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MIDDLE-RANK HUMAN SETTLEMENTS IN TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION
STRATEGIES IN LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN */

*/ This document was prepared in the Joint ECLAC/UNCHS Human Settlements Unit at the request of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS). It should be considered as a preliminary report on the subject

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MEMORANDUM

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SUMMARY

This document, prepared in the framework of the joint activities agreed on by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), is a preliminary report on the theoretical and methodological trends in the planning and management of middle-rank human settlements in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean, and on the concrete experience accumulated in this field in the region.

The subject dealt with by this document is of fundamental importance to the efforts which are being carried out in Latin America and the Caribbean, especially by the public sector, to bring the organization of the territory and the structure of the human settlements system into line with the achievement of the broader objectives which form the basis of the predominant development models in the region and the alternative schemes which are beginning to be considered, with a view to orienting future development.

The importance attached to human settlements matters is due basically, on the one hand, to the conviction that there is a mutual determining link between the process of settlement of the population over the territory and the broader processes of social change and development and, on the other, to the concentrative trends observed in the distribution of the population and activities in the national territories.

As a reaction to the problems raised by the territorial structures resulting from the interaction between the development style adopted by nearly the entire region and the pattern of settlement and, especially, in an effort to seek solutions to the critical situations held to have been created by the concentrative trend noted above, some concrete public sector policy and action proposals have been formulated in the past, which seek to alter that concentrative pattern and modify the structure and operation of the systems of settlement in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

In most cases, these proposals incorporate strategy and policy indications regarding the creation or strengthening of the so-called intermediate cities or middle-rank settlements, the idea being that through such measures the problems assumed to have been created by the concentration of the population and economic activities would be resolved through the establishment of more balanced territorial systems.

Many of the arguments supporting this type of proposal are based on the concept of balanced development which advocates the formulation of policies designed to check the growth of the large cities and favour a system of settlements in keeping with a normal logarithmic distribution whereby each settlement should have a size consistent with its role within the system as a whole.

This conception, for its part, is closely linked to the formulations on the optimum size of a city. In accordance with those formulations, models have been proposed which tend to rule out the viability of settlements exceeding a certain population size, concerning the exact magnitude of which there does not appear to be a clear consensus.

/Some authors

Some authors maintain that these models, as well as their theoretical basis, omit a series of elements making up the particular historic contexts --such as their specific economic, social, political and geographic features-- which provide the background for the processes of urban growth and spatial mobility of the population. There is no doubt that consideration of these elements determines the relativity of any "optimum" and makes it necessary to reformulate this in terms of the predominant development style, the form of insertion of the national economy into the world sphere, the nature and location of natural resources, the degree of technological evolution attained, the patterns of social participation in political power, the dimensions of the country and its particular historical background.

Furthermore, the theory of optimum urban size would appear to disregard the fact that economic and social development, or, at least, economic growth, has shown a high degree of correspondence with the degree of urbanization. It would appear that the technological indivisibilities which provide the basis for establishing economies of scale, external economies and economies of association, require a certain amount of concentration and, therefore, make it necessary for substantial resources to be allocated to the creation and maintenance of an urban system that is provided with an infrastructure and basic services. It also disregards the fact that the problems of the large metropolitan areas are a result of the imperfections exhibited by the economic and social structure of the country as a whole. In fact, in relative terms, the deficiencies in the area of provision of services --although not necessarily as regards the magnitude of the environmental deterioration-- tend to be more accentuated in smaller-sized urban centres and also, no doubt, in areas of high population dispersion.

Part one of the work which follows deals with the question of intermediate or middle-rank settlements and their relationship to population distribution and territorial organization. Next an analysis is made of policies on middle-rank settlements and the experience accumulated in this area. Finally, parts three and four make some recommendations for both national and international action.

A. INTERMEDIATE SETTLEMENTS, POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

1. Review of main concepts and theoretical approaches

In general terms it may be stated that the predominant human settlement model in the region, discounting differences among countries, displays a definite geographic concentration of both the population and the economic and political administrative activities around one or two urban centres, together with marked dispersion of the rural population over practically unoccupied territories. There is thus a highly polarized distribution of the human settlement system of the majority of the countries, which is reflected in:

a) the existence of a small number of large cities in which a substantial and growing proportion of the total population is concentrated;

/b) the

- b) the existence of numerous hamlets and villages corresponding to a dispersed type of rural population settlement, currently accounting for around one-third of the total population of the respective countries, and
- c) a lack of intermediate cities fulfilling regional or subregional functions.

As has often been noted, the development of industry in the large urban centres which provided the best advantages of location caused the emergence and expansion of new productive activities --especially trade, services and financial activities-- and this has led to an increase in the gap between the importance and magnitude of those centres and that of the remaining settlements in the country. This uneven growth is reinforced by the action of the State, which has helped to maintain spatial concentration to the extent that it has become necessary to allocate a high percentage of financial resources to the central subsystems, chiefly for the purpose of creating additional infrastructure, absorbing dissavings due to over-concentration, or meeting the high maintenance and operating costs of the main cities. In this context, intermediate settlements have basically been limited to fulfilling the function of channelling the surpluses generated by themselves or by the regions to the main centres, and their accumulation capacity has thus been restricted.

It is important to note that with the advance of the spatial concentration processes, the increase in economic activities and population has, in many countries of the region, gone beyond the limits of the main city, so that veritable central complexes have been formed, generally made up of a metropolis which acts as the hub of a network of medium-sized centres and rural areas directly connected with it. These complexes have become central subsystems of the national system and act as the driving force of that system.

At the same time, however, it may be observed that in recent decades there have been some changes in the urban picture in the region, reflected in a relatively substantial increase in small and intermediate cities. Thus, the process of spatial redistribution of the population during the 1960s and 1970s has been directed, on the one hand, towards a broadening of the area occupied and, on the other, towards an increase in the degree of concentration of the population. To a large extent that spatial expansion or broadening of the economic boundaries of the countries is linked to the emergence and development of new urban centres, among which intermediate and small settlements play an important role.

The concentrative trends referred to above have created some specific problems in the resulting territorial structures, which are reflected, among other things, in the utilization of the available financial resources to support a type of urbanization which has proportionally higher costs than those of smaller-sized centres and an uneven form of spatial growth with sharp regional disparities that reflect considerable differences in living conditions.

In response to these problems, efforts have been made to achieve significant changes in the territorial structures, through strategies involving spatial redistribution of activities and population built around proposals for forming national or regional systems of cities by creating or strengthening intermediate cities.

One of the clearest ways of determining the place of intermediate settlements within settlement systems, both regional and national, is to define as clearly as possible the functions they fulfil within those systems, among which the most important are:

- i) concentration of investment for the purpose of vitalizing relatively less-developed regions, by taking advantage of the indivisibilities and economies of scale of the basic social capital;
- ii) concentration of demand for services, by adapting it to the minimum scales of operation of those services, and
- iii) provision of alternative attractions for the migratory flows converging on the central regions.

For the purposes of this paper, intermediate settlements will be understood as those possessing a minimum level ("threshold") ^{1/} of diversification of economic activities that is sufficient to ensure that their development does not depend solely on one specific activity, while at the same time they avoid situations of inorganic diversification such as might involve a possible deterioration in the living conditions of their inhabitants, high operating costs and marked economic inefficiency. The foregoing also implies the existence of a suitable social division of labour and the presence and development, as in the major centres, of social relations of the secondary type, i.e., formal and indirect.

2. Population distribution and settlement patterns: a quantitative view

The basic factor underlying the efforts which have been carried out in the area of regional planning in the Latin American countries is the assumption that the problems encountered in that sphere are totally or partially attributable to the predominant human settlement pattern. For that reason, these efforts have been designed to achieve significant changes in the territorial structures through strategies basically intended to alter the spatial redistribution of activities and population, whose realization mainly requires policies and actions directed towards forming functionally ranked systems in which intermediate settlements fulfil a highly important role.

There are several theoretical approaches to this matter which it would be valuable to analyse, especially when it is considered that the adoption of a proposal for spatial redistribution ultimately implies the adoption of a theoretical-methodological option, since there is no consensus on some questions which may be fundamental.

