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CONTENTS

Latin America: crisis and development options <i>Enrique V. Iglesias</i> , Executive Secretary, ECLAC	7
Institutional elements of a new diplomacy for development (Notes for a book of memoirs) <i>Diego Cordovez</i>	29
Orthodox adjustment programmes in Latin America: a critical look at the policies of the International Monetary Fund <i>Richard Lynn Ground</i>	45
The adjustment process in the eighties. The need for a global approach <i>Carlos Massad and Roberto Zahler</i>	83
Global monetarism and destruction of industry <i>Victor E. Tokman</i>	107
The structural crisis in Argentine industry <i>Adolfo Dorfman</i>	123
Population, resources, environment, development interrelationships in the United Nations: in search of a focus <i>Branislav Gosovic</i>	135
Participation: the view from above <i>Marshall Wolfe</i>	155
Recent ECLAC publications	181

Participation: the view from above

*Marshall Wolfe**

Past experience shows that efforts to increase the participation of the excluded groups are usually based on mistaken, and often mythical ideas regarding development, democracy, the State and the people themselves. When put into practice, these ideas have been the cause of frustrations, unforeseen consequences and paradoxes, which have helped to erode them, creating a propitious climate for a more realistic evaluation of the phenomena to which they relate. In this connection, the author's central thesis is that political processes in which participation is encouraged will always be attended by a permanent tension between their main protagonists, in particular the State, progressivist movements and the people.

In pursuit of this central thesis, the author examines some of its key aspects. Beginning with an analysis of the concepts of development and participation, he then goes on to discuss the controversial issues of accumulation and consumption, planning and the market, conflict and consensus between social classes, local and national forms of participation and solidarity, the role of bureaucrats and technocrats and the tension between them and participation, and the national character of development processes.

Lastly, he outlines a set of recommendations in terms of the attitudes or predispositions to be desired in agents of the State, ideologists and intermediaries between the State and the popular movements, in order to further the participation of the excluded groups.

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I

Introduction

The first version of the ideas set forth below responded to a request from the United Nations Department of Technical Co-operation for Development to prepare a "Conceptual Framework for Promoting Popular Participation in Development" for an International Seminar on Popular Participation attended by government nominees and focussed on the comparison of "policies, experiences and institutions".¹ The terms of the assignment justified some uneasiness, particularly in their specification that the paper should discuss "requirements (institutions, policies and socio-economic considerations) for popularizing people's participation at all levels and on a sectoral basis". A response deserving the name of "conceptual framework" would amount to a treatise on theories of the State, democracy, and development. The organizers of the Seminar clearly wanted something more "practical", but not much more modest.

However, the assignment seemed a worthwhile challenge to step back and look at participation from the perspective of the State, its agents, and its advisers. In what ways do ideological preconceptions and development policy choices condition the capacity of different kinds of régimes now on the world stage to envisage a place for "participation"? What are the real constraints on their ability to act on prescriptions or intentions to "promote" and "popularize" participation?

The 1979 *Inquiry into Participation - a Research Approach*,² the conceptual background document of UNRISD's Participation Programme, touched on these questions and stated a position on "inner limits": "The need to define an overall national policy in the interests of the larger society, to reconcile divergent interests and to ensure a certain degree of co-ordination and integration of development policies calls for a central authority and puts limits to the degree of popular participation. As technological modernization of the society increases and as ever more complex

¹The Seminar was held in Ljubljana, Yugoslavia, in May 1982. The DTCD is to publish a report on the proceedings.

²See Andrew Pearse and Matthias Stiefel, *Inquiry into Participation - a Research Approach*, UNRISD/79/C. 14, Geneva, May 1979.

problems affecting ever larger socio-economic units require solutions these limits to participation are likely to become more pressing. Ultimately, the study of popular participation as national policy must lead to the critical study of the State, its origin, nature, function and justification".³ The sub-debate on "The Urgency Factor and Democracy"⁴ advanced the proposition that only a certain type of revolutionary mobilizing State can combine planned, decisive action to overcome mass poverty with a measure of popular participation or control, a proposition rejected or received with strong reservations by most of the debaters.

The subsequent course of investigations and discussions within UNRISD's Participation Programme suggest that its main strength and unique contribution lie in adhering to its original definition of 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",⁵ and keeping its distance from claims by the State to its right and capacity to "promote" participation tailored to the solution of problems it defines as urgent and national. In particular, studies of institutionalized participation carried out with the approval of mobilizing régimes risk identifying the perspective of power with that of the "hitherto excluded".

Nevertheless, the questions posed above cannot be disregarded, and one can even hope that there is something to be gained by stimulating agents of the State to think about them. I thus tried to delimit and focus the questions by first considering the two key terms of the assignment—"development" and "participation"—and the impact of recent experience on their interpretation. This required a hasty resurvey of some of the ground covered in the UNRISD/ECLAC exploration of "a unified approach to development analysis and planning".⁶ I then discussed how a

series of choices between theories of economic growth and of the legitimate functions of the State, along with ethical and cultural values, interacting with real processes of socio-economic change, condition a régime's answers to the questions: Who should participate, how, why and what?

My bias in discussing the choices and processes has been toward the supposition that tensions between the efforts of the State to "promote" popular participation, on the one hand, and the efforts of the groups "hitherto excluded... to increase control over resources and regulatory institutions", on the other, are permanent although continually changing. They are not to be overcome by the perfecting of planning systems to the point of their being able to demonstrate to State and people the "One Right Way" to develop, nor by the revolutionary triumph of régimes identified with the "hitherto excluded", nor by the self-liberation of democratic local groups from the tutelage of the State. (Obviously, this proposition supposes some degree of authenticity in the State's intention to promote participation and some degree of self-identification with the "nation" on the part of the groups "hitherto excluded". One can easily call to mind cynically oppressive and exploitative régimes in which the tensions do not exist because the authorities have no interest in participation even as a means of manipulation for their own purposes, and the "hitherto excluded" have no hope of obtaining any benefits from the régime.)

Furthermore, the tensions are tripartite, even if one assumes for the moment that the "hitherto included" have lost their monopoly of power. They involve the political parties and other movements organized at the national level that aspire to represent the people and dominate or influence the State. Each of these actors needs the other two but its limitations, as demonstrated by experience, justify distrust on the part of the others. History has been equally unkind to theories of the State as the embodiment of ideal rationality and guardian of the general welfare;

³*Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

⁴See *Dialogue about Participation 1*, UNRISD/81/C.17, Geneva, June 1981.

⁵See A. Pearse and M. Stiefel, *op. cit.*, p. 8.

⁶See *The Quest for a Unified Approach to Development*, UNRISD, 80.3, Geneva, 1980; Marshall Wolfe, "Elusive De-

velopment: the quest for a unified approach to development analysis and planning", *CEPAL Review*, No. 17, August 1982. (Originally issued, under the title *Elusive Development*, by UNRISD, Geneva, 1981.)

of vanguard parties equipped by theory to guide a destined class to power; and of the people as sources of democratic controls over State and parties.

The idea of permanent tension does not preclude the possibility of mutual accommodations, a conflictive learning process leading toward "styles of development" functioning better than heretofore for the well-being and freedom of the majorities now exploited or excluded. One might, at the risk of triviality, recommend to all the actors that they strive to reconcile conviction of the urgency of finding solutions to current problems with mutual tolerance of shortcomings, distrust of infallible prescriptions, and flexibility in coping with the unexpected. The following pages include an exercise along these lines directed to agents of the State.

The present mutations in the world order, the perverse consequences of the myths of development as well as the myths of revolution, are generating new paradoxes in the attempts of the State, political movements and people to make sense of one another, to manipulate one another, or to dispense with one another. To the hitherto excluded, participation for the purpose of self-defence *against* development sometimes comes to seem more relevant than participation *in* development.

Fernando H. Cardoso has vividly presented one of these paradoxes. In the first place, he states, popular distrust of national institutions and withdrawal to localized community self-help

can harmonize with the efforts of neoliberal régimes to divest the State of social responsibilities and leave disadvantaged families and communities to shift for themselves as best they can. In the second place, through a "perverse dialectic", "horror of politics, attachment to action exclusively at the level of the bases and of concrete demands, animated by the social institutions and movements most identified with the people... may motivate the population to claim its rights "autonomously" and impel it to demand solutions which, in modern societies, can be offered by the government agencies alone. In that case, the popular leader ends by dealing—on his own, that is, without the backing of broad political solidarity—with the State functionary, technocrat or not, who is the only figure capable of offering concrete solutions. Unintentionally and unwittingly, the purest and most autonomous movement makes a pact with the devil; it runs the risk of becoming the interlocutor and sanctioner of precisely what it wants to combat—the bureaucratic and alienating State".⁷

Other paradoxes, to be discussed below, emerge from the austere egalitarian ideologies of some States and political movements, their hostility to the transnational consumer society, and their assertion of a right to protect the people (and the national process of capital accumulation) from noxious influences. Still other paradoxes appear in the efforts of certain régimes to mobilize and manipulate direct popular support as a counterweight to political and economic élites whose power they wish to curtail.⁸

II

What is development?

