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ECLAC

and the sociology of development

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The principal sphere in which ECLAC's theses are situated is that of economics. However, as befits an integrated approach to development, the theories it has propounded also include sociological and political aspects. The social aspects of development have been a focus of attention at ECLAC since its creation, and in this area too it has endeavoured to avoid the mechanical transposition of existing theories to the region. Through an interchange of ideas with specialists from other institutions, it has sought to identify the specifically regional dimension of the problems dealt with and to determine the precise social and political conditions conducive to economic development. It has investigated the role of the State in development strategy, together with the part that consumers and diverse social groups might potentially play in the development process. It has also given its attention, within the context of the integration process, to the subject of the region's sociocultural identity. The combination of political will and proposals for development have been examined in detail in the planning experiments conducted. The investigations have closely monitored the adjustments tried out by society in the region. The development of the educational system, along with marginality and poverty, have also been important subjects, together with the situation of women and young people. At a time when new development strategies are taking shape, ECLAC has been studying the social costs of the adjustment, the role of education and the conditions for civic participation amidst the new conditions of social development, this last element being the central component of its approach advocating changing production patterns with social equity.

I

The theoretical aspects

Development issues, whether we are talking about economic or social development, or even political or cultural development, have long been a focus of attention within the different disciplines which intersect at these subjects: attention motivated both by purely theoretical considerations and also by the practical concerns of government policy. It can be asserted, however, that as far back as the end of the Second World War the subject of development started to acquire particular prominence. The various United Nations agencies played no small part in its promotion, and the goal of development began to assume the dimensions of an international project. ECLAC, with its sphere of competence embracing the Latin American countries featured in its name, was of course involved actively in this task, which it accomplished with great originality of thought. As regards the "social aspects of development", such matters as population trends, living conditions, health care, housing and education were accommodated in the interstices between more strictly economic subjects, and the social structure of countries in the region thus at an early stage—in the first half of the 1950s, in fact—came within ECLAC's field of vision.

But there is one point that needs to be stressed from the outset: the problems of development which it was aimed to tackle were at the same time a challenge to the theoretical assumptions at the basis of the various disciplines involved. Here, the value acquired by ECLAC's so-called "theoretical heterodoxy" deserves recognition. In its economic hypotheses and analyses, it endeavoured to make use of the ideas generated by different schools of thought in an enriching and innovative way, a practice it also applied to the different existing sociological approaches. It viewed development at that time as a subject of interest not only to academics and politicians but also to the public at large, believing that theoretical problems should cease to be merely the subject of polemical debate among groups or schools but become a genuine spur to the advancement of the social sciences, and of sociology in particular.

This is why in one form or another different strands of sociological thought were not only present

at various stages in the evolution of ECLAC's analysis but actually tended to converge in many instances so that in some of the studies a perspective is discernible that is somewhat characteristic of what is termed "critical sociology", in which the nature of society is assessed on the basis of a particular conception of the world or ideology. The aim of such critical sociology is to propose a form of transformation of society consistent with the principles underpinning it. While those evaluative tendencies were indeed present—and there is no reason to hide the fact that they often provoked a good deal of criticism—they coexisted with more functional aims of sociological analysis directed towards providing precise guidelines for practical action. This is not to claim that sociological analysis necessarily leads to the total reform or transformation of the social structure, but it can have a real impact on some of its components by taking up objectives already pre-established in some form or other.

But a predominant feature of ECLAC's sociology has perhaps been the aim of understanding a particular social situation in its historical context. In the case of Latin America, the objective was to point out the peculiarities of its structure and the dynamic forces inherent in its particular situation with a view to highlighting the various potentialities contained within it. The diagnostic goal was uppermost in this approach and, while the task of pointing out the foreseeable results of choosing between alternatives was not shirked, it was none the less kept in mind that such a choice was influenced by different points of view and ultimately belonged to the agent responsible for taking action.

The extremely broad stances referred to here, which have coexisted to some degree—even to the extent of being interwoven—in the sociological analyses performed by ECLAC, also lead to a definition of the role of the sociologist in development tasks, which, it should be remembered, were primarily defined—to begin with at least—as being tasks proper to economic development. Thus it was that ECLAC's sociologists saw their functions as alternating between collaboration in tasks belonging more properly

to the economist's domain (determining and defining a specific sphere of research and theoretical inquiry) and performance of their own critical role of contributing to formulating the broad lines of economic development, including its political aspects.

Although the sociologists had no shortage of theories at hand to guide them as they navigated their course through the world around them, most of the hypotheses derived from these theories, taken to be valid for the most part, sprang from the abstraction of a historical experience corresponding to social environments quite distinct from those of Latin America. The ambition to influence reality in a rational manner was based on having appropriate scientific knowledge. But the problem was knowing up to what point such knowledge was appropriate or inappropriate to Latin America, given that the theories had essentially been conceived in Europe and the United States. What was required, therefore, was a programme of empirical research which, in addition to adding to the sum of factual knowledge, would also make it possible either to confirm or discard the fashionable hypotheses and –why not?– propose new ones. In short, sociology shared the orientation characteristic of ECLAC's economic thinking, namely avoidance of the mechanical transposition of existing theories.