The idea of forming and strengthening intermediate cities has always been linked to the attempt to come closer to achieving an ideal scheme of human settlements. Since the spatial models seeking a general balance, based on the central location theories of Losch and Christaller, several proposals have been put forward advocating an optimum distribution of urban centres over the territory. Among the many proposals put forward in relation to spatial organization schemes, the most intensively debated ones in Latin America have basically been the following:

The first proposal developed at a time when certain specific planning experiments began to require formulations that were realistic and adapted to the specific conditioning factors of societies, the task being to reorganize territories in which the main functions were tending to become monopolized by a principal centre of accumulation. As a result of that observation, a scheme was developed based on the quantification of the population's demands for services and the amount of activities, according to location, in areas and regions of different types and size. The element basically determining the ranking of the system of cities in this scheme is the concept that the regional function is highly complex, so that a single city cannot provide the population and the regional economic system with all the diverse services needed. This gives rise to the concept of the urban network,^{2/} which constitutes the central element in the ranked system of cities, which from this theoretical viewpoint, is the basic element in the strategy for reorganization of the territory on a national scale. This concept has had great influence on research into urban processes and on the design of spatial redistribution strategies in several Latin American countries.

Another concept which has attracted interest in the region is that of growth centres, which is closely linked to the theory of poles of development and whose fundamental aim is to lead to the definition of growth policies for certain selected places for the purpose of achieving broader regional or national objectives through that growth. All this is based on the supposition that the establishment of growth centres can serve as a factor for vitalizing the regions in which those centres are located: i.e., each growth centre would become an effective means both of overcoming situations of backwardness in the less developed zones of the periphery of each country, and of initiating processes in those zones aimed at the achievement of national development objectives. The basic element, in this concept too, is that of a middle-rank city which, besides acting as a regional centre for services, offers a diversified basic industrial structure.

Some authors ^{3/} have based their arguments in favour of this theoretical viewpoint on the importance of the role which could be played by the growth centres in the process of the spatial diffusion of innovations and, as a result, in the advancement of regional development processes. This argument rests on two basic suppositions: first, that the development process can be conceived of as the introduction and diffusion of successive innovations in functional spaces (economic, social, cultural and institutional, as well as geographic) and second, that the most favourable conditions for innovation have historically been found in the largest, rapidly expanding urban systems.

Taking into account the existing limitations on applying a widespread policy for growth centres in countries such as those of Latin America, which have a strong tendency towards spatial concentration and face serious restrictions of resources for capital formation, some proposals have been elaborated, as alternatives to the idea of growth centres, which suggest a policy that has been called one of "concentrated, selective and limited deconcentration", providing for the gradual formation of a small number of such centres in selected places throughout the territory, this number being determined by the magnitude and type of the regional needs, the complementarity of the national and regional development objectives, the number of existing cities having the potential to become that type of centre, and the availability of resources. The aim in implementing policies based on this

/scheme is

scheme is to decrease the growth rate of the central subsystems, and it involves taking decisions on concentration of public investments in selected centres, complemented by policies designed to stimulate the location of private sector activities in those centres.

Another type of scheme which aims at spatial deconcentration on the basis of development of intermediate cities and which has acquired great momentum, not only in the academic sphere, in the past decade, proposes the alteration of the current settlement pattern chiefly by promoting the strengthening of the national urban systems with a large number of medium-sized and small cities, by using intermediate technologies, decentralizing energy supplies, and promoting self-sufficiency in food production. Such measures should be accompanied by the structuring of a political and social system founded on territorial communities, i.e., basic communities which are grouped together at successive and interrelated decision-making levels (local, regional and national).

It is important to note that for the moment these ideas can only be considered as an effort to construct ideal strategies, since it would be difficult to apply them properly under current conditions. However, they cannot fail to be considered as an important contribution to the discussion on strategies which include intermediate settlements as a central element for altering human settlement patterns.

3. Economic and demographic factors influencing the dynamics of human settlements

In order to analyse the role played by small and intermediate settlements in the development process it would be useful first to review briefly the current situation in the region, from a quantitative point of view.

Around 1960, some 33% of the total population of Latin America was located in major administrative divisions which had a density of 50 or more inhabitants per km² but comprised only 3.7% of the territory. In 1980, the divisions displaying that type of density constituted 7.8% of the area of Latin America and contained more than half of its population (almost 52%). Between those same years, there was a simultaneous reduction in areas with a low level of occupation. Thus, whereas in 1960 around 33% of the region's area corresponded to major administrative divisions which had less than one inhabitant per km², in 1980 only 7.7% of the territory displayed such a low density.

These figures undoubtedly conceal the heterogeneity existing in the large geographical aggregates under consideration, but even so the data suggest, in most cases, a persistence of the trends towards concentration of the population in small portions of the regional space. At the same time, however, some countries are exhibiting clear indications of a slackening in the concentration rate.

In Argentina, for example, it has been observed that the relative importance of the population of the central zone, comprising the Federal Capital and the Province of Buenos Aires, dropped during the 1970s and in 1980 approached the value recorded twenty years before. Between the 1960s and 1970s, an important decline was also noted in certain non-central zones, such as the pampas region and the

/Provinces of

Provinces of Corrientes, Santiago del Estero and San Luis. At the same time, a considerable positive change can be noted in the relative importance of the size of the population of the peripheral zones of the country: together, the regions of Patagonia, Cuyo, the north and northeast of the country grew during the 1970s at an annual rate of 2.54%, while the country as a whole did so at a rate of 1.79%.

In Brazil, with the establishment of Brasilia and the incentives of the opening of the agricultural frontier, the peripheral regions (north and central-west regions) have experienced rapid growth. Thus it may be stated that those zones have become attractive alternatives for those emigrating from the central zones of the country, which have been losing relative importance within the national territory as a whole.

Mexico, for its part, displays an accentuation of the trends towards concentration of the population. The population of the nucleus comprised by the Federal District and the States of Mexico and Morelos has increased from 20.5% of the national total in 1960 to 26.5% in 1980. That increase is the result of the importance of Mexico City, which has apparently increased during each census period. The peripheral zones, which include the States of the North Pacific and the northern and southern frontiers of the country, exhibit fairly differentiated types of growth, although their net result is reflected in a growth rate which exceeded the national average for the 1960s but was slightly below that of the 1970s. Much of the larger relative growth of the periphery between 1960 and 1970 was due to the fact that some States promoted the opening of new irrigation zones and the more intensive use of tropical lands, as well as the exploitation of mining and energy resources and tourist activity.

Peru, like Mexico, displays a significant persistence in its territorial concentration. In this case there is growing concentration of the population in the nucleus formed by the Department of Lima and the Province of Callao, which between 1960 and 1980 is estimated to have increased its relative share in the total population from 22.7% to 30.5%. Notwithstanding the foregoing, it is interesting to note that the demographic growth rate of the nucleus dropped in the 1970s to 3.44%, compared with 4.82% in the preceding decade, whereas the peripheral zones of the northern and southern coasts and of the eastern region (jungle) showed an increase in the growth rate of their population in the last decade.

The examples mentioned above indicate the great diversity of situations exhibited by the population redistribution process in Latin America. On the whole, however, the data show that the spatial concentration of the population continued in the 1960s and 1970s, although its rate would appear to be declining, both as a result of the decrease in total population growth and because of the presence of locational alternatives in peripheral zones.

Considering the features and trends of the national human settlements systems in Latin America, and given the close relationship between the population redistribution and urbanization processes, it would be interesting to briefly review the specific features of the latter in the region.

The first element which should be mentioned is that according to available data, the most dynamic period of urbanization in the region is over; in most of the countries, it occurred around the beginning of the second half of the twentieth century and its rate has declined in subsequent years together with the magnitude of the rural-urban migration accompanying it.

For the purposes of this analysis, the region can be divided into subregional aggregates. Thus, Temperate South America is in a fairly advanced state of the process, with a high percentage of urban population and with low and continually declining growth rates. The Caribbean, on the other hand, had low levels in 1950, with growth rates which have increased up to the present. Central America is in an intermediate stage of almost lineal growth, whereas tropical South America, to a greater extent than the rest, shows clear growth between 1950 and 1980 which then dropped off somewhat, giving urbanization levels comparable to those which the temperate subregion was exhibiting three decades ago.

Historically, the proportion of the total population which was living in cities in the last century was lower than 10% in most of the countries of the region; that figure increased slowly in the first quarter of this century and then grew rapidly. Even so, as late as 1950 the population of the cities was less than 50% of total population in all the Latin American countries for which data are available, with the exception of Uruguay.

In 1960 four groups of countries could be distinguished, according to the proportion of the total population living in cities of 20 000 inhabitants or more. The first group (Argentina, Chile and Uruguay) had more than 50% of its population in cities. In the second group, the proportion of the population residing in cities fluctuated between one-third and one-half of the total population. This group was made up of Barbados, Belize, Colombia, Cuba, French Guyana, Panama, Suriname and Venezuela. The third group had between a quarter and a third of its total population living in cities, and included Brazil, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Puerto Rico. Finally, the fourth group, composed of the remaining countries --Bolivia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Trinidad and Tobago-- had very low percentages of the population residing in cities.