During the 1950s and 1960s an international consensus on "development" took shape, many features of which were endorsed by régimes identifying themselves as socialist or capitalist, or refusing to accept either label. Development meant rising income levels accompanying structural shifts in national economies from the predominantly rural-agricultural to the urban-

industrial, from self-employment to wage-

⁷Fernando H. Cardoso, *Las políticas sociales en la década del 80: ¿Nuevas opciones?* (E/CEPAL/ILPES/SEM. 1/R.4), April 1982, pp. 23 and 24. (Unofficial translation.)

⁸The present paper does not give due attention to this last question, which is discussed in another paper to be circulated by the UNRISD Participation Programme: Bruno Jobert, *Clientélisme, patronage et participation populaire*.

earning employment, from local markets to national markets. It required a continual incorporation of productivity-raising technological innovations, along with increasing ability to exploit natural resources and transform the environment.

It was assumed by this consensus that certain industrialized countries identified as "developed" constituted models for what the rest of the world could and should accomplish, and that these countries would be able to sustain indefinitely their interacting processes of increase, diversification and innovation in production and consumption. It was further assumed, with many differences of timing and emphasis, that initial phases of income concentration in the hands of entrepreneurs or the State, restraint in consumption, and social services concentrated on the upgrading of "human resources" would lead to phases of increasingly equitable distribution, rising and diversifying consumption for all, and building-up of collective services and subsidies designed to equalize opportunities and determine a floor for levels of living—in other words, to a "Welfare State". It was asserted that national States could and should guide and stimulate development through "planning", and that the "developed" countries could and should help the others through financial flows and transfers of technology.

The consensus envisaged the initial participation of the broad masses mainly as producers, through their acquisition of skills and internalization of the work-ethic of industrial societies, and viewed their premature participation as consumers or through organized struggles for a larger share of the national income as a danger. It foresaw, however, that the very process of development would increasingly involve these masses not only as producers and consumers but also as citizens capable of reconciling their narrower interests and controlling the developmental activities of the State through democratic political procedures. Development would enhance autonomy at the national level and thus the capacity of people to influence its pace and the distribution of its fruits.

This consensus came under question during the 1960s for several well-known reasons. First, while a good many "developing" countries

achieved creditable rates of increase in national income, the expected benefits seemed no nearer; distribution remained highly unequal. Secondly, the concomitants of industrialization and agricultural modernization were proving very disruptive, heralding the prospect that major segments of the population would lose their hold on traditional ways of livelihood and sources of security without finding a place in the new order. Thirdly, international economic and political relationships made developmental achievements precarious. National governments were no more capable than before of foreseeing and controlling the key factors determining the feasibility of policies, in the face of unstable export commodity markets, ever-weightier debt burdens, recurrent balance-of-payments crises, penetration by transnational enterprises, and distribution of public resources on the basis of the strength of claimants (particularly the military) rather than of development priorities. "Planning", in the shape of preparation of fixed-term "development plans" at least, fell into discredit. Fourthly, the real course of economic growth and modernization, combining with unprecedentedly high rates of population increase, had a devastating impact on the endowment of natural resources and on the physical environment, particularly in the enormous urban agglomerations that were taking shape. Fifthly, the industrialized countries were beginning to lose their plausibility as models, partly because of exposure of their exploitative relations with the rest of the world, and partly because of dissemination of internal disillusionment with the consequences of their technological and cultural transformations, even before their quarter-of-a-century of sustained economic growth and rising levels of consumption came to a halt in chronic stagflation.

One result was an extraordinary proliferation of research efforts, prescriptions and "Plans of Action" seeking to redefine development or find the missing ingredient whose lack prevented observable processes from fulfilling their original promise. Practitioners of the social sciences other than economics challenged the dominance of the latter discipline and embarked on inconclusive interdisciplinary quests for a solution.

By the early 1970s two opposed "families" of conceptions of development and the way to

achieve it could be identified. The first was far from internal consistency in its efforts to derive guidelines for action from the socially-oriented criticisms of economic development. It included utopian blueprints for egalitarian new civilizations as well as relatively cautious proposals seeking within real political and economic constraints to assign a higher priority to the satisfaction of basic human needs, the protection of the environment, the safeguarding of human rights, and the reconciliation of economic transformation with differing cultural values. In any case, the area of consensus included the propositions that development could and should be subordinated to human values; that societies can evolve rational and coherent ways of accomplishing this; and that popular participation must be a central factor, as end and means, in the achievement of "another development".⁹

The other family of conceptions reaffirmed the economic Kingdom of Necessity: State intervention through planning, regulation and the building-up of a large public sector hindered rather than helped economic development. State efforts to redistribute income, protect the population from all contingencies, and provide elaborate services were self-defeating. The market and the law of comparative advantages should determine the allocation of resources. The State should limit itself to safeguarding the rules of the game, thereby making it possible for the market to function efficiently.

We are now in the early 1980s. While all the previous conceptions and prescriptions regarding development remain current, their promotion having become institutionalized, the international setting for the debate has changed to a marked extent. The salient feature is that practically all countries, whatever their previous level or style or strategy of development, are in complex difficulties. The possibility of their emerging from these difficulties through any coherent

policy decided upon and applied by the State seems less plausible than at any time since the 1940s. In the "developing" countries, the minorities able to benefit or at least hope to benefit from economic growth have shrunk, and even the wealthiest are insecure; their loss of faith in national prospects accelerates the flow of funds to presumably safer havens for investment. The perplexities of the central industrialized countries are becoming chronic and in many respects resemble weaknesses for which their development ideologists previously reproached the "poor" countries. Their will and ability to promote the development of the rest of the world continue to erode, and their exportation of the costs of their crises continually disrupts development prospects elsewhere.

The few national societies whose dominant forces have professed to aim at "another development" have encountered more frustrations than successes. The same can be said of the societies whose dominant forces abjured the Welfare State and hoped to invigorate their economies by freeing market forces. Régimes trying to follow both paths, as well as those clinging to more conventional development policies, are now concerned rather with short-term "crisis management" expedients than with long-term development strategies. While the shortcomings of "development" from the standpoint of human welfare and equity are even more pronounced than in the early 1970s and real events have justified the warnings then uttered, the proposals for coherent development alternatives risk falling out of currency, into a rut of ritual repetition at international gatherings, through the very severity and complexity of today's challenges.

For present purposes, three questions arise: If international consensus on the meaning and requisites of development has disintegrated, how are people to "participate" in it? Can national societies—the "people"—reinvent development in terms corresponding to their own needs and capabilities? Have the kinds of participation that have already emerged, shaped by the development style now in crisis, generated a momentum of expectations and group tactics that will be compatible with participation in radically different styles of development?

In the early 1970s, the UNRISD/ECLAC project

⁹The most readily accessible of the many sources of information on the quest for development so conceived are the periodicals *Development Dialogue*, published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Uppsala, Sweden; and *IFDA Dossier*, published by the International Foundation for Development Alternatives, Nyon, Switzerland. See also the two United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) publications named in footnote 3.

on a "unified approach to development analysis and planning" proposed two complementary ways of looking at development: "(i) as a perceived advance toward specified ends based on societal values; (ii) as the system of interrelated societal changes that underlies and conditions the feasibility of the advance". From this point of view, "all national societies will be developing, or trying to, during the foreseeable future, and at the same time will be trying to cope with the contradictions and disbenefits that arise from their development processes". "No detailed universal set of specifications or particularized 'definition' can be satisfactory; styles of development necessarily differ. But some general standard is nevertheless needed against which to assess styles of development. In the simplest terms, a style of development should be both

acceptable in the importance it gives to human well-being and equity and *viable* in terms of its compatibility with the resources of various kinds that can be mobilized by the national society as needed if it is to function and grow over the long term without breakdown". A minimum criterion for assessment of a style of development, then, "can be summed up as the extent to which the style of development enables a society to function over the long term for the well-being of all its members".¹⁰

The following pages will refer back to this criterion for the "development" to which "popular participation" is to be related, in full awareness that application of such a criterion to national policy is today even more problematic than it seemed ten years ago.

III

What is popular participation?

It is obvious that the unanimous endorsement of the "participation of all sectors of the society" in a United Nations resolution requires a certain measure of hypocrisy and also a tacit agreement not to seek a precise definition of the term. When the organizers of the UNRISD Programme subjected their own propositions to a truly participatory approach, the comments received demonstrated, first, that no proposition on participation can obtain general consensus; secondly, that research on participation can incur the same problem of interminable debate over goals and methods as do many practical participatory initiatives.¹¹ One's conception of participation can be broad or narrow, active or passive. It can be considered equivalent to political democracy;

the people decide, through constitutionally codified procedures of election or referendum, what development objectives and policies they want, and what political representatives shall try to convert the objectives and policies into reality. It can be considered equivalent to involvement in the processes of societal change and growth that the term "development" suggests. In this sense, everyone participates, voluntarily or not, advantageously or disadvantageously, exploiting or exploited, with the exceptional minorities so isolated and self-sufficient that the process does not touch them —by now a minute proportion of the world's population.