As a number of authors have observed, in their endeavour to promote rational social practice through development issues, the social sciences played a unique role. If we accept Max Weber's interpretation of the character of the modern Western world, whereby the entire complex of social relationships has been permeated by rationalism, then science has presumably found its place in this general process of rationalization and there will consequently be a correlation between scientific practice and the rationality of social practice. In Latin America rationality was, to some extent at least, introduced by science. It was held that the answer to the challenge of development was to be found primarily in science, which was perceived as a value in itself. On analysis, however, reality was found to be inconsistent with rational principles. Without anyone perhaps being fully aware of what was happening, science was becoming ideology.

To some extent, the contrast between theory and reality led to a desire to identify characteristics specific to Latin America. Various hypotheses put forward as valid by the different theories of development failed to find confirmation in these countries: for example, the assumption of a linear

correspondence between urbanization and industrialization; the existence of a rigid traditional-modern duality; and the existence of an industrial bourgeoisie that might take on responsibility for national development plans. These first findings obtained against the expectations of theory made it possible to say what Latin America was not, but it was still difficult to identify precisely what it was.

ECLAC's sociological researchers were not, of course, alone in setting themselves the task of defining Latin America's distinctive character; this same objective was pursued by the majority, arguably, of Latin American sociologists, who, it should be acknowledged, were following in the footsteps of historians, intellectuals, writers and other academics. The subject of development, however, added a certain urgency to the search for answers. It was necessary to establish the distinctive behavioural patterns of the various social groups (the bourgeoisie, the middle classes and the lower classes), the special nature of the problem of marginality and the social position of the indigenous or coloured population, and also to identify the special characteristics of its social institutions, the State, the armed forces, and so forth.

In the quest to match sociological theory to the problems of Latin American economic development, the work carried out at ECLAC by José Medina Echavarría deserves special mention not only for its pioneering character but also its abiding influence. His mentor was Max Weber who, by establishing a distinction between, on the one hand, economic institutions (or communities) engaged in the pursuit of some kind of benefit or the satisfaction of needs and, on the other, "economically significant" institutions (or communities), whose activities were not economic in themselves but could represent a "causal moment" in the course of an economic activity, made it possible to establish the link between strictly economic and sociological analysis. The problem consisted in determining the degree of correspondence or non-correspondence –"elective affinity", in the words of Weber– between these various types of activities. Weber's distinction was in fact taken up by sociological development theory –in vogue at the time– which differentiated between "primary requirements" corresponding to strictly economic institutions such as property, the labour force and market relationships, and "secondary requirements" (economically significant institutions), in particular the political regime, science and technology, and forms of stratification.

Acceptance of Weber's formulation, distinguishing between the economic and sociological while establishing the connections between the two, none the less presented some considerable theoretical challenges. The analysis made by Weber of capitalist development at a particular historical juncture and even for a specific cultural context had become a paradigm of the pattern of development in general, whereas the historical situation had in fact changed and capitalism was developing in conditions far removed from those that had given rise to Weber's theoretical model. Moreover, the "Soviet model" was already in existence and fully functioning, with its own distinct premises or foundations in terms of both the patterns of thought of its agents and the social and political conditions that shaped its organization.

From the theoretical point of view, the challenge to be met was considerable, nothing less in fact than constructing a new "model" to take account of the social conditions which would permit economic development in the current circumstances. The absence of perfect competition and hence of total market freedom was identified as being among the new conditions shaping capitalist development. Other conditions observed were changes in labour relations, with the free contract tending to be replaced by the powers of collective organizations to take action and negotiate and also, to some extent, to control jobs; and a major change in the functions of the State, which ceased to be neutral and started to intervene by regulating economic activity or participating in it directly.

These changes were not only apparent in the "central countries" but also in many Latin American countries or constituted a part at least of the new model to which they aspired. Of particular importance for Latin America was the confirmation of the profound social transformation taking place, evidenced by the presence of new, strongly upwardly mobile social strata, a feature that was especially conspicuous in the middle classes and organized proletariat. New groups began demanding political conditions permitting their full involvement in national affairs, which frequently led to conflicts between these groups and those whose position was already established.

How influential were these new conditions in shaping the behavioural impulses put forward as being necessary for achieving sustained economic development? In more practical terms, how could

working habits characteristic of activity at the entrepreneurial or at the shop-floor level be cultivated? Modern economic life presupposes the existence of psychological traits conducive to rational attitudes and a certain measure of discipline, but what precisely were the conditions in which such traits might be encouraged? What other processes of rationality does "economic rationality" relate to? In Europe, modern rational capitalism encountered showcase social conditions in that it coincided with a certain brand of legal and administrative rationality whose origins were not in the strictly economic realm but more of a political, professional or ideological nature. The type of rationality underlying the legal system and bureaucracy was what is known as "formal rationality" –based strictly on standards or regulations– but it was this that made it possible to perform the calculations necessary for any economic activity. It was precisely in this sphere that a radical change had taken place: the State, having ceased to be "neutral", was directing both the law and bureaucracy in terms of a "functional rationality", dedicated to the pursuit of goals at the expense of pure formal rationality.