Out of 20 countries with up-to-date data, in 1980 only El Salvador, Guatemala Haiti and Honduras remained in this last category, while two others had less than one-third of their population living in cities (Costa Rica and Paraguay). The 14 remaining countries all exceeded that proportion. Although there were only five countries with a proportion higher than 50% (Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Uruguay and Venezuela), another three (Brazil, Cuba and Peru) were very close to that proportion; in the six remaining countries (Bolivia, Dominican Republic, Ecuador Jamaica, Mexico and Nicaragua), the population of the cities was between 34% and 43% of the whole.

Within this general picture, different city sizes may be distinguished for the purpose of observing some trends regarding the population living in them and thus attempting to estimate the degree of importance of the size of the population of intermediate cities.

Table 1

LATIN AMERICA: URBAN POPULATION, ACCORDING TO SIZE GROUPS OF COMMUNITIES IN 1960, 1970 AND 1980
(Thousands)

Countries	Communities with population of 2 000 to 19 999 inhabitants			Communities with population of 20 000 to 99 999 inhabitants			Communities with population of 100 000 or more inhabitants		
	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980	1960	1970	1980
Argentina	2 949	2 923	3 219	1 731	2 564	3 529	10 432	13 323	16 293
Bolivia	250	476	596	261	272	268	524	904	1 626
Brazil	13 938	18 786	20 748	1 306	3 547	9 339	18 294	31 150	46 089
Chile	1 294	1 381	1 201	1 347	1 787	1 769	2 503	3 943	5 786
Colombia	2 346	3 203	3 095	932	1 706	3 044	4 273	7 427	10 962
Costa Rica	192	222	356	-	88	180	229	362	506
Cuba	1 069	1 389	1 897	1 012	1 080	1 392	1 722	2 640	3 231
Dominican Republic	332	395	333	213	407	740	390	888	1 528
Ecuador	234	393	417	350	655	866	822	1 311	2 302
El Salvador	352	681	926	114	172	340	342	562	854
Guatemala	639	990	1 278	51	118	335	524	733	1 038
Haiti	130	295	384	60	106	104	294	511	854
Honduras	248	409	554	82	116	217	134	351	661
Mexico	8 230	12 334	15 960	4 078	5 885	8 813	6 896	11 924	20 679
Nicaragua	293	339	469	92	205	346	211	421	676
Panama	88	125	282	85	135	201	281	451	599
Paraguay	165	222	203	-	71	199	393	554	821
Peru	1 698	2 573	2 802	904	1 385	1 591	1 817	3 694	6 572
Uruguay	449	526	515	498	522	610	1 025	1 255	1 312
Venezuela	1 193	1 346	1 382	1 590	2 269	4 357	1 936	4 030	5 709
Total	36 089	49 008	56 609	14 706	23 090	38 240	53 042	86 434	128 098

Source: CELADE, based on censuses.

/As mentioned

As mentioned above, the concept of intermediate settlements has meaning only in reference to a system of human settlements which exhibits certain identifiable patterns and specific features and displays structural changes which occur with a certain dynamism that is due to different factors, among which the most important are economic and demographic factors.

It is important to recall that the growth rate of the urban population is directly related to natural growth (difference between fertility and mortality) and migration (particularly rural-urban migration). It is also affected by the possible statistical reclassification of the settlements when they attain a predetermined size or fulfil other conditions laid down in national urban settlement definitions. An increase in the degree of urbanization, which implies that the urban population has grown at a rate higher than that of the total population, is caused by the action of the three basic mechanisms noted above.

Unfortunately, the available background material for the 1960s and 1970s does not make it possible to establish the exact weight of each one of these elements. Nevertheless, since there is sufficient background to assume that natural growth in the urban zones of the region, especially those of greatest size and most diversified productive structure, is less than that of the rural areas owing to the more substantial decrease in fertility in the former, it could be concluded that the rise in the degree of urbanization would basically reflect migration and the increase in the number of urban census locations, which corresponds both to the reclassification of localities which were previously considered as rural, and to the effects of the expansion of the perimeter of the cities into adjoining rural areas.

Because of the lack of adequate information, it is necessary to make indirect estimates of the contribution of each of the factors indicated to the growth of the urban population. One estimate ^{4/} indicates that around two-thirds of the increase of the urban population of Latin America is due to natural growth (64% between 1960 and 1970 and 72% between 1970 and 1980) and that the joint contribution of migration, "reclassification" or "annexation", which corresponds to net rural-urban transfers, has decreased in recent decades (from 36% in the 1960s to 28% in the 1970s). The last component is the one which ultimately indicates the increase in the degree of urbanization in Latin America, and --as noted above-- it has fallen off in recent decades. At the same time, the growth of the urban population has also shown a tendency to decrease, reflecting the decline in the total natural population growth of the country; it is estimated that the growth rate of the urban population decreased from 4.23% between 1960 and 1970 to 3.41% in the following decade.

Rural-urban migration plays a fundamental role in net rural-urban transfers, which, as noted above, would best explain the increase in the degree of urbanization in Latin America.

Economic theories generally interpret migratory movements as a mechanism for adjusting manpower to the changing spatial distribution of the productive resources brought about by the economic development process. It may be assumed that the development of technology and the tastes of the population, together with the rise in the standard of living, play an essential role in the location of activities and population.

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The so-called external economies which arise from the concentration of activities and population in a few urban centres are a good basis for explaining some of the modern trends in the spatial location of the economy, especially in relation to the existence and cost of production factors and the proximity of demand. With regard to factor costs, technological progress in general, and especially progress in the area of transport, has helped to reduce the importance of local supplies of raw materials and semi-manufactured products as a location factor for the majority of manufacturing industries. That progress also helps to increase the mobility of labour. In this way activities oriented towards the use of natural resources (land, mineral deposits, woods, etc.) lose relative importance in terms of product generated and population employed.

Technological progress, and the economic growth which usually accompanies it, helps in many ways to promote external economies of concentration by favouring the spatial concentration of activities and population. In the first place, a growing portion of the population is freed from its dependence on the land, and the physical links of industry with the location of natural resources are weakened. In the second place, with the increase in per capita income, the structure of consumption changes in favour of those goods and services provided by market-oriented activities, so that the proportion of national income spent on such goods and services increases continually. In the third place, the external economies grow through the increase in the scale of production of the large corporations and the complementary businesses, which require concentration because of the technological relationships which link their production processes. These conditions, which are dependent on each other, together with the higher productivity of capital invested in those activities which benefit the most from external economies of concentration, act in a cumulative process, and the trend towards a concentrated pattern of distribution of activities and population, which is reaching critical proportions in Latin America, becomes stronger over time.

It is interesting to observe some indicators which make it possible to chart the urbanization process from both a demographic and an economic point of view. The share of the agricultural product in the total product has decreased in the majority of the countries: while during the pre-industrial stage that share was between 50% and 66%, it has recently been between 10% and 20%. The share of the industrial product in the total product, for its part, has grown from 20% to 40% or 50%.

The importance of agricultural labour is tending to decline. The loss of relative importance of the agricultural product means that the capital and labour used in the sector are growing at lower rates than in the remaining sectors of the economy. Since the natural growth rate of the population and therefore of labour is higher in rural zones, the lower effective rate can only be explained by the migration of agricultural workers, which has caused the work force employed in the industrial and services sectors to increase in nearly all the countries of the region, although in ways that vary from one to the other.

In accordance with the foregoing it may be said in summary that there are two features of the economic development of the Latin American countries which have most affected --and are continuing to affect-- the mobility and spatial distribution patterns of the population. The first is the existence of

/differentiated regional

differentiated regional development of the economy: that is to say, income, the product generated by industry, the transport network, specialized business and government services, housing construction, urbanization works, education, art, recreation, etc., are concentrated in a few areas constituting a small proportion of the total area.

The second feature is the scanty development of agriculture, which has kept up a low level of productivity. The exception is commercial-type agriculture, which produces mainly for export; however, this sector absorbs only a small portion of agricultural manpower in nearly all the countries of the region. The critical conditions of the agricultural economy are also aggravated by the growing deterioration of the terms of trade of agricultural products in comparison with non-agricultural products.

At the same time it may be stated --although there is no reliable empirical evidence-- that in general the urban growth rate has been falling off in recent years, in so far as smaller settlements become larger centres. From this point of view, small and intermediate settlements normally display higher growth rates than the main centres. This is basically due to the action of migration, assuming (as was done in the analysis of the total urban growth) that natural growth is not the factor which explains the differences within the urban system.