The "unified approach" project singled out "participation" as one of the central areas of choice for a style of development meeting the minimum criterion of acceptability and viability. In this, it coincided with most other proposals for

¹¹See Selina Cohen (ed.), *Debaters' Comments on "Inquiry into participation: A research approach"*, by Andrew Pearse and Matthias Stiefel, UNRISD, 80.5, Participation Occasional Paper, Geneva, October 1980. See also the comments on the Programme by Devaki Jain in *UNRISD: An Evaluation Report*, SAREC/DANIDA, Stockholm, August 1982.

¹⁰See *Report on a unified approach to development analysis and planning. Preliminary report of the Secretary-General* (E/CN.5/477), October 1972.

"another development" and pointed toward the definition later adopted by the UNRISD Participation Programme, but its treatment of participation had a somewhat different emphasis. Since this treatment touches on the issues of participation from the perspective of the State, it may be worth while to quote it at some length:

"Participation is one of the most complex as well as basic areas of choice. It raises the questions—very hard for political leaders and planners to face frankly—of who is doing the choosing, how choices are enforced, and whether the style of development treats participation mainly as a means or mainly as an end, an essential component of the style. When participation is willed from above it becomes mobilization, a means of getting things done. When it arises from below it usually focusses on distribution, becoming also a means, from the standpoint of the groups able to participate, of obtaining a larger immediate share of the fruits of development.

"... 'Participation', like 'planning', is sometimes treated as a mystical entity that will resolve all problems once rightly conceived and applied. It is significant that evaluations of existing political processes of participation are generally negative. They are associated with the phenomenon of the 'soft State', corruption, allocation of resources according to the strength of political pressures, inability to maintain a consistent strategic orientation, and continual promises that the system cannot honour.

"From the standpoint of many development analysts and planners, 'politics' is bad, 'participation' good. Participation is then viewed as a substitute for existing political processes, as consisting in an orderly procedure through which the competing social forces and interest groups can be educated to present more rational and manageable demands and persuaded to internalize the demands the development process will make on them.

"The following propositions are relevant:

- (i) Authentic participation usually requires a redistribution of power;
- (ii) Participation cannot be inserted as a 'missing ingredient' into most current real styles of development. The style itself must change, both as a result of new forms of participation and as a condition for such participation;

- (iii) The functioning of mechanisms for participation (political movements, trade unions, co-operatives, community councils, youth clubs, etc.) depends on the settings in which they appear (or into which they are inserted)...

- (iv) The higher the proportion of the population in situations of poverty and marginality, the more traumatic will be the changes in the style of development requisite for their authentic participation, and the more difficult will it be for external agents—whether or not representing the State—to undertake relevant catalytic roles;

- (v) The more important forms of organized participation (other than voting and political party affiliation) open to disadvantaged social groups in the past have derived from their relationship to the means of production and their clash of interests with social classes controlling the means of production: wage-earners against employers, peasants against landlords.

"Conflictive participation of this kind has obviously not lost its importance, but in many countries today the most disadvantaged social groups—and the most rapidly growing—are 'marginal', having only tenuous relations to production, and do not confront any readily identifiable target for demands other than the State itself. They identify themselves as would-be consumers (of educational and health services as well as food and shelter) more than as producers and earners of income from defined occupations. Trade unions are irrelevant to their needs, and approaches such as workers' management even more so. Their real capacities as consumers are also usually too low to allow scope for organizational forms such as co-operatives that in other settings have functioned as instruments for defence of consumer interests".¹²

The formulation in the last paragraph is vulnerable to criticism, and at best simplifies very complex and poorly-understood present trends. In conjunction with the proposition that authentic participation is incompatible with current

¹²*The Quest for a Unified Approach to Development, op. cit., pp. 17 to 19.*

styles of development, however, it points to real perplexities for the State, for political movements aspiring to lead oppressed classes to the conquest of power, and also for the "organized

efforts... of the hitherto excluded" to act upon "resources and institutions", that can exist in their present form only on condition of these groups' continued exclusion.

IV

Accumulation versus consumption

The central proposition of the original consensus on development, that capital must be accumulated and invested so as to raise future production capacity and that this requires restraint in current consumption, remains compelling, although it has undergone so many reinterpretations and amendments that its operational implications are far from clear. It has, for example, been demonstrated that in countries in which most of the population lives in extreme poverty raising of the level of consumption of basic goods and services is a requisite for raising of production; that public expenditure on education and health is investment in "human capital"; and that in economies relying for industrialization on private entrepreneurs and investors the growth of an internal market for manufactured consumer goods is an essential feature of "development".

These arguments suppose, however, that increases in consumption will flow (or be channelled by the State) in directions conducive to higher productivity and in amounts compatible with accelerated capital accumulation, and that non-essential "luxury" consumption will be concentrated as a stimulus to minorities that will also invest part of their incomes.

Ideally, organized participation by the majority of the population might be compatible with these arguments, to the extent to which the majority believes that present sacrifices are equitably distributed, that the kinds of "basic" consumption and collective services that become available correspond to its most urgent wants, and that present restraint will be rewarded by future gains.

Obviously, the majority has had no good reason to believe these things, and the cultural

and political changes involved in the real processes of "development" in widely differing national societies have supported their scepticism. Almost everywhere, "development", assessed by the conventional indicator of rising per capita product, has been accompanied by widening gaps between the consumption patterns of different strata. Access to the fruits of development, in the form of services provided by the State as well as income, has been determined largely by the initial distribution of power. Neither the private sector nor the State has shown consistent ability and will to make developmental uses of the resources withheld from mass consumption.

Such patterns of distribution should be no surprise, in view of diagnoses since Marx of the functioning of capitalism, and efforts to quantify, compare and detect changes through manipulation of fragmentary statistics have become a flourishing international industry. However, the variants of capitalist development in the poorer peripheral countries have manifested additional deviations from the ideal of the original consensus on development that derive from their economic and cultural dependence on the richer central countries. The beneficiaries of such development have adopted as their right the consumption standards of the rich countries and have also diverted much of their "accumulation" to those countries for safekeeping. Even in the countries committed to non-capitalist styles of development, bureaucratic and military élites have commonly taken to styles of consumption out of keeping with the austerity expected of the rest of the population. With the nearly universal trends of dependent modernization, and in par-

ticular the penetration of modern mass communication media controlled by transnational enterprises, similar consumption aspirations have spread to much wider middle strata, and, according to recent evidence, to a surprising extent to the poor, diverting their meagre resources from food, shelter and other "basic needs".¹³ As controversies over the transnational promotion of manufactured infant food formulas and proprietary drugs have shown, no group is too poor to be a valued market for some "modern" products.

Under these circumstances, it is natural that participatory struggles have focussed on distribution and, to the extent that the majority has been able to join in them, have proved incompatible with the accumulation of capital needed for economic growth—particularly within settings in which recipients of the lion's share of resources devote a high proportion to ends that are irrelevant or inhibiting to such growth. At the level of individuals, consumer credit for purchases of durable goods have prevailed over savings, and at the national level, particularly during the 1970s, borrowing from banks in the central countries has substituted for domestic accumulation.

Raúl Prebisch has singled out as the central factor in the "crisis of peripheral capitalism" the incompatibility between its combined requirements of capital accumulation and luxury consumption, on the one hand, and democratization focussed on distribution and channelled through trade unions and populist political movements, on the other. Periodically, the progress of such democratization endangers the surplus that is divided between investment and the "privileged consumption" of the wealthy. The result is hyperinflation, economic stagnation, and eventually the entry of military force to reverse democratization, depress the incomes of the majority, and restore the surplus.¹⁴

¹³See Carlos Filgueira "Consumption in the new Latin American models", *CEPAL Review*, No. 15, December 1981. Filgueira raises the question whether, in view of the consumption incitements now dominating the Latin American lower-income strata through the mass media, increments in their income would bring about improvements in their diet and in the satisfaction of other "basic needs".

¹⁴Raúl Prebisch, "A critique of peripheral capitalism", "Socio-economic structure and crisis of peripheral capital-

The real identification of organized popular participation with the struggle for redistribution, the precarious ability of the "hitherto excluded" to engage in this without encountering repression or bringing the style of development to an impasse, and the superimposition of the modern consumer society on the distributive struggle lead the argument back to several questions concerning the rights and capacity of the State.

Under what circumstances can the State control the process of accumulation and above all the developmental investment of the resources accumulated sufficiently to justify it in convincing or compelling popular organizations to restrain their struggle for a larger share? Can the State be expected to move in this direction in the absence of a prior transformation in societal values as well as in the distribution of political and economic power? Is there justification for recommending to the State a frontal attack on the internationally-transmitted consumer society, by penalizing conspicuous consumption and by controlling the mass media, in order to reduce the incompatibility between popular demands and accumulation requirements?