Various problems arose in the case of Latin America with regard to the patterns of economic behaviour of the population and their correspondence to the goal of economic development pursued. A characteristic feature of a collective development drive is that it aspires to a better standard of living or consumption; but a certain sense of responsibility, both individual and collective, is also essential. The two elements do not necessarily coincide and may even conflict; the desire for a better standard of living is not necessarily accompanied by the impulse to make the necessary effort to achieve it, while an individual's ambition to possess or acquire may not be contained by a sense of collective responsibility. Since the necessary correspondence between the two elements was not guaranteed, it seemed necessary to foster it consciously, a role that could be assumed by institutions which were not strictly economic, such as the education system, the media, the State, the political parties and the trade unions, to name but a few. But an almost crucial factor identified was that the groups in charge of leading a country should provide a model of behaviour worthy of imitation, the disorientation or apathy of the masses often being attributable to a lack of exemplary conduct on the part of the leading élites, whether economic or political.

Likewise, the initial propositions put forward by ECLAC in its "development sociology" showed an awareness of the problems of the relationship between politics and economic development, although that concern was certainly not confined to "ECLAC sociology". Many of Latin America's political approaches seemed to be incompatible with the economic rationality required; a large proportion of the parties or governments lacked rationally based ideologies or political machinery. An interest in economic growth may well have been present, but in many cases was not necessarily guided by rational impulses. In addition to this, however, it has to be recognized that both political and economic rationality have their own objectives and that when the State intervenes, either through its regulatory powers or directly, in the workings of the economy, it is necessary to establish connections between the two types of rationality –economic and political– and to acknowledge that the accommodation attainable between the two can only be ephemeral. The problem posited with regard to the relationship between political and economic rationality came into focus far more clearly when ECLAC embarked on the subject of planning.

A further element that characterized the social conditions in which economic development could be brought about in Latin America and which needed therefore to be introduced into the debate was that of the almost inevitable politico-social conflict. Development itself –especially at times when it picked up greater speed– entailed imbalances in the social structure, creating conflict situations. It could be foreseen that there would be an accelerated uprooting of large numbers of people, many of them from rural areas, who would be incapable of adapting readily to the new conditions precisely because of the speed with which the changes were taking place. It was also predictable that extreme imbalances –a source of conflict– would be produced between different sectors of national life: serious inequalities between regions or disparities within economic activities with regard to the degree of modernization and development achieved. Moreover, the ever-increasing expectations of the "consumer societies", modelled on the most advanced countries, continued to be a source of concern since the conditions required for meeting those expectations were not fulfilled in the Latin American countries. In brief, it had to be taken into account that socio-economic conflict was an almost inevitable part of the very process of economic development.

The importance ascribed to the political system should be stressed, since development was conceived as the product of a clearly formulated programme whose full realization depended on an appropriate political framework, so that the differences between the Latin American countries were often thought to be not so much a function of economics as of social infrastructure and the political processes permitted by that infrastructure. In this there was full concord with the general approach taken by ECLAC from its very foundation. The State should not only intervene in the process of development through policies to protect fledgling industries and stimulate the modernization of the primary exporting sector, but should also be regarded as having the function of promoting processes rather than merely correcting faults and inefficiencies. These ideas chimed with the propositions formulated by Myrdal, for whom the primary functions of State intervention in modern industrialized countries were those of arbitration and levelling, and in the less developed countries guiding and planning. The historical situation, moreover, obliged the State to assume new functions or to play a more active role than it had done traditionally; the international economic situation was presenting ever more serious and complex problems, while domestic processes of transformation were generating tensions and conflicts, in addition to which urgent social programmes were needed, since the traditional structure of society was undergoing a process of profound change and readjustment.

Not everything, of course, could be reduced to the State's capacity to take action; changes were also needed in the behavioural approaches of certain social groups of crucial importance for the success of economic development. There was an awareness, for example, that the "commercial entrepreneur" in Latin America prevailed over the "industrial entrepreneur"; that frequently business executives acted by reacting to the immediate economic situation rather than planning ahead for the medium and long terms, or tried to function within the protective confines of certain defined options. An attempt was then made to inculcate new attitudes, both public and private, to be adopted by the entrepreneur in his capacity as manager and economic innovator. Likewise, with respect to the labour force, the need was pointed out for a work ethos, a capacity for technical adaptation and an awareness of social responsibility closely associated with the individual's awareness of his function

within the overall context of society. This could be achieved only by expanding the meagre involvement of these groups at the national level, where workers' organizations often encountered obstacles preventing their proper functioning.

It should not be forgotten that in this endeavour to chart a course for the region's development, ECLAC grappled with the subject of integration right from the start. Integration was seen as a need arising from the process of industrialization, since it was necessary to establish markets making for economies of scale and also to concert and coordinate efforts aimed at modernization. The goal of integration, however, demanded a better understanding of the region's sociocultural identity and presented some very specific challenges. In Latin America the process of national integration has generally been extremely slow and in most of the countries did not even get off the ground until the twentieth century. The question arising was how to achieve the supranational integration of newly emergent nationalities.