Migration to the main centres would have to be of considerable magnitude for its growth rate to increase; for this reason, it is tending to stabilize in those centres. On the contrary, net rural-urban migration towards small and intermediate settlements, although quantitatively lower than in the previous case, has a higher impact on the growth rate of those settlements.

Finally, it should be mentioned that very probably important differences are to be observed between the growth rates of the intermediate cities. This is basically due to the type of economic structure which characterizes them, which is instrumental in making one city and not another attract a higher quota of migrants.

B. POLICIES FOR MIDDLE-RANK SETTLEMENTS: A REVIEW OF EXPERIENCE

1. The validity of middle-rank human settlements policies

Although their heterogeneity is well known, middle-rank human settlements in the region have been the subject of a considerable number and variety of explicit and implicit policies whose nature and social coverage, as well as their effects over time and the main results of their implementation (especially in relation to the objectives which had been set) will be analysed below.

It is important to consider first of all, albeit briefly, the set of arguments justifying policy proposals for middle-rank human settlements, the contexts in which those policies are implemented, and the ways in which the respective actions are adopted to deal with the great variety of objectives established.

/However, this

However, this task of systematic review has considerable conceptual, methodological and practical limitations.

In the first place, as mentioned above, it is difficult to make the concept of the intermediate or middle-rank human settlement homogeneous for countries of very different geographical and economic sizes which have a great heterogeneity of productive apparatuses --differentiated even within the country-- and systems of territorial distribution of the population and economic activities which correspond to different historical and cultural modalities.5/

In the second place, the policies implemented form an extraordinarily broad mosaic, are part of diverse and incomplete theoretical conceptions,6/ have lasted for varying time periods and have been formulated in sociopolitical contexts that were also different. The difficulty of carrying out an exhaustive analysis and especially a review of a comparative nature is increased both by the fact that many of the policies are implicit in government, private or direct social action, and by the substantial gap between the formulation of the policies and the actual situation regarding their implementation.

In the third place, an analysis of policies on middle-rank human settlements cannot be separated from the complex set of national, interregional, intra-regional and local policies on human settlements.

From this perspective, and for the purpose indicated, several of the studies, reflections and experiences on regional planning in Latin America and the Caribbean 7/ are fully applicable.

The difficulties noted are substantial and because of them the arguments and conclusions of this document are subject to certain margins of application and are structured rather as elements for guiding a more systematic exploration of the particular situations of each country, since only a strict typological 8/ effort with regard to middle-rank human settlements will make it possible to obtain more specific and solid conclusions.

Subject to these reservations, it is appropriate to go back to that set of arguments which are usually put forward to validate planned, predominantly public 9/ action on middle-rank human settlements:

a) In the first place, it is held that the importance of human settlements planning lies in the need to check the explosive growth of the metropolis, with its concomitant qualitative increases in the social costs of urbanization and the threat to natural ecosystems;

b) Next, it is maintained that middle-rank cities would be capable, by internalizing substantial economies of scale and external and territorial economies of sustaining forms of development (with different degrees of self-sufficiency) in peripheral regional systems at least sufficient to create a national territorial order ensuring more homogeneous and geopolitically more stable occupation of the territory;

/c) It

c) It is also argued that the features of the new development options or schemes based on real advantages of the Latin American economies, such as their endowment of natural resources and labour force, as well as the existence of opportunities for collaboration and horizontal integration, also call for a territorial arrangement based on the predominance of intermediate cities and the building up of regional systems which are of middle rank in national terms;

d) In the same way, emphasis is placed on the need to overcome phenomena associated with the dispersion of the rural population and with the dynamics of the predominant forms of agricultural production, which would also involve a ranked ordering of human settlements;

e) It is considered that the (intra-national) regional sphere would be especially suitable for conducting governmental decentralization efforts ^{10/} associated with effective processes of democratization and with the prevailing demands for coherent planning and multisectoral action and for concerted policy design, and

f) Finally, it is maintained that the area of influence of middle-rank cities contains greater possibilities for the establishment of effective systems of participation of the organized social base: a condition that is felt to be increasingly essential for stabilizing and supporting democratic processes, and of fundamental importance in formulating diagnoses, strategies and projects.

2. The general contexts in which intermediate human settlement policies have been defined

The various policies concerning intermediate human settlements in Latin America and the Caribbean have been proposed and carried out in very different socio-political contexts. Mention may be made, however, of some common elements of the different contexts under which the policies were designed and which serve as a framework for subsequent analysis of them.

In the first place, in practically all known experiences the government plays a strategic role and the designs are, therefore, of the type known as public policies. To the extent that government actions fit in with various ideological and theoretical proposals, the corresponding policies will be "tinged" with those features. In this respect, an exhaustive analysis made by ILPES ^{11/} on the state of planning in the region provided an interesting typology of ideological-theoretical forms which explain human settlements planning and policy proposals.

For their part, the different sociopolitical contexts and their respective planning formulations involve different schemes and structures for social participation and the presence of different socio-governmental links. The forms of participation of the organized social base and the links it establishes with the governmental structure are vital elements upon which the feasibility of a planning proposal largely depends.

The general statement made here --which obviously requires specific adaptation to each national or regional experience in each specific historical time period-- is that interventionist planning schemes --with emphasis on

/incentive instruments

incentive instruments and restrictions on location---together with a series of sectoral policy measures have been predominant in the region, against a background of governmental structures that are insufficiently developed as regards middle-rank human settlements and display serious deficiencies in the area of social participation, with practically no schemes in which the people take the leading role in the design, management and control of programmes and projects.

Furthermore, the most comprehensive development options of the countries of the region (efforts aimed at substitution industrialization and diversification of the export structure, among others) usually do not assign an important role to intermediate cities or the human settlements subsystems proposed.

3. General analysis of experience

Even recognizing the considerable heterogeneity of situations and experiences and the need for carrying out more systematic research on the topic, the efforts made at planning intermediate human settlements in Latin America and the Caribbean have achieved rather poor results, especially with regard to vitalizing the middle-rank cities and their respective peripheral human settlements subsystems.

Reference may be made here to a good deal of experience and research on planning modalities and policy proposals concerning middle-rank human settlements,^{12/} which generally shows that in recent decades territorial planning in the region (in both its intra-regional and urban aspects), has not altered the concentrated structure of the national human settlements system, has not set in motion more or less permanent territorial development processes in peripheral regions, and has not even effectively helped to improve the distribution of income and opportunities.

The meagre results of these types of policies --a situation to which reference has already been made-- are explained largely by a set of common theoretical and technical elements which form the basis for the efforts carried out in this area.

Among these, special mention should be made of the following:

a) These policies have been strongly idealistic, utopian and academically-oriented, a situation which shows up initially because in the majority of the experiences there is an imprecise diagnosis of the actual situation of the middle-rank cities and their areas of regional influence (inadequate analysis of the social forces favouring change and of the behaviour of the economic sectors, for example). The lack of precise knowledge of the situation to be altered fits in easily with simplistic and obviously piecemeal explanatory schemes (minimization of the centre-periphery domination scheme at the national level, for example). The predominance of spatial categories over social categories and the difficulty of achieving an interdisciplinary conceptual framework that would generate capacity to carry out comprehensive approaches also results in a narrow academic orientation, much closer to laboratory work than to social praxis.

/Finally, mention

Finally, mention should be made of the predominantly utopian foundation upon which the design of this type of policy often rests. The uncritical use of the theory of the so-called poles of development is a good example of this feature.

b) In most cases, there is a lack of feasibility and viability studies of the policies designed. The policies often do not stand up to an analysis of internal coherence, or were formulated without making a review of the available inputs. In addition, the projections of the financial resources necessary for realizing the proposals are often also imprecise and the sociopolitical feasibility studies which give an effective account of the opinions and options of social movements and political forces regarding those proposals are either not carried out, or are conducted with an inadequate methodology which does not take into account the significant socio-territorial changes imposed by the existence of broad and stable political-social alliances.^{13/}

c) Policies on middle-rank human settlements have not been fully integrated into development macro-policies in the countries of the region. This lack of co-ordination is evident in:

- i) severe difficulties in ensuring that the territorial policy proposals, especially those referring to middle-rank cities and regional subsystems, form part of the high-priority or central policies of national development;
- ii) serious deficiencies in the integration of policies on middle-rank human settlements, both into national central policies and into sectoral policies (especially those regarding industry, agriculture and natural resources), and
- iii) lack of integration of the set of territorial policies among themselves, given the lack of coherent strategies regarding the national human settlements system.^{14/}

d) The policies do not cover the set of available resources making up the total development potential of the regions and the middle-rank cities, especially the material resources of the habitat for the provision of goods and services,^{15/} the variety of adapted technologies present in those spheres and, especially, the capacity of social organization existing in those human settlements. On the contrary, many of the policies raise the question of the use of the available regional resources after the establishment of the options.

e) Middle-rank human settlements policies are not sufficiently based on a recognition of their specific aspects; rather, they are designed according to general frameworks, without seeking to bring them into line with different situations, such as, for example, intermediate cities lagging behind in peripheral regional subsystems of low economic dynamism and intermediate cities which for various reasons (geopolitical, exploitation of natural resources, etc.) become both centres of explosive growth and centres of activity in predominantly rural regions. It is obviously necessary to consider these special circumstances in order to proceed to the formulation of specific policies resulting from a careful analysis of each situation, of each of the inputs of that situation, and of the various options and instruments for activation and development which correspond to each case.