An UNRISD report has answered the last question in uncompromising terms: "The dethroning of imported and imitative 'consumer societies' for affluent minorities in the developing countries will also be a key component in any development strategy deserving the allegiance of the masses and capable of securing sufficient domestic capital accumulation. There is no way of achieving development goals within the constraints of present-day technological knowledge, natural resource availabilities and organizational capacities while at the same time meeting sophisticated consumer demands of the rich countries and higher income groups in the poor countries and while also encouraging their spread to wider strata". The report then quotes with approval an argument by a member of the United Nations Committee for Development

ism" and "Towards a theory of change", in *CEPAL Review*, Nos. 1 (1976), 6 (1978) and 10 (1980). Prebisch proposes "socialization of the surplus" and State planning of its developmental uses as the only acceptable solution for the periodic crises and resulting repression, but does not indicate how existing States can go about this or how organized popular participation can reconcile itself to the solution.

Planning to the effect that the starting-point toward self-sustaining national development may be "to remove all signs of affluence", thus freeing the national society, including the poor, from an influence that poses antidevelopmental goals and attitudes.¹⁵

This answer, however justifiable in itself, raises the old question of who is to bell the cat, since the forces determined to enjoy the consumer society usually dominate the State and the masses of the population are more inclined to hanker after it than reject it (except in certain cases of religiously or culturally motivated reaction against the whole pattern of dependent modernization). The principled enemies of the consumer society may be limited to circles of intellectuals, possibly having a foothold in the planning organs of the State but with little or no real power, and usually with certain contradictions between the objective and their own "modern" style of living. If the people of the rich countries must restrain their own superfluous consumption as a prerequisite to the curbing of consumerism elsewhere, the political path to the objective becomes even harder to trace.

It can, of course, be argued that only a revolutionary State representing the "hitherto excluded" and able to shield them from these influences can follow such a path. Revolutions,

however, do not spring from such arguments, and the varied experiences of "really existing socialism" suggest scepticism as to the ability of revolutionary States to devise satisfactory alternatives to the lures of consumerism.

In general terms, it can be affirmed that consumerism, as it has emerged from the transnational capitalist style of development, hinders the achievement of organized popular participation with realistic priorities, but that it is dangerous or self-defeating for revolutionaries, reformers, or planners to assume that they know the real needs of the masses better than the masses themselves. Austerity is no more an end in itself than diversified consumption, and modernization introduces many goods that, on balance, raise the quality of life and can be widely distributed without undue distortion of the distribution of national and family expenditure. It must be kept in mind that among the central items of consumer demand are two of the most powerful instruments for informed participation as well as for the penetration of consumerism—the transistor radio and television. Is the family that skimps on food to have access to these means of broadening its horizon really to be blamed? Should the State try to shield it from the temptation?

V

The guidance of investment and economic growth: comprehensive planning, participatory planning, the market

The policy implications deduced by different theorists from the original consensus on development are much too diverse to be discussed here, but most of them had in common the supposition that the State must accelerate

and guide economic growth through the use of rational techniques for controlling the future, in other words, by planning. A nation's political leaders carried the responsibility of deciding on development objectives, and its planners the responsibility of showing the leaders how these objectives were to be reached. This meant assuming that the political leadership would choose objectives compatible with real national capabilities and with the international consensus on de-

¹⁵*Social Development and the International Development Strategy*, UNRISD, 79.2, Geneva, 1979, p. 13.

velopment, so that the contribution of the planners was essential at this stage also. The application of planning might be most effective in socialist or State capitalist settings in which the State directly controlled the means of production and the sources of accumulation, but the proponents argued that planning could also be made comprehensive and effective in systems relying on private capital and entrepreneurship, through the State's regulative powers, through fiscal incentives and disincentives, through planned provision of infrastructure, and, above all, through rational demonstration to the private sector of the advantages of conforming to the plan.

Under such a conception, "participation" should ideally consist of the education of the relevant actors (investors, entrepreneurs, public functionaries, farmers, workers, etc.) on the roles they were to play in the plan and the reasons why they should conform to these roles. The interests in development of all the actors were assumed to be basically harmonious. Since there could be only one optimal path to development, to be decided on by the political leadership on advice from the planners, conflictive participation, organized self-defence against the requirements of planned development, could only be harmful to the general welfare.

Such a conception of planned development, somewhat caricatured here, could not survive the lessons of experience. The planners were never able to count on sufficient information concerning the economies and societies for which they were trying to plan; their passion for quantification forced them to invent the data with which they worked and plan for imaginary countries. Their rationalism could not cope with real political processes and the functioning of bureaucratic institutions. They could not convince the potential investors and entrepreneurs to follow their directives. Before long, the faith of governments and the public in comprehensive fixed-term plans dwindled, although, even today, planning agencies continue to produce such plans.

Planning, or more broadly the formulation of development policy, thus moved perforce toward the recognition of uncertainty, conflict, and recalcitrant institutional and individual behaviour, toward more modest hopes to rationalize dependent economic growth and societal

modernization. "Participatory planning" became an attractive slogan. Some governments set up elaborate consultative mechanisms to bring about interaction between planners, representative bodies, and organized interest groups, but these generally functioned erratically.

The formulation of policy did, in a sense, become more participatory but not more unified as the groups able to make themselves heard grew more diverse and urbanization brought a larger part of the population into complex contacts with the State. The machinery of the State also became much more complex; regulating, investing, and service-providing agencies established links with different clientèles and represented their interests, bound up with the growth of the agency itself, before the central political leadership. The campaigns of international agencies for action on a series of "major problems" further complicated the machinery and extended the range of groups participating. The supposition remained that the State could promote development and had a duty to put forward some coherent image of the style of development the country should aim at, but the constraints imposed by the distribution of power and by the momentum of what had been done already became more apparent; except in revolutionary crises the State could make only marginal changes in the distribution of resources. If the system grew too costly, in terms of the size and diversity of groups able to enforce their demands on it, the outcome, as indicated above, was likely to be a reassertion of the power of minorities and a reinforced exclusion of the majority.

During the long period of sustained economic growth from the 1950s to the early 1970s, it could plausibly be argued that growth itself would, however slowly and erratically, eventually lead to styles of development more compatible with the internationally accepted development objectives. The rich would simply have to tolerate somewhat slower growth in their disposable income so as to provide resources that the State could use to eliminate critical poverty and improve the quality of life. Similar reasoning would apply to relations between rich countries and poor countries. The exploited and excluded groups would then see a hope of improving their lot by means short of violent overthrow of the

system and dispossession of the rich, and would participate realistically, in productive and self-help activities as well as in consumption. The State, by experience, by training of functionaries, and by the capture of a larger share of the rising national income, would continually enhance its capacity to invest, provide infrastructure, and implement income redistribution.¹⁶

The recent years of faltering economies and increasing political violence have shaken this optimistic expectation and, as was stated above, forced many régimes back into short-term "crisis management" expedients with no clear developmental perspective. Two proposed ways out of the trap have been described: first, the prescriptions for radically different egalitarian and participatory styles of development; secondly, the neoliberal reversion to the market as arbiter of resource allocation. The implications of the former prescriptions, with their apparently contradictory requirements for decentralized initiative and rapid, planned transformation governed by universalistic norms, are discussed in various contexts throughout the present paper. At this point, something must be said about the implications for participation of the second alternative.

These implications are relatively simple. Legitimate participation is that of the rational individual who chooses his means of livelihood according to his perception of comparative advantages, invests his capital or sells his labour power, and by his decisions on the spending of his income determines the structure of production. Labour unions and other organizations for defence of the interests of the disadvantaged must not be permitted to accumulate power or they will overprice labour, depress investment incentives, and by restricting demand for labour

bring about a lower level of employment than if wages were to remain at their market value. The State should as far as possible extricate itself from all but the most basic social services, from redistributive measures, and from subsidies to or regulation of economic activities, although it may retain an obligation to relieve extreme poverty. It follows that organized participation exerting pressure on the State to undertake such activities is undesirable. Private initiative is to be relied on to replace services previously provided by the State, to the extent that these are worth while. This implies that the disadvantaged strata may be encouraged to provide their own services through organized self-help—as long as this does not lead to their accumulation of power to press the State to finance the services.

It is evident that after an extended period during which the State has amplified its responsibilities, while a widening range of interest-groups have competed vigorously to obtain funds or services from the State and have come to depend on a framework of State regulation, the application of a non-interventionist policy of this kind will require an authoritarian régime able to resist pressures, dismantle incompatible forms of participation, and maintain the ideologists' conception of the rules of the game. It can also be expected that the interplay of interest-group pressures and State economic interventions will make its reappearance, if only to rescue the more powerful interests from the consequences of miscalculation in taking advantage of economic freedom, but that participation will take place within narrower circles and shielded from open political competition. The ideal of reliance on the market, like the ideal of comprehensive planning, will then succumb to the real complexities of economic and social change.