II

Problems in practice

ECLAC's work of theoretical postulation, of course, required the practical confirmation that its hypotheses were indeed borne out by reality. From the mid-1960s or thereabouts, the development process ran into serious difficulty in various major countries in the region, and there were even signs in some cases of a total breakdown of the process. The assumption that the political decisions with the greatest impact on the direction of development were processed at the national level was called into question by the increasing importance of external decision-making centres; moreover, the institutional political systems did not appear to be open to wider participation. The premises of the development option put forward seemed, in practice, to be extremely fragile.

In the economic sphere, ECLAC had placed particular emphasis on the undesirable repercussions for the countries of the region of the classic model of a relationship between central and peripheral countries which would give rise to an international division of labour impeding Latin American development choices. The sociological studies undertaken at-

The development objective which ECLAC tried to formulate implied the pursuit of modernization—which was a new departure—but at the same time it was argued that such a goal could be pursued consciously in both the economic and social realms, that tensions could be foreseen and worked upon and that this capacity for action could be transformed into a special dynamic intrinsic to the societies in question. In the same way as in the economic sphere, “structural reforms” were also proposed in the social realm. For example, an educational reform was promoted with a view to encouraging social mobility and the assimilation of new values and patterns of behaviour, an agrarian reform was introduced to modify land ownership with a view to engendering new forms of social relationships, and a reform of the State and political system was instituted to bring them into line with the needs of systematic, planned development. The matrix of relationships connecting economic development, social development, national autonomy and political democratization was a leitmotif running through the debate.

tempted to show that it was not enough to explore the subject purely in terms of “external obstacles” to development, a notion in which the idea was embedded that the problem originated in the relationships between strong and other, weaker societies by virtue of their unequal economic power. The problem was more complex than that, and it could be demonstrated that in cases where there had been an expansion of the industrial economy this had led to an increased intermeshing of local interests and foreign monopolistic interests. Moreover, the presence of foreign political interests was increasingly evident in the structure of the State.

The “problem of dependence”—the term used most commonly in tackling these subjects—prompted analysis of the conditions for the existence and operation of the economic and political systems, analysis which cast light on the type of connections between the two both within each country and externally. The main proposition put forward was that the mode of integration of national economies within the international market implied patterns of interrelationship

among social groups within each country and between those groups and groups abroad. The dependence relationship was not a simple matter of exploitation and coercion; there was actually a community of interests between dominant local and foreign groups. In other words, dependence did not mean that the entire interests of one society were aligned with those of another society. Interdependence was a fact of life which linked the developed and underdeveloped societies and also made for a sharing of interests between the dominant groups of both types of society. While this context presented an opportunity for change, the dynamic of that change lay in transformation of the structure of classes, sectors and social groups and the restructuring of the system of power relationships, goals for which collective action and firm political will were needed.

A better context perhaps for observing the difficulties of combining political will with development plans is the Latin American planning experiment to which ECLAC and the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) became so firmly committed. As indicated by ECLAC's authors themselves, planning entered the stage in Latin America when foreign trade lost its dynamism as the driving force behind economic activity. This led to a recognition of the need for government intervention to direct the economic process and to the adoption of particular types of policy to compensate for the loss. An endeavour was indeed made to steer reform in the direction of a new model of development to replace the previous one, which had outlived its useful life. However, the political authorities—whose task it was to set the process in train—showed a certain ambivalence: it was recognized that planning could be a valuable tool and that there were direct precedents in Western Europe to justify it, but at the same time the goals of transformation and change contained within it aroused fear.

As regards ECLAC more specifically, it was the United Nations that backed the idea of development planning, whose underlying values were taken to be those already established by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Development Strategy and other resolutions that had gained the support of almost all the countries represented. In United Nations texts particular emphasis was laid on social development; in framing policies an effort was made to give equal weight to the "social" and the "economic", the aim being to elaborate a methodo-

logy for social planning as a counterpart to economic planning and thus to achieve a unified approach to development analysis and planning. In this way it was hoped to formulate a more satisfactory response to human needs than had been the case previously. These aims were based on the assumption of a consensus on the values of human well-being and social justice. Given those premises, the problem was to decide who should be the recipient of the recommendations and advice.

There were expectations that society itself (and those most directly concerned in particular) would rally its efforts to achieve its objectives, for which purpose it was necessary to open up channels for wider involvement. The greatest hopes, however, were pinned on the capacity for action and commitment of those performing direct political functions. In fact, in many Latin American countries the plans formulated were directed towards goals that entailed drastic measures in areas such as farming land ownership, as well as monetary and credit reforms, or the restructuring of the tax system for the purpose of financing social or other policies. More often than not, these measures could not be implemented because of the strong pressures exerted on governments (from the injured parties). In some cases, the goals set reflected the desires of the planners more than the convictions of the politicians or heads of public agencies. In addition, politicians were far more responsive to the symptoms of situations, to which they endeavoured to provide direct solutions, whereas planners tended to put forward a set of interrelated solutions based on a structural conception of development and accordingly expressed in more medium- and long-term language.