4. Establishment of a preliminary typology of experiences

It is undoubtedly a complex matter to formulate a typology of experiences which will establish --albeit with a good deal of imprecision-- a classification of the main policy modalities. However --bearing in mind that important restriction--, it is possible to distinguish some identifiable types within the various policies seeking to promote and develop intermediate cities.

Such distinction is strongly determined both by the common features of the different contexts referred to above and the already noted need to specify the situations, and by the different production sectors for which the policies analysed are designed (industry, mining, agriculture, for example). The classification which follows emphasizes, as a distinctive criterion, the central objective of the most relevant experiences which have taken place in the region.

a) Policies for creation of intermediate settlements

Ordinarily based on policy formulations of the "poles of development" type, these experiences display a substantial variety of motive activities: industry, exploitation of natural resources and energy, and directly productive, service and tertiary activities. These policies are generally linked to frontier territorial development experiences in which geopolitical options aimed at the activation of peripheral regions predominate. Usually, in these cases, the new intermediate cities are initially based on a human settlement (or a small subsystem of settlements) of limited development, with low population density and no signs of previous dynamism. Thus situations of explosive growth are habitually produced, with radical changes in the structure of the economic base and the dynamics of population growth and of creation of basic economic and social infrastructure.

Because of these circumstances and their various consequences, the pertinent authorities have to engage in practically continual activity of formulation and reformulation of general and sectoral policies, in an attempt to rationalize the growth and provide a suitable response to the growing demands for resources and services which it causes. Furthermore, in the majority of cases these policies are instruments for achieving national objectives; thus development of the intermediate settlement is explained not by local options, but by priorities established according to a global model whose area of reference is the country. This instrumentality justifies the allocation of a qualitatively higher volume of resources, the installation of new activities in the locality and a qualitative and quantitative increase in services, trade and urban activity in general.

The local government institutions are also affected, and it is even possible --given the national priority explaining this growth-- that corporations or other regional and local institutional forms will be established with broad functions, their own resources and high degrees of autonomy. In that context a fundamental change is brought about in the social structure of the locality, new sociopolitical actors appear within the civil society, and a shifting of the previous social forces will probably occur. There will be considerable general activation in this type of intermediate city, although it will be subject to the instability of explosive growth and the high national costs which such an expansive modality involves.

/The specific

The specific programmes for growth and diversification of urban functions and activities will encompass practically all of the city's activities. Substantial investments will be made in economic infrastructure, energy, transport and communications, and basic social infrastructure, health and education. Clear emphasis will be given to specific programmes in the area of housing and urban services.

As regards the effectiveness of these policies, it may be said that in most cases they have achieved effective development of the new intermediate cities, which have attracted significant amounts of population and have become diversified in terms of their economic activities. However, these achievements, besides being costly in terms of the national budget, have negative cumulative effects and are unstable or, rather, their stability depends on the permanence of the national priorities established.

The Latin American experience includes several examples of strategies based on the theory of poles of development with the objective of creating middle-rank cities, even though in many cases it is rather a question of promoting existing urban systems and incipient activities, chiefly industrial.

Two cases may be cited by way of example. The first, in Mexico, was aimed at creating satellite cities in connection with the industrial decentralization of the Federal District (Mexico City). It began in 1953 with the establishment of Ciudad Sahagún, 50 km from the capital; as of 1970 22 industrial parks had been set up, 14 of which were private. These centres were classed as deconcentrating submetropolises. The net effect was the creation of a huge metropolis comprising the industrial parks of the Federal District and the traditional expanding city, where there arose low-income peripheral settlements characterized by the high degree of poverty of their inhabitants.

The case of Ciudad Nezahualcóyotl is illustrative. It arose spontaneously 40 years ago in connection with the peripheral settlement and growth of the city; decentralized industrialization strongly boosted its growth process in the 1950s.

In 1963 the respective municipality was created, and thus the new city was legalized and entered into a stage of organic consolidation in accordance with the human settlements policies for this particular case.

A second, better-known case is that of the Venezuelan Guayana Corporation. Established in order to develop a region rich in natural resources in Venezuela, its purposes and principles were closely connected with what could be considered today as a scheme for creation of intermediate cities, although strictly speaking it was originally a case of polarized regional development.

During the 1950s, the zone of Guayana experienced substantial changes which contributed to the establishment of new human settlements. Puerto Ordaz was founded; together with the already existing locality of San Félix, it was later to become part of Ciudad Guayana. In the second half of the 1950s, construction of the iron and steel works and of the first hydroelectric power station (Macagua) was begun while the Orinoco river was dredged in order to make it navigable up to Puerto Ordaz. In addition, the Venezuelan Guayana Corporation (CVG) was created to take charge of the integral development of the region.

/During those

During those years, the settlements which were subsequently to make up Ciudad Guayana saw their population increase from 4 000 to 30 000 inhabitants between 1950 and 1961, while Ciudad Bolívar, some 100 km away, doubled its population during the period to 63 000 inhabitants. At the end of 1961, the city of Santo Tomé de Guayana which was intended to be the physical nucleus of the great CVG programme, was founded.

During the 1960s, the CVG organized specialized subsidiary companies in iron and steel (SIDOR) and energy (EDELCA), it created a company to be responsible for bauxite exploitation (ALCASA), and it completed one stage of another large hydroelectric plant (Gurí). As a result, the region came to generate one-third of the total energy produced in the country. All this completed the basic cycle of the Guayana programme, i.e., the establishment of the basic industries which would make it possible to form a complex made up of intermediate industries.

In the 1960s, Ciudad Guayana grew at a truly spectacular rate, expanding from 30 000 to 144 000 inhabitants between 1961 and 1971 (an annual growth rate of 15.8%). For its part, Ciudad Bolívar exceeded 103 000 inhabitants in 1961, although it grew at a much less marked rate (annual average rate of 4.7%). The region as a whole increased by nearly 200 000 inhabitants, growing at an annual rate of 55%; most of that growth was absorbed by the Ciudad Guayana area, where serious problems arose as a result. The rate of open unemployment came to around 15% in 1973, and in 1970 the housing shortage was more than 46%, situations which, together with the high cost of essential consumer goods (especially food), the considerable distance from other important cities and the lack of local recreational and cultural facilities, together with the lack of satisfaction of the basic needs of the population and the persistence of segregationist forms of occupation of the land, made Ciudad Guayana a model that was in practice quite different from the theoretical one elaborated at the time of its founding.

In summary, it may be said that although the magnitude of the investments involved in the programmes for the creation of Ciudad Guayana was quite considerable, it has not helped form an effective counterweight to metropolitan concentration in Venezuela. Ciudad Guayana is totally disconnected from the region and appears to be an island within it. The standards of living of its inhabitants have not been substantially altered, there has not been self-sustained growth and, as noted above, the internal migration process has been neither avoided nor redirected. In the final analysis, the trend towards the concentration of industrial growth in the central region has only been partly checked, and the great difference of income between the centre and the periphery in the country has not been lessened.

b) Policies for promoting the development of existing intermediate cities which currently display little vitality

These policies chiefly consist of the establishment of national priorities for the activation of intermediate cities in little-developed human settlements subsystems and ultimately involve a system of selectivity among the various intermediate cities and their respective regional subsystems in terms of sectoral priorities, national territorial integration policies, population policies, etc.

/The activation

The activation of the intermediate cities to which these policies refer is usually integrated into national interregional planning schemes which set priorities for specific regions; in this way, these policies are part of an organic conception of the national regional system and are instruments for achieving objectives such as retention of the population and medium- and long-term development based on the exploitation of national resources. Other motivating factors are connected with policies for improving the living conditions of the population and policies for decentralization or deconcentration of government activity on the one hand, and of the productive apparatus and provision of services on the other. These policies involve a substantial increase in investment in the basic economic and social infrastructure. Unlike the previous ones, these strategies start out from a situation of a certain relative dynamism, and what is basically sought is the introduction of development measures which display a quantitative variation in comparison with initial levels.