Once it has succumbed, within the present context of world economic crisis, the perspectives for "organized efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions" are very different from the outlook at the beginning of the experiment. Important groups that previously had some degree of control over their conditions of livelihood—industrial workers, public employees, landholding peasants—have become unemployed or unable to defend their previous income levels, while other groups that were only beginning to exert "organized efforts"

¹⁶This line of argument has been particularly prominent in documents of the Economic Commission for Latin America since the 1960s. It has been demonstrated that most Latin American countries have already achieved levels of per capita income and State administrative capacity enabling them to eliminate extreme poverty and universalize basic social services by virtue of a moderate redistribution—if the dominant forces could be convinced of the necessity. See, for example, Enrique V. Iglesias, "Development and equity. The challenge of the 1980s", in *CEPAL Review*, No. 15, December 1981. The recent arguments of Raúl Prebisch, referred to above, grapple with the reasons why this has not happened, but end with a similar reliance on the State.

have sunk into a more complete economic and political marginality. The State, under the thumb of its external creditors and representing some realignment of the forces dominant during the neoliberal authoritarian period, is in no position to rebuild social services and sources of employment, even if the dominant forces are anxious to

broaden sources of support and resume democratic political processes. It remains to be seen whether the recrudescing popular movements can come up with viable tactics when previous prescriptions for reform and revolution seem equally unpromising.

VI

Participation, social classes and conceptions concerning conflict or consensus in societal change

Except possibly for self-sufficient "primitive" communities, societies are divided into classes standing in different relationships to the means of production, and these divisions are complicated or cross-cut by other sources of self-identification: language, religion, family, tribe, locality, political affiliation, etc. For present purposes, policy-oriented perceptions of these divisions can be divided into four broad categories, with very different implications for the role of participation. (At the same time, within the real processes of national policy formulation, it is commoner to find the four categories of perceptions entering into incongruous combinations. In a good many cases, régimes representing mainly a bureaucratic élite have adopted ideologies that suppose a dominant role for classes that hardly exist in the national setting, while external dependence widens the gap between ideology and policy.)

First, it can be assumed that all classes and interest-groups share an overriding common interest in "development" within which conflicts of immediate interests are shortsighted or illusory. The political leadership should formulate development objectives that are in the interest of the whole population, translate them into policies that safeguard this interest, and convince the whole population that this is the case. Participation can then become predominantly harmonious and co-operative, designed to enable each group to make an optimal contribution to the general welfare. This point of view is un-

likely to tempt adherents to the UNRISD definition of participation, except possibly in the post-revolutionary variant to be summarized below, but it is permanently attractive to technobureaucrats within international organizations and national States.

Secondly, it can be assumed that the common interest in development does not preclude real conflicts in which each group or class has a right to organized defence of its perceived needs and will suffer exploitation or discrimination if it does not defend itself as best it can. Conflictive participation is thus a legitimate aspect of development, insuring against undue concentration of its fruits. The right to self-defensive participation extends not only to wage-earners and peasants but also to ethnic, cultural or tribal minorities that are otherwise likely to be disrupted or super-exploited in the course of economic growth and modernization, as well as to women striving to overcome their traditional disadvantages. Conflictive participation is compatible with the more conventional objectives of development as long as neither the one nor the other is pursued to excess. Maximization of capital accumulation and growth of national productive capacity, then, do not deserve absolute priority. The State can act and be accepted as final arbiter of most conflicts, keeping them within limits and defining the rules of the game. The State has a duty to help the weaker groups, by promoting their organization and by legal or administrative guarantees of rights. Reliance on

the leading role of the State is conditional; the State can function for the general welfare only if the different classes and groups are able to call it to account and defend themselves against bureaucratic arrogance, corruption and bungling.

Variants of this conception have viewed the middle classes or strata as the main progressive and stabilizing force within developing societies, and conclude that public policies should aim, through education, protection of small enterprises, agrarian reform, etc., to increase the size and participatory capacity of the middle strata with a stake in the existing order. These strata can then keep the demands of the upper and lower classes from becoming unmanageable or incompatible with democratic political competition. The real evolution of the middle strata, of course, with their vulnerability to consumerism, their propensity to monopolize State benefits, and their rancorous self-defensiveness against threats to their privileges from the "hitherto excluded", has hardly corresponded to the hopes of political scientists.

A third possibility is to assume that the conflicts of interests between classes within a capitalist order are irreconcilable, whatever the degree of economic growth possible within this order, and that in any case the insertion of "peripheral capitalism" in an imperialist world order rules out anything more than a caricature of development benefiting only a few exploiters. The path to authentic development then lies through a revolution bringing to power a class or alliance of classes capable of transforming social relationships and using the forces of production that modern technology makes available for the benefit of all. From this viewpoint, significant participation will consist in organized struggles leading up to the transformation. The class destined to carry out the transformation has no reason to limit its struggles to what a reformed capitalist style of development might offer. Organized self-help or self-defence within such a style can be either a means of training the participants for the more significant struggle, or a means of inducing conformism with exploitation, depending on the forces taking the lead. It is unrealistic to expect the State, as the instrument of the dominant forces, to support authen-

tic participation of the "hitherto excluded". Since the conflict of classes is both national and international in scope, the revolutionary movement must be organized at these levels. A similar conclusion can be reached without reference to Marxist theory, as it was in the "urgency" sub-debate, and this line of reasoning probably has more relevance to the real perspectives and justifications of revolutionary dictatorships in the Third World: mobilization under a coherent strategy to overcome hunger is so urgent that it cannot wait on the democratic reconciliation of conflicting interests.

After the revolutionary transformation, of course, most variants of this conception call for a reversal of the role of participation to something superficially similar to the first conception described above. Participation must be mainly positive, focussed on the raising of productivity and the defence of the new order. If the class destined to bring about authentic development is really in power, it cannot defend itself against itself. Conflictive participation remains legitimate only in relation to survivals of the old order, including the bureaucratic heritage, and against external enemies.

It hardly needs repeating that experience has been no kinder to this conception than to the others. The trajectory of "really existing socialism" has confirmed the dangers of excessive State power manipulated by a new class of functionaries and has strengthened the case for autonomous popular organizations and local self-government as indispensable safeguards; that is, for a retreat from faith in post-revolutionary consensus and infallible leadership to new forms of conflictive participation.

Fourthly, the role of participation can be judged from the neoliberal perspective described above. Conflicts deriving from class divisions may be real but are not legitimate. Participation should be "positive", directed towards higher productivity, but individual choices guided by the market can be relied on to generate it. Combinations of self-help are desirable, but combinations for self-defence are, at best, suspect. In relation to participation, the main duty of the State is to keep combinations from accumulating enough power to hinder the functioning of the market.

VII

Participation, the "community", and other forms
of group solidarity

One can envisage "plebiscitary" participation through a populist movement given shape by charismatic leadership, with the masses of the population exhorted to participate and instructed on how to do so through the mass communication media, and with localized formal organization rudimentary or absent; but when United Nations resolutions or national régimes endorse "popular participation in development" as a policy objective, "participation" implies direct, localized and organized interactions between people, however these may be articulated with organization at the national level.

At this point, conceptions of the role of participation and State strategies to "popularize" participation depend on theories and empirical observation concerning the ways in which different classes within national societies organize themselves and the implications of overall economic, cultural and political change for spontaneous or induced changes in such organizational forms.

The most widely diffused type of popular organization in pre-industrial societies is the peasant community with some degree of self-government and some degree of control over the livelihood of its members. Since the nineteenth century, market-oriented economists as well as Marxists have argued that the static traditionalism of such communities is an obstacle to "progress". Their disintegration is thus inevitable and desirable, however painful this may be to the members. Since the nineteenth century also, other currents of opinion have argued the contrary: that such communities through their traditions of co-operative work, mutual aid, and social equality, represent values preferable to capitalism, or that they point a way to socialism bypassing the traumas of capitalist development.

During the 1950s, variants on this latter view became influential as a way of modifying the consensus on economic development without challenging its basic premises. The community

development movement assumed the presence of internally harmonious local communities having sufficient autonomy to be able to act collectively in pursuit of their own interests with a certain amount of technical and material aid and guidance from outside. Social theorists who saw the communities as seeds of a new society could join forces with planners who saw community development programmes as a relatively inexpensive means of raising agricultural production and rural levels of living, while the development effort concentrated on industrialization. Somewhat later, attempts were made to apply "community development" principles to urban low-income neighbourhoods, but here expectations were relatively modest; aided self-help in housing, community services and domestic industries might enable the poor to live a little better.

The achievements of the programmes fell below their initial promise for many reasons, including the substitution of bureaucratic compulsion for voluntary community initiative under pressure of national targets, the inapplicability of many of the technical solutions offered to the communities, and the inability of many of the community-level workers to transmit them effectively. The most general shortcoming, however, seems to have been failure to recognize the divisions of interests within communities and the constraints imposed on their responses by local and national power structures. Supposedly egalitarian initiatives ended by increasing the differential advantages of the richer and more "progressive" community members at the expense of the unpaid labour of the weaker members; brought into the open latent conflicts that rendered the programme inoperable; or alarmed the landlords, moneylenders or other power holders sufficiently to motivate them to sabotage the programme.