The problems of reconciling short-term demands with medium- and long-term policy were exacerbated by the political instability of most of the region's governments. The rapid turnover in the ranks of those responsible for directing public affairs and the consequent shifts in political direction rendered the notions of the medium and long terms virtually meaningless. Moreover, the political support base often tended to be unstable, and governments directed their manoeuvring tactics towards winning the support of the main pressure groups, with political instruments—both economic and social—being used frequently to obtain the support that would make for a basic minimum level of stability. Finally, commitment to the means and ends of planning began to look like weakness; it

was felt that keeping more or less strictly to what had been programmed represented a constraint on the decision-making powers of the political authority.

As regards society's ability to mobilize its own efforts in pursuit of economic and social development objectives, difficulties arose here too. The groups possessing a larger share of economic and social power tended to identify with the status quo and deployed the tactics of pressure groups to influence the system of decision-making and protect the positions they had already achieved, while also trying, in many cases, to secure new privileges. Those in a less privileged position resorted, when they could, to showing their disagreement through various forms of protest. The latter, however, were seldom in a position to take systematic action, and their *de facto* dependence on the State was a more influential factor than had been supposed. The expectations of "public participation" involving the capacity for creation, something that had been considered an essential part of achieving a development goal meeting the needs of human welfare and social justice, were not fulfilled since such participation turned out to be meagre and transitory.

Practice showed that the actual economic processes and social relationships formed fell a long way short of the aim of appreciably enhancing human well-being. The aspirations to devise and apply alter-

native development styles, emphasizing independence and originality and focused on the human dimension, were shown up as utopic reverie when confronted with reality, so that a certain degree of frustration was virtually unavoidable. At times, in fact, the concept of "development" –almost invariably referred to in terms of its most directly economic aspects– was seen as being in conflict with that of participation. Worse still, doubt was cast on its compatibility with democratic institutions and processes. Technocratic and frequently authoritarian solutions began to emerge in the guise of a new panacea to the problems of development.

In short, the experience of planning in Latin America undoubtedly yielded a number of successes, and the real advances made in the social sphere in extending the embrace of services such as education, health and housing should not be overlooked. No less important were the analyses performed that allowed a better understanding of the situation and greater awareness of the political and social repercussions of economic decisions. However, the hopes pinned on planning as an effective tool of practical action were certainly disappointed. To be fair though, the blame could not be laid entirely at the door of "planning errors and mistakes". The sheer magnitude of the obstacles encountered, obstacles of all kinds, has to be taken into account.

III

An era of change and conflicting processes

If one casts one's gaze back over the years from the end of the Second World War to the present time one cannot fail to note the complexity of the processes of change occurring during this time. Positive or negative evaluations are not a mere function of the observer's point of view but derive from the situation itself, in which the positive and the negative are interwoven. The expansion of domestic markets, for example, is an indisputable fact, and in most of the countries there was significant industrial development. Nevertheless, despite the initial hopes vested in industrialization, it was not generally able to perform the function of stimulating the economy as a whole and generating a sufficiently broad demand for productive employment. Only in a very few

instances did it have any substantial impact on overall export levels.

Consequently, the involvement of the Latin American countries in international trade during most of the period continued to be based on primary commodities, and foreign trade was continually prey to the vagaries of international demand for such goods and the constant fluctuations in their prices. In the case of manufacturing exports, these were largely based on natural resources and their prices were therefore, unfortunately, often subject to the same conditions as affected the markets for primary commodities. One could carry on in this vein pointing out a whole series of transformations of a different type that were undoubtedly extremely significant in their

impact not only in the economic sense but also –and sometimes predominantly– in the social sense, such as the transformation of the agricultural sector. The fact is, however, that the changes occurring which affected social structures and gave rise to large-scale movements of the population also triggered fresh inequalities, with disparities in income distribution, for instance, tending to remain the same or even to widen. If a number of basic indicators of living conditions are included in this panoramic survey of the post-war period, noteworthy improvements may indeed be observed, but at the same time large segments of the population continued to live in conditions of abject poverty.

Patterns of distribution, in fact, provide a clearer picture of the real characteristics of the type of development achieved. The actual form of development that has emerged shows pronounced structural heterogeneity, and modernization –which often involves intensive use of capital assets– has not succeeded in absorbing the entire labour supply since the structure of skills available does not correspond to the new demand. Technical progress is concentrated in a number of individual sectors and does not filter through to the broader strata characterized by low productivity.

It is undeniable, then, that the major changes resulting from the processes of urbanization, industrialization and what might be termed “dependent modernization” have produced paradoxical effects: large sectors of the population, and perhaps the majority in one or two countries, have fully identified with the lifestyles and expectations of modern consumer societies. An important role in establishing these new ways of life and levels of aspiration is played by multinational companies and the mass media with their standardized messages. These have been assimilated, however, not only by those strata of society in a position to achieve such ambitions but also by many groups who set their sights on material betterment whether or not they possess the wherewithal to achieve it. Regrettably, what is at issue is not a mere, harmless “imitative mania”; the pattern of “imitative consumption” that has been generated entails high costs in terms of domestic resources. The countries in question are experiencing continual growth in consumption, largely as a result of the affluence of 30 per cent or even 40 per cent or more of the population. These groups require an ever higher level of income to enable them to pay for the types of

goods they desire. Furthermore, production of such goods requires the mobilization of resources –capital, technology, labour and even natural resources– which, for the most part, are not those that the countries of the region actually possess.