As regards the effectiveness of these policies, it may generally be stated that their results have been relatively poor. This is partially explained by the fact that an increase in the levels of activity of these intermediate cities and their respective regional human settlement subsystems presupposes a simultaneous effort to activate the general economic conditions which have caused the depressive situation and stagnation which it is hoped to correct as regards its local manifestation. These measures also involve a substantial mobilization of central public resources, which are usually committed to other lines of activity, and to the extent that they are not very effective in mobilizing non-conventional regional resources, especially with regard to social organization and mobilization, their achievements are limited.

One significant example of this type of policy is found in Colombia. The development plan for 1969-1972 included the Intermediate Cities Programme, which had three basic objectives: to reorient immigration towards cities of 30 000 to 350 000 inhabitants, to promote the economic growth of those cities and to develop their infrastructure.

The change in the political leadership of the nation in 1974 involved an increase in the influence exerted on decision-making by landowners, the rural bourgeoisie and, in general, the financial capital connected with the land market and agroexports. Industrial development, the motor of growth and the mainstay of the Programme in question, was assigned a secondary role and the irreversible loans of the United States Agency for International Development (AID) were channelled towards the construction of infrastructure for isolated projects, dispensing with the harmonization premises of the original model. Thus, the Programme --originally public-- was left in private hands and more than half of the funds originally assigned for implementing it were shifted to the big cities, so that only 20% of the originally budgeted amounts were allocated to intermediate cities, where they were used exclusively for development of the services infrastructure, almost completely disregarding the initial objectives.

c) Policies for generating intermediate cities in contexts of the regrouping of rural human settlement subsystems

These are policies which propose the reintegration of the rural space, which is defined, in various proposals, as a key sector for long-term development prospects in the countries of the region.16/

These strategies for promoting intermediate cities have actually had relatively little development in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean. However, it is important to mention them as a possible type of policy since a good portion of the human settlement subsystems in the region are predominantly rural. At the same time, mention should be made of the fairly common practice in planning processes in the region of designing specific policies for the rural environment --such as agrarian reform or integrated rural development policies-- in which the question of human settlements and territorial arrangement play an important role.

In these cases an extremely important role is played by the type of agricultural development which it is sought to carry out in the region in question. Productive specialization (production cycles; degrees of employment and seasonality of the work force; energy, irrigation and transport infrastructure demands), the previous level of development and diversification, the system of land ownership, and marketing policies will all be key factors in explaining both the possible courses of agrarian development and their implications for territorial arrangement and shifts of the population.

Although the spatial implications of any form of agrarian development are very important and quite evident, it is well known that there is little explicit incorporation of those aspects into the respective policies, and this makes it difficult to study these experiences systematically. Even so, integrated rural development schemes often establish policies for economic infrastructure, the complete and active programming of investments in essential services and some adjustment of the governmental institutional structures, given the precariousness of all those important aspects of rural life.17/

The effectiveness of these policies --even with the already established limitations concerning limited coverage of the experiences-- is also relatively low with regard to the activation of intermediate cities; this is because human settlements aspects are usually secondary in the general context of policies for agrarian and rural change. In addition, the limited success achieved is due to a large extent to the large volume of public resources required, for which, furthermore, varied alternative uses are presented. Finally, these proposals are conditioned by the limitations as regards technical and institutional resources which have to be faced in efforts to give them a generalized national character.

In these cases, more than in the previous ones, the restrictions as regards specialized technical staff and the weakness of institutional structures are further factors which undermine the effectiveness of the policies proposed.

One example of these policies is found in Bolivia, where the existence of traditional interregional conflicts has often meant that global plans appear to be a collection of different regional plans and strategies which were designed

/with strong

with strong autonomous features and which therefore result in the dispersion of the population and activities, which --it is argued-- hinders the creation of economies of scale and concentration in the country.

To tackle this situation, the 1976-1978 Plan for Economic and Social Development proposed the achievement of efficient integration of the national territory through the grouping of territorial units (cities and rural regions) around the main resources of the country, which are found only in certain areas. Rural development, through the integrated rural development programme, was made the first priority, and emphasis was placed on peasant colonization processes, through measures which, ultimately, have been those carried out with the most regularity. This set of objectives, whose basic element for action was the creation of new poles and the revision of regionalization schemes, has to a large extent remained at the level of mere declarations of intentions until now, since Bolivia does not have specific legislation on a national scale for turning global strategies and plans into more defined and precise guidelines for concrete government and private-sector action.

d) Policies for the consolidation of relatively developed intermediate cities

These cover a complex set of more or less broad and coherent measures designed to develop gradually and continually the existing system of intermediate cities, naturally taking account of its diversity.

In view of the scarcity of resources, both under current crisis circumstances and --quite probably-- in the immediate future in the region, the other options which exist for investment and public spending, and the lack of capacity of the private sectors and the social sectors themselves to carry out significant efforts at investment in intermediate cities, it is worth giving consideration to this type of policy, which basically seeks to avoid the deterioration displayed by many middle-rank cities and their respective regional subsystems of settlements.

These policies suggest that priority should be given to rationalizing investment and public spending in economic infrastructure and basic services and making an exhaustive effort to seek agreement between local and regional social and political sectors, in order to join efforts at exploiting new resources --especially non-conventional ones-- and carrying out actions as part of plans which are the subject of consensuses. Thus, replacement of essential services, maintenance of the current infrastructure and a central concern for the social sectors most lacking essential needs are the types of activities given priority in these consolidation policies.

It is difficult to identify the results of this type of policy, since, although they are quite common in social practice, they are relatively rare in official formulations. What should be emphasized is that these are normally policies with realistic and modest proposals, thus making them a possible option, especially in preference to some utopian policies which often underlie planning actions in this field.

5. Instruments for implementing intermediate settlements policies

The analysis which follows refers to the main instrumental spheres in which middle-rank settlements policies operate. Of course, these policies are formulated in very different contexts as regards development policy and efforts, all of which will, in each case, affect the role played by the market in allocating resources, the type of interventionist, governing or regulating attitude adopted by the State and, especially, the degree of social participation and non-governmental action involved.

The foregoing paragraphs have to some extent made passing references to several of the policy instruments most commonly used in planning experiences concerning medium-sized settlements and their regional surroundings.

It would be useful at this point to review this range of instruments in a more systematic way --although necessarily, given the limits of this document, without entering into an exhaustive analysis-- noting, as an initial and principal hypothetical observation, that except in rare cases they do not form a coherent and integrated group. Rather, these instruments are formulated from a partial perspective and their management usually depends on sectoralized bodies which, apart from their own limitations, bears out the basic difficulty jeopardizing the efficiency of the set of instruments discussed below.

a) Policy instruments for increasing the economic infrastructure, especially relating to expansion of energy generation and transmission and of the transport, communications and marketing systems. In general terms these instruments aim to improve the basic conditions which enable the broadest development objectives to be achieved in the intermediate cities and their regional surroundings. Through these means the necessary resources are provided for making productive activities feasible, especially as regards improvements in the supply and cost of energy, transport and distribution facilities.

Implementing these instruments involves high investment costs, and an extremely precise study should be made of the different social benefits and the benefits that can actually be internalized in the intermediate city and its respective region. In addition, the feasibility of these investments will depend on the existence of productive projects with high degrees of feasibility. Moreover, the infrastructure supply of the intermediate city and the potential demand horizons will determine the various future investment thresholds. The very frequent lack of this diagnostic element militates against the hoped-for effectiveness of the investment project.

b) Policy instruments for increasing basic social infrastructure, especially relating to the expansion of health, education and urban services (particularly housing). This social infrastructure, which directly affects the quality of life of the population of the intermediate city, is also an important variable, through the generation of territorial economies and the raising of the productivity of the work force, in determining the feasibility of economic investments.

/These instruments

These instruments are fairly common as action and planning instruments, both because they are under the auspices of the central government, and because they involve the most recurrent social demands. The considerations detailed earlier in reference to initiatives on economic infrastructure are also valid in these cases, especially as regards the sectoralization which prevails in the defining of the projects, the lack of diagnoses on real installed capacity and future demand for social infrastructure, and the existence of almost unrestricted centralized sectoral control of corresponding actions. The possibility of a significant alteration in the conception of this type of instrument depends not only on multisectoral integration and the predominance of local institutions, but also on effective incorporation of mechanisms of community participation and control in the definition of priorities and implementation of the projects.

c) The most specifically urban instruments, which are those relating to urban planning of the intermediate city, incorporate an extensive set of measures concerning subjects such as zoning and densification in respect of specific activities, remodelling, establishment of urban limits, control of land use and regulation of the functioning of the city, especially of the transport systems. These physical planning instruments, in which a specialist viewpoint obviously predominates, are very widespread and acquire their greatest significance in the concept of regulating plans.

