 1979. The essay by Graciarena and Franco, discussed above, also comments on the lack of rapport of the 'planners' who flourished during their 'second stage' with the politicians as well as with the 'true' technobureaucrats.

development within the time-horizon they consider relevant —e.g., approaching exhaustion of key natural resources, prohibitive costs of energy, unmanageable congestion and unrest in the cities. They will then seek technical solutions for these problems that will strengthen their control exercised through advanced technology and the mass communication media, that will return a profit from new lines of production, and that will permit shifting of the costs to the weaker sectors in their own societies or in other societies. Up to a certain point these forces may even view environmental degradation with a certain pride, as evidence that they are really generating development and that they are tough-minded enough to pay the price.

The authors of the injunctions for planning cited above do not disregard this difficulty and consider two possible ways of meeting it, in one of which, the partial autonomy of the State, they have little or no confidence, evaluating development plans in terms not very different from those of de Mattos. The objectives set forth in the development plans of most Third World countries, and even the laws, they point out, include the redistribution of incomes, protection of the marginalized strata, preservation of the environment, and many other desiderata, but few of the objectives are achieved and most of the laws are violated or ignored. The objectives and the laws derive from the relative autonomy of the State and the contradictory interests it tries to represent; but the economically dominant sectors generally get what they want, whether through application of policies corresponding to their interests or through sterilization of contrary policies.<sup>12</sup>

The relative autonomy of the State, in fact, can be reduced to the relative autonomy of the planners to draft plans that are not going to be implemented.

The other way out is through planning for and by the 'community'. This proposal points to some of the central unresolved difficulties of the quest for alternative styles of development which we have touched on when discussing participation.

<sup>12</sup>Hurtubia et al., op. cit., p. 18.

First, what agents and processes are to bring such a decentralized and participatory system of planning into being and how? The injunctions suggest the need for Platonic Guardians or a *deus ex machina* from outside the stratified and complexly dependent national societies. The State, for reasons stated above, is unlikely to play this role. Professional planners can only dream of doing so. The injunctions suggest a technocratic utopia hidden behind a participationist utopia.

Second, what is the 'community' that is to take the decisions and control planning? In most of Latin America, the prevailing style of development has gone far to disintegrate previous paternalistic or oligarchic ties; local communities with common perceived interests and values are rare exceptions; and national communities show cohesion only against external adversaries. The reality in most countries most of the time is the imposition of the perceived interests of minorities, encountering the apathy or resistance of the majority. The community development programmes in which high hopes were invested a few years ago broke down on unrealistic expectations concerning harmony of interests within local groups and between such groups and the forces nationally dominant. The appeal to 'community' really supposes that another style of development is already imminent.

Third, even if one can suppose the feasibility of wide popular control of policy-making in such societies, how are the aggregate demands of the different groups to be made compatible with 'ecodevelopment'? The identification of 'community' with 'ecoregion' introduces further complications. The ecoregions are yet to be defined, and presumably will coincide only by accident with historically determined administrative boundaries and sentiments of local self-identification. At best, the task of regional decentralization of a country so as to harmonize ecological, economic and political criteria will be conflictive as well as complex, as the vicissitudes of regional planning efforts up to the present demonstrate. The problem might be simpler in predominantly peasant societies with strong attachments to land and locality, but most Latin American societies are

now very far from this pattern and can never return to it. How can the population of Mexico City, or São Paulo or Caracas control decision-making that affects its ecosystem? Can the continued growth of such agglomerations be tolerated, and if not how can it be halted? However much one may distrust the experts and the centralizers, many of the relevant policies will have to be counter-intuitive in character, national or international in scope, and unwanted, at least at first, by most of the population involved. There may be hope that this population will become better able to force the planners to take it into account, but hardly that its collective decisions will become coherent enough to restrict the planners to humble technical functions.

In the real world, a strengthening in popular capacity to voice demands and a reduction in the intolerably wide gap between high consumption levels and low will unavoidably mean an intensified strain on the environment through accelerated housing construction; higher per capita energy and water consumption; greater spatial mobility; wider purchases of non-essential consumer goods, and resource-consuming uses of leisure time, such as motorized weekend and vacation travel. The enhancement of popular understanding of 'social limits to growth'<sup>13</sup> and gradual changes in life styles can be hoped for, but at best the process of adjustment will be very different from the vision of 'communities' taking ecologically sound decisions and giving instructions to their planners.