During the past three decades, the real processes of "development" and modernization have disrupted traditional community organization

and sources of livelihood to such an extent that the original suppositions behind the programmes have become even less plausible, although in a good many settings peasant ways of life and local solidarity have shown considerable resilience. Social differentiation has become more complex. Peasant smallholders have survived and even grown in numbers during agricultural modernization and increasing orientation of agriculture to export markets, but under severe disadvantages and forced into changing expedients to gain a minimum livelihood. Also to be found are growing numbers of commercial farmers emerging from the better-off peasants, of skilled workers and technicians in agrobusinesses, of commercial intermediaries, and of underemployed landless labourers. Almost everywhere, much of the rural population is in movement. Migrations link newer and older zones of settlement, rural and urban areas, and even different countries. The mass media, particularly the transistor radio, the increasingly obtrusive regulatory, repressive and servicing agents of the State, and the growing dominance of national markets and manufactured consumer goods generate new attitudes and settings for organization. And, of course, invasions, civil wars, ethnic disputes, and military action against guerrillas convert millions of peasants into refugees.

In the urban agglomerations, the scale and rapidity of increases in size create unprecedented conditions, both for the State's efforts at control and for the efforts of different classes and groups to form organizational ties. In very simplified terms, one can distinguish, first, the organized workers in modern enterprises—the so-called “formal sector”; second, the more numerous families surviving by a wide range of poorly understood expedients, sometimes self-employed, sometimes working for wages, sometimes subsisting through mechanisms of mutual aid, unorganized or organized in relation to issues other than livelihood, as in neighbourhood groupings—the so-called “informal sector”; third, the “middle strata”, ranging from professionals to white-collar employees and small tradesmen, with a mass of “educated unemployed” at the fringe, simultaneously a cause and effect of educational expansion and modernization of consumption. The present crises, of

course, imply shocks to all of these groups, with substantial numbers of organized workers and members of the middle strata losing their sources of livelihood and thus their bases for organized action.

The current trends do not necessarily mean that anomie is triumphing in the cities and the countryside nor that organized participation is receding still farther out of reach of the “hitherto excluded”, but organizational forms and tactics, along with recruitment of different groups and their awareness of common interests and alternative futures, promise to continue to change, probably in even more various ways than in the recent past. A few years ago, for example, the present importance of religious ties and organizations in transforming the consciousness of disadvantaged groups and helping them maintain self-defensive solidarity under difficult condition of political repression and mass unemployment could hardly have been expected. Neither could the prominence of women's interests as a basis for organization, nor the combativeness of cultural and ethnic minorities.

In any case, the overall trends suggest that conflict between and within groups will continue to be more in evidence than broad solidarity of the “hitherto excluded”. Under conditions of scarcity, all forms of organization contain seeds of exclusion and discrimination, even if they profess egalitarian ideologies. Land-holding peasants and co-operatives associated with agrarian reforms exploit or exclude landless workers. Trade unions or self-managed industries guard their advantages against the unemployed. The educated middle strata use their differential access to public services to increase their relative advantages and through “credentialism” exclude the less-educated from preferred areas of employment. Meanwhile, population growth and spatial mobility bring different groups into increasingly conflictive contact. Tribal minorities continue to be pushed off their land, often by settlers as poor as themselves, manipulated by land speculators and agrobusinesses. Migrants competing for jobs incur the hostility of the groups previously on the scene.

By now, the State has at its disposal an imposing array of sociological studies and statistical compilations aspiring to make sense of social structural changes, along with innumerable so-

cial reports of the international organizations that warn of impending disaster and prescribe how to avoid it. One might conclude that the State, to the extent that it chooses policy approaches incorporating participatory values, can and should base its action on a thorough understanding of the changing forms and con-

sequences of participation in settings of scarcity and group conflict. However, this is a desideratum rather than a practical recommendation. It leads us to consideration of the agents of the State in relation to participation, and of the constraints upon their knowledge, interpretations and actions.

VIII

Participation, bureaucrats and technocrats¹⁷

The national societies in which the issues of development and participation have come to the forefront of attention have simultaneously been undergoing processes of bureaucratization and a somewhat later technification of parts of their bureaucracies. Bureaucratization, of course, was under way long before the deliberate drive for "development", but received a powerful impetus from the assumption by the State of continually wider responsibilities, and also from the pressures for public employment of the middle strata emerging from rapidly expanding systems of secondary and higher education. A considerable corpus of research has, since the nineteenth century, focussed on the roles of bureaucracy in the modern State, and in rich as well as poor countries a litany of complaints and accusations has accompanied the studies.

The State, to accomplish its purposes with at least a minimum of efficiency and fairness, needs detailed laws, regulations and standards. The interpretation and application of these requires a specialized body of functionaries. These functionaries are subject to the professional deformation of making the regulations ends in themselves and also to considerable temptations to favoritism or corruption in their application. Bureaucracy can be expected to exhibit its shortcomings in a particularly pronounced form where it has become over large for reasons unrelated to

the tasks required of it, where power is very unequally distributed, and where the groups having a share in power have traditionally held the mass of the population in contempt.

At best, even if a bureaucracy is efficient, goal-oriented and honest, tension between bureaucracy and participation seems to be unavoidable, and it is unrealistic to expect the tension to be resolved in favour of one side or the other. If the State takes seriously its duty to promote the general welfare, it cannot help relying on uniform standards, in the quest for equity and efficiency in the distribution of its resources, and in combating arbitrary violations of human rights by local power-holders. The local group cannot help resenting and resisting the restrictions on its initiative, the time-consuming and baffling effort to cope with requirements that do not take local conditions into account. Intermediaries with their own purposes of profit, power accumulation or furtherance of an ideology are bound to take a hand, sometimes contributing to flexibility, sometimes to cost and conflict. Programmes whose main overt justification is the stimulation of local participatory initiatives are as susceptible to bureaucratization, standardization, and manipulation by intermediaries as any others, as the fate of many community development programmes has demonstrated.

One might prefer the vision of a "withering away" of the State with its bureaucrats and its replacement by autonomous community action with all members of the community (or enterprise) sharing in decision-making and

¹⁷This section is based on an UNRISD internal working paper, *Policies and Agents*, circulated in May 1980.

administration. In the present world of complex and interdependent societies, however, this utopia is out of reach. The vision of an anti-bureaucratic revolutionary State acting directly through and at the will of the mobilized masses has also lost credibility. It seems preferable to accept the tension and propose "creative resistance" as a framework for the conflictive interplay of bureaucracy and participation.

Technocracy, or technobureaucracy, poses somewhat different problems for participation. While the traditional bureaucrat relies on norms and precedents tending to stifle participation in red tape, the technocrat may be highly innovative but also more manipulative or coercive than the bureaucrat. For present purposes, "technocrat" is simply a convenient label for a person who advises on public policy or directs a programme, or aspires to do so, on the basis of specialized knowledge and theory; the term includes professional planners and a wide range of "experts". Technocrats have aspired to more autonomous roles in policy-making than bureaucrats have claimed, at least openly, and as far as they are able have separated their rewards and status from those of the remainder of the public administration.

Their attitudes toward "bureaucracy" are generally ambivalent. They need a strong and obedient State apparatus to accomplish their purposes, but find the real bureaucracy unresponsive, self-serving, over-large and over-expensive in some countries; and in others, rudimentary or lacking minimum levels of education and motivation. The neoliberal school of economists, which for present purposes can be included among the technocrats, is more fundamentally anti-bureaucratic, ideologically opposed to the Welfare State and to State intervention in the economy, and thus disposed to extirpate whole areas of bureaucratic activity.

The main tension between technocracy and participation lies in the confidence of the technocrat that his professional tools qualify him to find the One Right Answer to development problems. Thus, legitimate participation by other forces in the society must consist in learning the implications of the Answer and acting accordingly. Economists in technobureaucratic roles have been prone to subject their societies to rigid application of measures based on theories which

can never be disproved by failure, since their proponents can argue that the prescription has not been long enough or consistently enough applied. Engineers, who probably have had a more effective influence on the allocation of public resources than economists, have insisted on large-scale technically advanced investment projects, extremely costly, dependent on external financial and technological support, and disruptive of the environment as well as of people's lifestyles and livelihood.

Moreover, as the national economies and political systems have become more intricately involved in the world order, technocrats in national public institutions interact with technocrats in international organizations of many kinds and in private transnational enterprises. There is a prospect of the major lines of development policy being determined through negotiations among technocrats from the three types of institution, influenced to varying degrees and behind the scenes by the stronger national economic interest-groups, with only limited participation and understanding by the national political leadership, let alone wider public opinion. The majority of the population would then be able to participate only through resistance to changes it perceives as disadvantageous, generally too late for more than compensatory or obstructive gestures.

Suspicion of technocratic direction of policy has been strengthened by dramatic evidence of the shortsightedness of expert calculations in such key development policy areas as nuclear power, the construction of giant dams, and the exploitation of tropical forest areas by agrobusinesses, on the engineering side; and the control of inflation or the management of external debt on the economic side. The experts best able to intervene in policy-making have proved remarkably incapable of foreseeing and prescribing for the major problems that have emerged during the 1970s.

Nevertheless, complex societies grappling with problems whose solutions must be in large part "counter-intuitive" cannot afford to dispense with experts. The ideal would be the strengthening of participatory mechanisms to call the experts to account and struggle against technocratic arrogance without resort to populist campaigns of denigration and persecution. The

disorders and voluntarist delusions associated with the latter exaggeration, as various experiences indicate, usually lead to the discrediting of participation and the return of a technocratically-inclined leadership. As in the case of

bureaucracy, one must envisage the tension between participation and expertise as a legitimate and permanent aspect of the evolution of development policy.