These policy instruments are generally criticized in the countries of the region, especially because of their limited linkage to other types of policies and because of the considerable gap between the normative approach defining them and the actual conditions in the sphere in which they are implemented. In addition, as in the previous cases, the national sectoral institutions are those that play the main role in defining these instruments, and there has been little experience with participation by the organized social base in defining, putting into operation and controlling them.

d) Regional and national instruments for the integration of intermediate cities consist of measures designed to link middle-rank cities with their regional and national contexts from an economic, territorial, social and political point of view. These are basically policy instruments for improving the links of the urban entity with its rural, regional and national contexts. This implies the design of investments in transport and communications infrastructure and especially involves adopting a set of more specifically urban-regional policy instruments.^{18/}

The set of instruments specifically for interurban planning consists of schemes for the establishment of precise and ranked roles in a network of urban centres within a given territorial context, assuming certain forms of interaction, complementarity and competition. These policies --most of which are based on precise conceptual schemes which are open to discussion ^{19/--} are strongly academically oriented and have little grounding in specific projects. Even so, they deal with one of the basic aspects of planning for intermediate cities which is their regional ties and the ways of dealing with the complex urban-rural interrelationships.

6. The institutional issue and that of social participation: some basic aspects

The previous paragraphs have suggested that there is a predominant concern with the institutional aspects and forms of participation connected with intermediate settlements policies. It would be useful at this point to define the significance which these issues have had in practice with regard to these policies.

The central theory of the thoughts which follow is that, as regards theoretical bases and definition of objectives, schemes for governmental decentralization have generally been inadequate in the region, and, even in the most favourable experiences, have taken the form of deconcentration strategies, at times accompanied by proposals for social participation in which processes guided by governmental authorities have been given preference. This condition explains to a large extent the lack of effectiveness of many of the policies formulated.

The institutional issue in planning and managing the development of intermediate cities basically relates to the role played by management structures which are quite often incapable of meeting the new demands implied by the processes of change. Faced with this situation, institutions (for example, municipal institutions) have been obliged to diversify their departments, rationalize their working methods and attempt to improve the technical and professional quality of their personnel. As for the intermediate city itself, sectoral institutionality --both national and regional-- also has great importance, especially in cases where the seat of the local government is located in the respective intermediate city. The different bureaucratic lines of reasoning and institutional objectives which prevail from one point of view to the other --local or municipal, and national and regional-- are factors explaining the tension and conflicts produced between them. Thus, the relative municipal obsolescence and the institutional tension referred to above appear initially to be the two main sets of problems in this area.

In addition to the foregoing, there are problems relating to administrative decentralization in its sectoral and regional aspects, the creation and operation of regional corporations, the role of local public enterprises (on a municipal scale) and the degree of autonomy with which investment projects are defined, appraised and put into practice.

The decentralization schemes carried out in the region have had more limited scope in the budgetary and project spheres, which is precisely where transfers of responsibilities take on greatest importance. At most there have been institutional alternatives approximating to deconcentration schemes, especially in the operation of the national sectoral system at the regional and local levels.

The regional corporations in intermediate cities show more satisfactory results, partially due both to their greater capacity for establishing good inter-institutional co-ordination among the governmental agencies, and to the fact that they have much more legal, financial and administrative autonomy than the municipal government. The isolated operation of these corporations has, however, militated against the obtaining of better goals.

/The institutional

The institutional issue is clearly linked to participation, which is the main and most effective form of social control over the institutional changes that are indispensable in order to ensure that local governments and the community itself have sufficient degrees of autonomy to participate in the activation of intermediate cities and overcome their main problems.

It has been suggested that participation schemes generally assume a certain social subordination to the governmental authority, which demands unrestricted support from the communities. For this reason, perhaps, participative experiences in the intermediate cities --where, we repeat, there is a potential for effective activation-- are relatively few and are rarely based on the principle of organizational autonomy of civil society.

This leads to a clear failure to use the potential resources for policy formulation and project implementation, whose utilization is absolutely necessary if the policies developed in intermediate settlements are to favour the masses represented in the participation schemes.

Proposals for autonomous participation ^{20/} by the most common social movements in the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean involve various institutional schemes, which correspond to the participative experience of each specific social situation and chiefly refer to the most important problem areas as regards the economic and social infrastructure, provision of urban services, and the regional and national integration of middle-rank human settlements.

7. Summary and conclusions

An analysis of experience with middle-rank human settlements policies in the countries of the region gives rise to a number of conclusions, among which special mention should be made of the following:

a) Although in many countries there has not been an explicit strategic formulation relating to middle-rank settlements, the set of implicit policies as a whole (most of them of a sectoral nature) have had a real impact on the distribution of activities and people in the territory, which has led to new human settlements planning proposals sharply oriented towards co-ordination of sectoral policies in the local sphere and the emergence of smaller administrative territorial units (municipalities) as action agencies.

b) In general, human settlements policies relating to middle-rank settlements are formulated during specific periods in the socioeconomic development of the countries; in particular, they are related to the modernization process of the State and the increase in its tasks and responsibilities. They are also connected with the economic growth process and the need for more effective organization in order to keep up the rates achieved. Finally, they are linked to the need for attenuating the social conflict existing in many countries, by encouraging redistributive processes through investment in basic social infrastructure and the development of services. Having been created in close connection with the particular dynamics of each country, these policies take on specific characteristics: a feature which has been stressed throughout this work.

/c) The

c) The basic objectives most frequently found in middle-rank human settlements policies have to do with the problem of the exaggerated territorial centralism which exists in Latin America and the Caribbean and the measures designed to control it, or with processes of expansion and consolidation of the frontier, behind which lie objectives of a geopolitical nature.

d) Middle-rank human settlements are considered not only as service centres for a certain area of influence, but also as centres for encouraging local and regional development.

e) The sectoralist nature of the respective measures and the emphasis on State action in the provision of services often hinder the formulation of broader policies envisaging other types of basic investments, such as those in the industrial and commercial fields, and this jeopardizes the effective achievement of the more structural objectives of development and creates a gap between programme content and reality.

f) In the larger countries of the region, there are great differences in the development of middle-rank human settlements among the different regions. This is basically a reflection of unequal regional economic development.

g) The settlements of these same countries display a relative uniformity in the employment structure of the economically active population, with predominance of the tertiary sector and diversified functions. In addition, there is great under-utilization of labour: a phenomenon similar to that occurring in the major cities.

h) The existence of a broad informal sector and the organization of production around one or two industries or subsistence agricultural activity, are determining factors in the high indexes of unemployment observed in the middle-rank settlements.

i) The instruments used for carrying out the different policies basically relate to the area of investment in social services and economic infrastructure. An increase in centralization has generally been observed, to the extent that these works taken as a whole, in their formulation and implementation stages, depend on ministries and divisions of the central government.

j) In recent years a tendency towards local management of investments has emerged in some countries, which has vitalized the smaller settlements, giving them new functions and greater responsibilities in planning and implementing development policies.

k) Instruments relating to the restriction or encouragement of industrial location have had only relative success and have shown themselves to be ineffective over the long term, in addition to absorbing resources on a relatively permanent basis --in the form of subsidies-- and thus becoming a burden on national, regional and local budgets.

1) The instruments for administrative reorganization and rural-urban integration which have been utilized have been more effective to the extent that they achieve multisectoral integration and broad participation of the social base. When these elements have not existed, however, these instruments have lost effectiveness.

m) Finally, it may be stated that middle-rank human settlements policy proposals have been different according to the countries of the region involved. Their progress has been sharply influenced by the relative degrees of economic and social development, the greater or lesser participation of the State as an agent of change, and the political situation at a given time. The success of such policies has been extremely dependent on the levels of social participation, the degrees of intersectoral integration and co-ordination, and the continuity of these factors.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR NATIONAL ACTION

It should be noted once again that, because of the heterogeneity displayed by the countries of the region, the recommendations which follow are by way of general proposals whose validity will depend on the different situations of intermediate and small human settlements in the countries of the region. Only an exhaustive knowledge of the situation of each intermediate settlement will make it possible to define truly appropriate policies.

The discussion which follows has been divided into three sections. The first contains some basic principles of a middle-rank human settlements policy; the second a set of methodological and technical aspects which are especially valid for structuring these policies, and a final section discusses various policies relating specifically to middle-rank settlements.