It is worthwhile recalling the frequency of the cycles of peaks and troughs in economic performance that have contributed to rendering the already bewildering course of Latin American development in the post-war era even more perplexing. Not only have times of change coincided with booms, but radical structural transformations have also taken place at times of crisis and, in some cases, were possibly even because of those crises. The 1980s, for example, were a decade of profound change, but at the end of 1989 the per capita GDP in the region was 8 per cent less than that recorded in 1980 and in fact equivalent to the 1977 figure. This decline had a marked regressive dimension: for both the middle and the working classes the 1980s were a time of deep recession. In general terms, it was estimated that in 1980 some 112 million people –35 per cent of households in the region– were living under the poverty line, a figure which increased in 1986 to 164 million (approximately 38 per cent of households).

The confused economic and social picture sketched above is further muddled by complexities in the political sphere. The immediate post-war years saw a succession of different, abruptly alternating regimes, and in the 1970s and much of the 1980s the hopes pinned on the solid installation of democratic regimes did not appear to be well-founded in the region as a whole. The sociological studies undertaken by ECLAC were mainly directed towards analysis of the changes that had occurred, especially those linked to the profound transformation of the social structure. In demographic terms, the sheer growth of the population raised considerable problems in itself; the ratio of the rural to the urban population shifted so that the region could be defined as essentially urban both in the present and in the immediate short term, which meant that the predominant pattern of social organization had changed and had become that of an urban secular system, with the corresponding changes in social relationships.

As for the changes in the economic structure with a marked impact on social relationships, it was evident that a “national market” had formed in almost all of the countries. The ways in which this market came into being, however, were seriously dis-

torted by the trend towards concentration, which led in turn to regional disparities and engendered exclusion and marginality. A further phenomenon observed, as already mentioned, was the industrialized production of goods and its ever stronger linkage with other sectors of the economy, such as agriculture and the services sector, modifying the types of organization and social relationships typical of these sectors in the past. As far as employment was concerned, jobs in industry and in the tertiary sector increased. In fact, the size being attained by the low-productivity services or tertiary sector was a cause of considerable concern, although the significance being acquired by the so-called "modern tertiary" sector was far from negligible. ECLAC pointed out that, in addition to the serious problems of disparity in the economic and social structure, the newly emergent "modern economy" was making new demands as regards both the education and training of the workforce at all levels and new forms of social organization (system of labour relations, role of the trade unions, intermediary organizations and other forms of participation).

Naturally, the structure of social power was also affected by the changes described above. The masses were indisputably a force to be reckoned with, and the use of coercive exclusion—employed on many occasions, needless to say—did not get to the root of the problem. What was actually at stake were forms of participation and representation, and, more specifically, the role of the political parties. ECLAC's studies were mainly oriented towards analysis of the changes in social stratification, which could cast light on the new conditions in which the power relationships and the entire matrix of social relationships were in operation, affecting both actual and potential patterns of socio-economic development.

These studies indicated that the social stratification had turned out to be even more complex and that in most of the countries the proportion of persons occupying "middle-level" or "higher" positions had risen, although the actual content of those positions was far from uniform. The predominant features of the lower strata had changed as a result of urbanization, increased geographical mobility, the partial disintegration of traditional structures of rural power and access to information media. However, as already mentioned, not only was there no appreciable decrease in the polarization between these strata and the fully modernized sectors, but the gap had actually increased.

In the sphere of business enterprise, the points of interest were the connections established between different economic activities. On the one hand, a modern rural business community evolved in many countries and had an impact on exports and agro-industry, while, on the other, close relationships were established throughout the entire business sector between the financial, financial-commercial and industrial branches. Their links with foreign companies continued to develop both through direct partnership and through the use of patents, trade marks and technologies. It is interesting to note in them the presence of ideologies fashionable in world centres which reinforced their group identity and their sense of playing a key role in society.

At the same time it was noted that technical and scientific personnel were beginning to adopt the intellectual frame of reference of their peers in developed countries and to take over those countries' attitudes with regard to efficiency, specialization of functions, the imperatives of rational organization, the conception of the State, and so forth. Many of the professionals took up managerial positions in enterprises and adopted international outlooks, lifestyles and consumer expectations. Conversely, technical and administrative professional staff in the public sector suffered drops in income in many cases, along with worsening working conditions.

The salaried middle classes remained, as before, a heterogeneous mix of groups linked with the administrative functions of the State or its welfare services, such as health care and education, but a significant group emerging at this time were salaried staff involved in the development of private financial or other services and the expansion of commercial services to meet the demands of increasing urban consumption. These salaried middle classes were badly affected during the periods of crisis—particularly, the passive sector—and the insecurity of their situation became more or less permanent. There was a quite considerable gap between reality and their modern consumerist expectations; in some cases, the upward mobility that had favoured these classes in the past no longer functioned.