This vision will have to be broken down into a learning process, involving technically prepared and motivated change agents as well as the people themselves, through their frustrating experiences and their individual decisions concerning the application of their income, the use-value of the products crowding upon them, the advantages of maintenance and recycling in preference to the accumulation of mountains of rubbish and, above all, more cre-

ative and varied use of their most precious resource, time.<sup>14</sup>

Nevertheless, the comprehensive vision is needed, and possibly something can be done to rescue the conception of the planner as an agent of societal change and guardian of this vision. For this purpose, one needs to examine the probable capacity of the forces now dominant to achieve strategies not only coherent but viable over the long term. In Latin America during the 1970s a period of exaggerated hopes and fears of revolutionary transformation or of accelerated, increasingly equitable economic growth gave way to a period of discouragement or complacency (depending on the observer) before the apparent solidity of dependent capitalism and consumerism backed by military force. It is evident that this system of domination continues to confront contradictions and incompatible pressures making its functioning precarious. As in the central countries, the dominant forces will have increasingly to incorporate concessions and remedial measures, including measures of environmental protection, that are contrary to the logic of the system. Incremental changes may add up to major mutations in the style of development, or contradictions may generate sudden qualitative changes—possibly even including shifts in the energy-intensive technological and consumerist orientations that make sound environmental policy so hard to envisage at present.<sup>15</sup>

The 'planner' or 'reformer technobureaucrat' (using the terms as shorthand for would-be change agents making use of technical or academic disciplinary tools) needs to pay close attention to the mutations now beginning in the central countries and evaluate realistically the opportunities as well as constraints they imply.

<sup>14</sup>Ignacy Sachs, in *Stratégies de l'écodéveloppement* (Les Editions Ouvrière, Paris, 1980) and *Styles de vie et planification* (CIRED, texte préparé dans le cadre du projet "Demain aujourd'hui: Expérimentation sociales, changement de styles de vie et de développement", 1979), has emphasized the need for rethinking of the alternative uses of time as central to the emergence of life styles compatible with ecodevelopment.

<sup>15</sup>Reliance on impending crisis to bring about constructive change may seem unsatisfying, but no other midwife is in sight. Dr. Raúl Prebisch, in "Hacia una teoría de la transformación", (*Revista de la CEPAL*, No. 10, April 1980) seems to have reached a similar conclusion.

<sup>13</sup>Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth* (A Twentieth Century Fund Study, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1976).

From this viewpoint, the idea of 'processes' that become 'problems' when some social force capable of responding perceives them as such is useful. The planner legitimately has his own perceptions of processes and problems, and should try to be in the lead in perceiving problems or incipient societal mutations, before they force themselves on the attention of the State or the public. This may sound like a simple platitude, but the paucity of foresight by planners (in the market-oriented and centrally-planned industrial countries as well as the Third World) during the 1950s and 1960s concerning the major problems that have emerged during the 1970s is striking. The planner might best take care not to exaggerate the infallibility or the political viability of his perceptions and responses, but this does not mean that he need remain a simple projector of existing trends, augmented and reformed, or a value-free agent of power.

One problem for planning that cannot really be 'solved' is the tension between the standardization, centralization and regulation inseparable from State efforts to 'solve problems',

on the one hand; and the claims of experimentation, diversity, adaptation to local conditions, and freedom of personal choice, on the other. The scale of problems and the counter-intuitive character of some of the actions needed, it was argued above, imply that the former cannot realistically be rejected as wholly negative. At the same time, the bias of the State toward rigid, expensive, bureaucrat-fostering solutions will unavoidably generate apathy or resistance. This tension, which can be formulated as a tension between technocratic and participationist utopias, cannot be overcome by choosing one side or the other. It is a permanent and legitimate component of human efforts to achieve social ends.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup>Two previous essays have developed the final propositions outlined here. See "Preconditions and propositions for 'another development'", *CEPAL Review*, No. 4, Second half of 1977; and "Reinvesting development: Committee utopias and real seeds of change", *CEPAL Review*, No. 7, April 1979. The idea of technocratic and other utopias underlying planning derives from José Medina Echavarria, *Discurso sobre política y planeación* (Siglo XXI, editores, Mexico, 1972).