IX

Participation and culture

As was suggested above, in the more recent stages of international discourse on development, the idea of the legitimacy of different national styles gained ground against the idea of development as a uniform process whose laws all societies must follow under penalty of remaining "backward". The earlier approach assumed that "traditional" cultures and forms of social organization presented obstacles that must be swept away in the course of modernization. It went back to the intellectual attitudes accompanying the diffusion of capitalism, nationalism and imperialism from nineteenth century Europe, but the governments of most of the new nation-States that emerged during the 1940s and 1950s seemed to endorse the general principle by adopting uniform political institutions and socio-economic objectives.

The newer conception affirmed that development should be "endogenous", that somehow the choice of a style of development should emerge from the national culture. It was open to various objections: that it went too far in reversing the uniformity and ethnocentrism of the previous conception; that it evaded the inescapable organizational and motivational requirements of industrialization; that national cultures are rarely, if ever, homogeneous enough to lead to coherent choices of this kind; that certain cultural traits might be incompatible with any change deserving the name of development or with choices in line with real national capabilities; and that the real choices would continue to be made by dominant minorities interpreting the national culture to suit themselves. It could also be argued that the aspiration to endogenous

styles of development represented a reaction to dominant trends of world cultural homogenization and economic integration that had already gone too far to be reversed. The application of the conception to multi-ethnic States able to survive only by refraining from imposing a coherent endogenous style of development on refractory minorities presented other awkward problems.

In any case, major ideological and political forces in a good many countries will undoubtedly continue to make the effort. One must then consider how far the known forms of organized participation —elected local governments, trade unions, co-operatives, women's associations, etc.—, which share in the uniformity of the original consensus on development, can be reconciled with the diversity of forms and values implied by endogenous development. It would be ingenuous to ignore the fact that participation, where it arises spontaneously in reaction to the shocks of imported modernization, can be xenophobic, intolerant of national minorities, hostile to women's assertion of equal rights. Spontaneous "participation" must bear part of the blame for the millions of refugees in the world today, and for millions of dead. Ideologists can interpret national cultures either to emphasize features compatible with these evils or to delegitimize them. Popular movements may or may not internalize the ideological interpretations. One can expect a continuing tension between the claims of universal values and cultural diversity, with outcomes that will be internally contradictory, continually changing, and sometimes horrifying.

X

Requirements (institutions, policies and socio-economic considerations) for popularizing people's participation in development

The above heading brings us back to the original assignment. The terms "institutions", "policies" and "popularizing" imply that one is thinking of requirements for the State, rather than for the groups "hitherto excluded" and their "organized efforts to increase control...". But what can real States do with generalized formulations of "requirements"? A remark by Dudley Seers comes to mind: "A familiar joke on the international scene today is the attempt by the 'progressive' economist, domestic or foreign, to sell land reform, or industrialization, or more effective tax collection, or wider educational opportunity, or greater independence from a foreign power to a government whose *raison d'être* is precisely the *prevention* of such developments, or at least limiting them to the greatest extent possible".¹⁸ Obviously, a good many governments are dedicated to the prevention or limitation of people's participation, and most others are ambivalent about it or precluded by the conflictiveness of real participation from taking any consistent position. But *if* the forces controlling the State really want to call forth wider participation, in terms compatible with the UNRISD definition, can anything useful be said about the "requirements"?

To begin with, one can discard the hypothesis that the State, in the best of cases, is an ideally rational and benevolent entity that is at the same time so lacking in initiative and imagination that it is simply waiting for good advice. The State today is overwhelmed by more pressures and stimuli than it can cope with, and generalized prescriptions are unlikely to get more than a ritual hearing in the form of endorsement of

declarations and plans of action. For other reasons it will probably not be useful to prescribe specific institutions, such as elected local governments, co-operatives, self-managed industries or direct representation of interest-groups in planning and policy-making. The virtues of such institutions when they find compatible environments are too well-known to require elaboration, and only a thorough grasp of the environment can support judgements as to whether they will be compatible or not.¹⁹

It may be somewhat more helpful to formulate requirements in terms of attitudes or predispositions to be desired in agents of the State, ideologists and intermediaries between the State and the popular movements. The following points are an experiment in this direction, made at the risk of a repellently exhortatory tone:

i) They should prepare themselves for an indeterminate future of changing crises and conflicting demands on limited public resources. They should try to explain these prospects, as they perceive them, to the people, and (a very hard saying for political leaders under conditions of open competition for power) should restrain themselves from promising more than the State can perform. Even more, they should refrain from claims that the State has performed what it promised, when such claims conflict with reality perceived by the people.

ii) They should recognize and resist temptations to suppress or manipulate participation in the interest of a technocratic One Right Way to development. They should take care that the real urgency of large-scale rapid action to overcome national poverty and weakness does not lure

¹⁸See Dudley Seers, "The prevalence of pseudo-planning", in Mike Faber and Dudley Seers (eds.), *The Crisis in Planning*, London, Chatto & Windus Ltd., for the Sussex University Press, 1972.

¹⁹The series of studies of rural co-operatives carried out and published by UNRISD exemplifies the kind of confrontation of institution with environment needed for meaningful statements on the participatory potential of an institution.

them into compulsion and manipulated mobilization to achieve targets, with a consequent degeneration of participation into ritual or popular apathy. They should keep in mind that the people may be right as against the State and the technocrats, without falling into demagogic glorification of the people's correctness or disregarding group conflicts of interests. (The latter delusion can lead to the invention of an imaginary people that is always right, so that by definition any group that deviates from rightness is excluded from the people.) This implies that they should expect and welcome creative resistance from the groups affected by the centralization, standardization and bureaucratization that are unavoidable in the activities of the State.

iii) They should seek to appreciate realistically the potentialities and limitations of present forms of group solidarity and directions of change in these forms within national and local power structures. This implies a critical but sympathetic evaluation of the consumption aspirations and cultural changes penetrating the societies, neither accepting them wholesale as attributes of modernity nor rejecting them in the name of an impracticable austerity and cultural integrity. They should try to engage the people in a debate on these questions—a debate given structure by some coherent image of the national future held by the policy-makers, but not manipulated to a predetermined set of conclusions on what is to be required of the people. Such a debate requires that the people have access to a range of sources of information and opinion, managed neither by private interests solely concerned to foster profitable consumerism nor by bureaucrats motivated to exaggerate achievements and conceal shortcomings. Probably no national society as yet has found a fully satisfactory way to resolve the contradictions behind this desideratum, and one must fall back on the evasive formula that the appropriateness of any solution depends on the setting. Transfer by the State of control of mass media to popular organizations, for example, can mean much or little, depending on the degree of autonomy of the organization and of control by the rank and file.

An assessment of prospects and priorities may justify the conclusion that radical changes, conflicting with the expectations of large sectors of the people, are necessary and that these

changes cannot wait upon the achievement of consensus or even full understanding. It would be idle to advise agents of the State never to harbour this conclusion. When they act on it, however, it is particularly to be desired that they resist assumptions that they are infallible or that they have the right to exempt themselves from sacrifices they expect from others. Take the objective of "eliminating signs of affluence" proposed above as a requisite for movement toward authentic development. If this is really necessary, the policy-makers should seek as wide and informed a consensus as possible on the permissible limits of affluence and then subordinate their own lifestyles—and those of the upper bureaucracy and military—to such limits.

iv) They should keep in mind the conflicts of perceived interests within and between groups and the likely distortions and manipulations of participatory policies through interactions among local and national power-holders, political and economic intermediaries, and bureaucracies. They should remember that, while the policies may rest on the supposition that all actors can benefit and, therefore, should co-operate, the actors themselves may hold "limited good" or "zero sum game" suppositions—what one gains another loses. In educational programmes, for example, the objectives of the State, of teachers and educational functionaries, and of the students and their families may differ widely one from another, with competition for educational privileges and preferential access to jobs concealed behind the public goal of universalization of schooling. The aggregate result of the pressures on education will then differ from what any of the actors want or expect.

v) Whatever the level of resources that the State can devote to social purposes, the agents of the State should strive for equity in their distribution and should envisage vigorous popular participation as a necessary but inevitably troublesome requisite for progress toward this objective. In conditions of overall scarcity, two propensities will always be present: toward distribution of public resources in line with the political and economic power of different groups, excluding the weak; and toward distribution of token amounts, too thinly and irregularly to help the recipients. The public agencies are also subject to a permanent temptation to seize upon

participatory schemes as a means by which the poor can be persuaded to provide for themselves services (such as housing and urban infrastructure) that the State provides for the better-off and more influential. A permanent and conflictive misunderstanding between disadvantaged groups and the State is then to be expected. The latter hopes to use local self-help organization as a means of divesting itself of costly responsibilities, while the former see such organization mainly as a means of exerting pressure on the State for additional resources.

vi) The agents of the State should refrain from making mechanisms of participation into ends in themselves, converting them into rituals, and subjecting them to quantitative targets. Participation is an end as well as a means for any society striving to function better for the well-being of its members, or rather participation is a central element in the functioning of such a society, but committees and meetings are not legitimate ends in themselves; they are unavoidable but faulty means toward participation. All participatory movements have to contend with excessive time spent in meetings, with the resulting apathy of the majority, opportunities for manipulation by minorities temperamentally at home in meetings, and, if agents of the State or a dominant political party organize the meetings, a likelihood of ritualized conformism in discussions, inoculating the masses against spontaneous participation. Even if the State or party does not propose to enforce ideological conformity, the unavoidable standardizing and quantifying propensity makes it prone to mistake the machinery of participation for the reality. Here the contribution of agents of the State must be mainly through self-restraint; they cannot prevent organized groups from making erratic or dilatory use of their freedom, but they can refrain from imposing moulds that require them to do so.