The studies undertaken by ECLAC showed that, especially in the 1980s, workers in industry and related sectors underwent far worse upheavals than the salaried staff of the middle classes. They suffered drastic salary decreases in real terms, and the num-

bers of industrial workers in some countries dropped in proportion to the constantly growing urban workforce. Furthermore, in many countries the power of the trade unions to protect the interests of their members diminished, and their scope for influencing national politics became extremely limited.

It was also found that the peasantry had become diversified as a result of changes in the agrarian structure and the emergence of different forms of farming units as alternatives to the traditional large estates and smallholdings. Farming enterprises were formed that gave rise to sizeable groups of salaried workers, albeit only temporary workers in many cases. At the same time, smallholdings and tenant farms did not dwindle in number. The emergence of agricultural enterprises and of a considerable number of salaried workers entailed a change in the peasant's relationship with the land, the nature of his demands and the consequent mobility of the rural population. The growth of agro-industry also influenced the activities of medium- and small-scale landowners, who in many cases formed connections with it. There was no decline, however, in the significance of the "peasant economy" associated with this type of landowner, its most salient feature, as ever, being the strategy of survival of the family group.

Naturally enough, marginality and poverty were major concerns for ECLAC, and although these two aspects are not strictly equivalent, their correlation should not be underestimated. ECLAC's studies were focused on analysing these phenomena and on establishing the interrelationships between them and the characteristics of the current development model; the impact of social policy was evaluated with reference to these issues and strategies for tackling them were formulated. What was most interesting, however, was the finding that poverty and marginality appeared to be closely linked with the exclusive character and concentrating effects of the current development style and that in order to eliminate these structural traits they had to be tackled head on.

Lastly, with the aim of giving a comprehensive account of the new social situation, ECLAC set about analysing two categories of exceptional importance: women and young people. With regard to women, it showed that the effects of the changes that had taken place were not confined to the economic and social spheres, but extended to cultural behaviour. The numbers of women joining the workforce had increased extremely rapidly and at a much faster rate

than in the case of men, although this did not mean, of course, that they had attained a greater share in economic activity than men, who continued to hold sway. Women were mainly joining the service sectors, in many cases the so-called "personal services", but in most of the countries clerical and secretarial positions accounted for the second most common form of female employment.

The increase in female participation in the labour force was seen to be associated with urbanization, modernization, the education process and changed attitudes to work. Thus, it was evident that women were gaining increasing access to education, although improved equality of opportunities was a phenomenon limited to the higher social levels, the less advantaged groups continuing to be prey to discrimination. Women's involvement in public life was found to be low in terms of the traditional forms of participation such as membership of political parties, trade unions and other common forms of organization, but a different picture emerged when account was taken of social movements linked to specific community needs such as housing, education, health care and improved living standards. It is a fact, for example, that at the grass-roots level such movements claiming better conditions appear to be organized and led largely by women. The aforementioned changes had an impact on the traditional family by reshuffling the roles of family members. In addition, a major role was played in these structural changes and in the role of the family by the spread of mass education and the impact of the media, which competed with the family as a socializing influence.

The world of young people was a subject of interest to ECLAC for a number of reasons. For one thing, in the Latin American region, the relative numerical importance of this age bracket of 15 to 24 years was one of the highest in the world (approximately 20 per cent of the population), and in fact, one third of the workforce was under the age of 25. However, in times of crisis as in the 1980s, the absorption of young people into the labour force was extremely slow; in some countries they accounted for almost half the unemployed. Young people were therefore well aware of their precarious situation and also very anxious about their future. It had been taken for granted that the expansion of the education system would enable young people to enter the workforce at a favourable level, but it began to be clear that the

abilities of the most highly educated were being underutilized. Although, as a social group, young people seemed far better educated than previous generations, their employment opportunities in a working world of changing rules and slow growth did not come up to general expectations.

A further point of relevance was the finding that the young people of the region formed a heterogeneous social group. Children from poor families tended to remain trapped in their marginal situation. As for the others, paradoxically, the very organization and nature of the education system served to accentuate the social differentiation through the contrasting standards of education imparted—irrespective of formal equivalence—by the different types of edu-

cational institution. Thus, the differences between urban and rural institutions and between private and public institutions were particularly notable. A further development noted was the emergence of university systems ranging from centres of excellence to institutions with little more to commend them than their paper credentials, where the level of teaching was hardly distinguishable from that provided by secondary schools. A further matter of concern was the question of how young people would succeed in establishing a sense of identity, a subject which was regarded as a serious cultural challenge, especially in view of the proliferation of images of consumer habits abroad and other aspects of foreign lifestyles propagated by the media.

IV

The search for a new approach

It has become almost a platitude to define the 1980s as the "lost decade". While this is an accurate description from the point of view of low economic performance and deteriorating social conditions, the crisis of the 1980s was nevertheless a turning-point in the development approach adopted until then. The previous dynamism, driven by an export sector dependent on basic commodities, an industrialization process mainly reliant on domestic demand and investment concentrated in the public sector, was tending to run out of momentum and to give way to new approaches. Here a point of cardinal importance was the ideological change taking place, especially—as far as development was concerned—in the conception of the State, which was beginning to be perceived as subsidiary. In other words, the philosophy emerging was that the public sector should only fulfil those essential functions that the private sector could not or did not wish to fulfil. This new ideology began to take shape in almost all the governments of the region.

Furthermore, in most of the region's countries certain sectors began to emerge whose chief defining characteristic was a more modern approach to production. Many of these sectors were devoted to the export of non-traditional goods, although the financial, services and commercial sectors were also undergoing extensive modernization. However, the patterns of distribution characteristic of Latin Ameri-

can development did not change and even, in some cases, assumed more regressive characteristics than before. And the productive structure, linked to a concentrated domestic market in which the distribution of income is extremely unequal, has reproduced those inequalities.

The trend at the present time is towards an emphasis on the growth of the more modern sectors in the trust that it will generate sufficient forward momentum to pull along with it the sectors and social groups straggling behind. The idea of reliance on the most modern sectors is lent further force by the world-wide technological revolution that we are witnessing today, an evolution which will render former production methods irredeemably obsolete. Moreover, it is thought that increased industrial exports might contribute to rectifying the perennial external imbalance of most of the region's economies.

None the less, the new development approaches which have begun to take shape retain as a point of discussion the question of the type of relationship between economic development—understood as the expansion of per capita product and income and their distribution—and social development, conceived as the improvement of the population's living standards.

ECLAC, as might be expected, is involved in this debate and has shown a particular interest in the social aspects of development, especially in view of the

high social cost of the crisis of the 1980s (high levels of unemployment and underemployment, the decline in real salary levels, increased poverty and the deep erosion of the social welfare services). In the process of identifying the factors affecting social development, the search has not been limited to analysis of the efficiency of the social welfare services. Although important, they are not in themselves the root of overall social inequality. As highlighted by innumerable ECLAC studies, the real problems are to be found in the nature of the relationships between economic, social and political structures.

ECLAC has advanced an approach which has gained currency under the motto "changing production patterns with social equity". In this approach, social aspects not only form a whole but also constitute a substantial part of the approach itself. The problem of education ranks high among the social factors considered, in view of the pre-eminent importance ascribed in the context of the current technological revolution to the production and use of know-how in the process of innovation. Furthermore, new technologies (computer and communications systems) also have an undeniable impact on the actual process of production and dissemination of know-how. Through its own studies and those of other United Nations agencies (especially UNESCO) and also research undertaken nationally, ECLAC has sought to show the challenges faced in the region in order to achieve an optimum balance between education, development and social equity.

The expansion of the education system since the Second World War and especially in the last three decades is indisputable. However, especially in recent years, this expansion has largely been at the cost of declining overall standards of teaching, and inefficient use has been made of the system's capacities. This has been particularly evident in primary education, which has begun to pull down the secondary and tertiary levels and to yield high rates of late school entry, grade-repeating, truancy and early school-leaving. Expansion of the education system has been accompanied by increased access to secondary education which, although initially conceived as a level preparatory to higher education, has declined in practice to the level of mass education, performing a function previously assumed to be that of primary education. The content of the education provided at this level has remained the same, however, and a

large proportion of the students emerging are not equipped to join the workforce. The standard of higher education is also questionable, and few universities can boast sufficiently qualified and stable full-time teaching and research staff. Part-time teaching staff are increasingly common, as are research staff engaged in projects that are not always contained within university research policy.

The studies also demonstrate, however, that the education system has been subject to severe segmentation, a process that has exacerbated existing social inequality. Low performance, truancy and repetition of grades are problems generally concentrated in the marginal urban population groups and in rural areas. In addition, there has been a dramatic decline in the State's capacity to take action in the educational sphere, which has led to a chronic shortage of material and human resources. For those who have no other choices, the primary and secondary education offered by the State often has little more than symbolic value. The more privileged groups tend to create their own academic circuit with higher standards of quality, a circuit entered at an early age through private and selective pre-schools or primary schools. Thus, part of the private sector holds itself apart from the State sector and tends to form segmented educational circuits divided according to income group.

An important element of the thesis propounded by ECLAC is its orientation towards a model of development conducive to social cohesion and the strengthening of democratic political processes in the region. The particular concern of ECLAC with the problem of civic participation leads on to the subject of the political forms implied by this option and the model of democracy adopted.

In ECLAC's new approach, democracy and participation are issues arising inevitably from the dynamic of the transformation process. In this sense, sociological analysis seeks to permit a better understanding of current ideological structures and their possible orientations, the role of organizations and cultural attitudes, and the part played by the media. And the aspect of greatest relevance in all this is the understanding of the new relationship established by society with the State, given that a new State-society relationship is a key factor in achieving the more equitable society set forth by ECLAC in its approach.

(Original: Spanish)

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