As a corollary, they should take care not to overburden and confuse local groups by too many competing participatory initiatives from sectoral public agencies, as is likely to happen when the national policy climate spurs agencies dealing with education, health, land reform, etc., to avail themselves of participation as a tool.

vii) The present endorsement of partici-

pation at the international level as a requisite for development means that the international agencies are commissioning "experts" in policies relating to participation and governments are requesting their advisory services. It is natural that such experts should be strong believers in the virtues of participation and also in the necessity of styles of development different from those prevailing up to the present. They generally base their claim to expertise on services to participatory movements and programmes in their own country or elsewhere; over the past three decades, community development and related programmes have provided abundant opportunities for promoters of participation to gain experience. However, the reports of such experts leave one with the impression that a good many of them fall into the sort of error on which Dudley Seers passes judgement. That is, they advise national authorities to embark on participation on a scale incompatible with the government's sources of support or its capacity to create and manage complex new institutions.

Alternatively, some groups within the machinery of the State —progressive planners and specialists in social programmes— are eager to undertake bold participatory initiatives and welcome the experts' support, but are unable to mobilize decisive political backing for the initiatives once they encounter serious resistance, sabotage, or co-optation by forces having different purposes. By this time, one serious hindrance in a good many countries to new participatory initiatives sponsored by public agencies is a history of previous initiatives promoted intensively, then starved of resources, quietly abandoned, or violently reversed, often with dismissal of the functionaries involved and repression of the popular leadership called forth. Apparent apathy in the face of participatory appeals may derive from bitter experience and a more realistic appreciation of the risks than that of the international experts and their allies within the State.

viii) Exhortations and cautions such as the above, directed to the agents of the State rather than to the State itself, suppose that the former have a certain limited degree of autonomy and also a certain capacity to transform their own consciousness of their place in the web of conflictive-co-operative relationships between State

and people. The following quotation sums up the perspective from which even the more progressive agents of the State have commonly viewed participation: "The planners ... tended to conceive of the 'the people' as the only proper subject both of their own interventions and of the studies related to these interventions; they did not find it comfortable to think of 'the people' and of themselves as parts of a single system which might be investigated. ... While it is probably disagreeable for most people to think of themselves as subjects of study, it is probably particularly threatening for those who, like planners, exercise power in large part on the basis of authority derived from a role as technical experts. This rationale for authority tends to be undercut if the technician is viewed as one more actor on the social scene, with his own interests, beliefs, biases."²⁰

Up to the present, initiatives for participatory research have focussed on "the people", with the aim of helping them to awareness of their place on the social scene and what they can do to change it. Recommendable as a last and particularly intriguing "requirement for promoting popular participation in development" is participatory research among the promoters, the agents of the State, so as to help them view themselves as actors with their own "interests, beliefs, biases". And, of course, understanding of the agents of the State in these terms, as actors with ambivalent relationships to the State that employs them, the organized forces that make demands on them, and the social and educational backgrounds that have shaped their consciousness, is crucial to the efforts of the "hitherto excluded" to devise more effective tactics of pressure and self-defence.

XI

In conclusion

Let us try to derive from the preceding discussion a few propositions worth debating:

1. The Participation Programme is fully justified in aligning itself with the efforts of the "hitherto excluded" to "increase control over resources and regulative institutions", and in taking care not to subordinate its support of these efforts to any one conception of the requirements of "development" or to the specification of a political order within which participation can flourish. To the extent to which the Programme aligns itself with State policies to "promote" or "popularize" participation it risks becoming evasive and apologetic, of confusing its clear allegiance and unique contribution with other perspectives that serve the interests of power. These perspectives are not necessarily illegitimate, but other research and advisory programmes can be expected to represent them quite adequately.

2. This first proposition does not require identification with an ideology rejecting the State and political movements, and expecting the Good Society to emerge from the autonomous local and occupational organization of the "hitherto excluded" or from the renaissance of endogenous cultural values. We come back to the idea of permanent tension and the kind of paradox pointed to by Cardoso. The organized efforts of the "hitherto excluded" will be directed toward resources that can exist and reproduce themselves in their present form only as long as the excluded remain excluded, and toward institutions that will always respond bureaucratically, manipulatively or repressively. Their attempts to accumulate countervailing power through affiliation with national movements will permanently encounter the iron law of oligarchy; the propensity of the movements to opportunism, sectarianism and delusions of infallibility; and the danger that the power-wielding enemies of the movements will strike hardest at their most vulnerable supporters. Par-

²⁰Lisa R. Peattie, "The social anthropologist in planning", in *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, July 1967.

ticipation-oriented agencies of the State as well as political movements will provide jobs and status for better-educated élites and will incur Tolstoy's taunt at those who would do anything for the people except get off their backs.

3. Ideally, activities within the Participation Programme should help the "hitherto excluded" to conduct their encounters with these ambivalent but indispensable allies-antagonists-exploiters on the basis of a better understanding of the ways in which they can make use of them, avoid being used by them, and eventually transform the settings in which the encounters take place. The activities should also help the hitherto excluded to grasp the wider implications of economic, technological, ecological and political trends for their struggles to improve their livelihood and achieve a share in power. Thus, as the *Inquiry into Participation—a Research Approach* paper asserted, the activities in question should enter into the critical study of the State, of the societies within which different categories of "hitherto included" confront different categories of "hitherto excluded", of anti-participatory structures and ideologies, and also of the international order. A consideration of this agenda, however, leads to the conclusion that our capacity to help the hitherto excluded to a usable framework of ideas for their struggles is modest and insecure.

4. The main hindrance in the way of offering a strategic orientation for these struggles is the discrediting by recent history of the mobilizing myths of development and revolution. Real transnational capitalist development, after transforming the livelihood and expectations of the greater part of the world's population at a price that has been too often deplored to need elaboration here, seems to have exhausted its dynamism and self-confidence. Its extraordinary scientific and technological innovativeness continues almost autonomously, but this impetus now seems as likely to generate more intense contradictions as to extricate it from stagnation. The only aspects of its clouded future that can be predicted with some confidence are that the costs of its crises will be transferred as far as feasible to the "hitherto excluded" as well as the "newly excluded"; and that in rich as well as poor countries the ability of the State to respond through services and subsidies to organized struggle over the terms of incorporation will shrink. Trends

within societies of "really existing socialism" are in many respects different but no less symptomatic of decline in dynamism and creativity. The label of "excluded" may no longer fit the mass of their populations, but it is evident that the style of development has not satisfied consumption aspirations nor hopes for the emergence of an innovative socialist culture. Through indebtedness, technological borrowing, and agricultural lags, their difficulties have become unexpectedly dependent on the vicissitudes of the capitalist world. Their peoples face the prospect of intensified austerity and technobureaucratic dictation in order to cope with faltering economies; a prospect less alleviated than before by hope of and easier future or faith in centralized planning. The proposals for endogenous egalitarian styles of development different from both the above models remain attractive as ideals and are very likely the only alternative to catastrophe, but the international climate has become even less supportive than before. The hopes that at least a few national societies would begin to convert them into reality have been disappointed. The experiences of the few political leaderships that have tried to move in this direction have demonstrated mainly the limitations of State capacity to transform society or enter into creative interactions with an unprepared people.

5. One might go on indefinitely with a litany of contradictions and dangers, or one might explore the paradoxical ways in which present mutations in the world order simultaneously discredit and enhance the importance of theorists and technocrats of different schools. One might speculate as to whether more varied forms of participation (or anti-participation) will emerge in the Third World if the capacity of the capitalist and socialist centres to serve as development models, sources of financing, sources of technology and sources of political backing for the forces contending for control of the State continues to erode, and if socio-cultural mutations in the centres send ever more contradictory messages to the rest of the world. All this, however, does not bring us closer to a satisfying answer to the question of how activities aligned with the "hitherto excluded" can help them to a frame of reference for their relations with the State and political movements, within prospects so contradictory and indeterminate, so conducive to cynically ter-

roristic repression on the one side and to anomic submission or rebellion on the other. Possibly the major contribution will be anti-utopian, toward recognition of the permanence of tension and the imperfection of human institutions. But this

conclusion immediately suggests its opposite: that the struggles of the "hitherto excluded" cannot do without utopias if they are to gain enough vigour and continuity to alter the balance of power.