1. Basic principles in defining a policy on middle-rank human settlements

Without necessarily implying any order of rank, a set of basic principles will now be proposed which seek to define the strategic contexts for formulating the specific national options which may be established in each country according to its typology in the area of middle-rank human settlements. Basically, these principles comprise definitions relating both to a national human settlements policy and to the different settlements subsystems in the region, whether metropolitan, predominantly urban or predominantly rural, and an attempt is made to show in this way that a policy on middle-rank settlements should be part of a national human settlements policy.

a) What is needed is a global strategy for forming the national human settlements system which will establish the desired type of spatial articulation between the population, natural resources and productive activities as a whole. This means contemplating, at least as a theoretical alternative, the design of a scenario providing for a drastic alteration of the predominantly concentrative pattern displayed by the development styles prevailing in the countries of the

/region, and

region, and based on a concept of territorial organization established in terms of a central objective of social balance and substantial improvement of the possibility afforded to the under-privileged masses to satisfy their essential needs. Furthermore, the territorial objective function should seek the full utilization of the real advantages of the Latin American and Caribbean countries, especially their vast endowment of natural resources and the set of factors which make up their development potential. To do so, the current concentrated distribution of the population and the growing tendency towards metropolitanization should be altered significantly. Overcoming current tendencies in this area is also necessary in order to resolve the spiralling cost of urbanization --predominantly metropolitan-- with its consequent effects of deterioration of the quality of life and habitat of the majority of the population.

In this context, middle-rank settlements offer a feasible strategic alternative --certainly in the medium and long term, which is when the significant changes in the distribution of the population and economic activities emerge-- for modifying human settlement through the utilization of the current supplies of infrastructure and the economies of scale and external economies which they display.

b) Improving the precarious living conditions of the masses should be the central objective of policies encouraging the development of intermediate cities. This should be sought through the formulation of actions in the area of production of goods and services designed to respond to the basic needs of the masses (especially in the sphere of the preferential creation of non-specialized productive jobs and jobs in informal economies) and in programmes for direct improvement of the quality of life, the social infrastructure and the habitat. The specific policies should involve effective social redistribution of opportunities, which should also be brought about through the use of methodologies for evaluating investment projects attaching a high value to socially differentiated cost-benefit indicators.

c) An important role should be assigned to the State in the formulation and implementation of middle-rank human settlements policies. It is a question of strengthening the strategic role played by public policies in modifying national socio-spatial arrangement, especially in human settlements subsystems with a predominance of middle-rank settlements. The lack of a private productive sector of sufficient capacity, the volumes of resources required by the most significant investment projects, and the need for permanent co-ordination of the actions to be undertaken and the technical, professional and institutional requirements are all factors which require more significant State action in the strategies to be developed in middle-rank human settlements.

It will be necessary to give priority to actions which favour the social sectors having less relative income, such as direct action programmes in the area of basic services, direct incentives for the creation of sources of non-specialized employment, preferential lines of credit for the activities of small- and medium-sized businesses, technical assistance activities and specific technological adaptation programmes. In particular, comprehensive programmes for overcoming the current circumstances of marginality --with emphasis on new forms of organization and production and with growing participation by the organized social

base-- should be the central focus of public policies in this field. It is also necessary to adjust programmes for provision of infrastructure and urban services in favour of low-income social sectors and neighbourhoods.

d) In order to carry out an effective policy for favouring middle-rank human settlements, effective governmental decentralization is a necessary pre-condition. This institutional readjustment process should involve a considerable transfer of responsibilities from the central sectoral spheres, as well as the strengthening of local governments and the creation of regional bodies with significant degrees of autonomy. To do so it is necessary to have a form of national budgetary allocation which really favours regional and subregional human settlements subsystems and to establish the corresponding autonomy in the use of these decentralized budgets. Decentralization policies should include measures for putting into practice effective democratic forms which will fully recognize the social organizations and motivate the participation of the activating forces existing in middle-rank settlements. A new institutional and legal framework should back up these initiatives; it should incorporate various mechanisms for social control of the decentralization process.

e) The activation of middle-rank human settlements depends to a good extent on effective recognition of the role to be played by the population in defining, implementing and controlling programmes and projects. Community organization is a key factor in putting into effect innovative forms of planning in socio-spatial contexts. Factors such as the tradition of participation or the most difficult problem areas, where the greatest dynamism is to be observed, should be considered in the design of specific actions. Two fundamental aspects are the autonomy of social movements, viewed as the basis for solid participation in the whole management of programmes and projects, and the full recognition of these rank-and-file organizations as direct actors in planning. Furthermore, the degree of co-ordination among these levels is also essential for establishing permanent and balanced socio-governmental links. The local level --especially against the background of middle-rank settlements themselves-- appears to be especially appropriate for channelling the different forms of participation towards effective planning modalities.

f) Policies for activating middle-rank human settlements should use the entire range of available resources, especially non-conventional ones. Several considerations point to this basic principle in policy proposals, especially the observation that so-called non-conventional resources (certain material inputs, some specific production techniques, the actual organization of the people, forms of shared work and others) are considerably underutilized, whereas in contexts of restriction of material and financial resources, which are the most probable future scenarios in Latin America, they are absolutely indispensable. It is especially necessary to stress the idea that a considerable portion of the basic housing and habitat needs of significant percentages of the population of middle-rank settlements are satisfied through the mechanisms of the informal economy, which proves that there is a large supply of materials, organizations and technologies connected with those procedures, available for carrying out substantive policy lines. The other consideration on the need for designing solutions of wider coverage --given the foreseeable expansion of needs-- further increases the difficulty of using new resources or making more efficient use of so-called traditional resources.

/g) Middle-rank

g) Middle-rank human settlement development policies should give increasing consideration to the question of protection of natural ecosystems. The aim of this is to emphasize the environmental issue as an important aspect of middle-rank settlements planning. The significant urbanization of high-productivity agricultural land, the intensive and selective consumption of non-renewable natural resources, the high degrees of water and air contamination and the considerable deterioration of soil quality are all aspects of environmental deterioration which should be given priority attention in the planning and management of middle-rank human settlements. This problem area contains a real possibility for timely and comprehensive action, at least in the sense of adopting interrelated actions.

2. Basic methodological considerations in defining middle-rank human settlements policies

Some methodological issues which are increasingly significant, as shown by human settlements planning practice, should be discussed in greater detail.

a) An integral policy conception is indispensable: partial or sectoral formulations should be avoided in planning human settlements. It is especially important to link specific policies in this area with all those policies --at the respective national sectoral levels-- which exert considerable influence on middle-rank human settlements. This is the case of agricultural reactivation policies, which are the real basis for any alteration in the distribution of production and population, to the extent that they involve possible alterations in the system of land ownership, forms of production, predominant forms of marketing, functioning of technical assistance, incorporation of new lines of credit, and all aspects which provide the basis for a new arrangement of the rural space, with its consequent influence on middle-rank settlements. The same occurs with industrialization policies, which in their different formulations and conceptions exert various types of influence on the roles to be fulfilled by the middle-rank settlements. Finally, mention should be made in this respect of the set of social and redistributive policies --defining as such those which seek most directly to improve the quality of life of the most underprivileged masses-- which are reflected differently in the various regional subsystems and of course in the entire complex structure of middle-rank settlements.

b) Defining middle-rank human settlements policies requires a higher level of information and a systematic knowledge of these centres. Knowledge of the variables explains their dynamism and deterioration, their qualitative and quantitative changes; the possibility of carrying out projective analyses and, in particular, the feasibility of carrying out exercises for appraising policy alternatives; and it is a basic requirement both for creating new information systems and for readjusting applied research programmes in this field. Designing more effective population and housing censuses, as well as censuses in specific and sectoral spheres, and possibly extending them throughout the region; designing information systems which take into account more specific middle-rank settlements issues (informal economies, new productive and technological systems, unsatisfied basic needs, etc.); and putting into practice applied research especially aimed at making a critical analysis of the policies and proposals for alternative schemes are all measures of undeniable importance which should be implemented as a matter of urgency.

/c) The

c) The high degree of uncertainty with which middle-rank human settlements policies are frequently defined raises the important methodological requirement for the maintenance of a strategic planning approach which goes beyond planning formulations based on the mere elaboration of plans. This methodological version calls for a flexible conception of planning which recognizes the uncertainty, raises the need for policy feedback on the bases of systemized practice, assumes the need for temporary working hypotheses regarding the occurrence, significance and magnitude of the main phenomena, and continually incorporates the corrections which emerge from practice, the new information prepared, and the research carried out. Strategic flexibility should be conceived of as a path of action, as an articulated set of policies contrasting with a permanently changing situation.

d) Closely connected to the foregoing are methodological conceptions on planning viewed as a base for projects: a proposal which leads to a more specific approach to the methodological exercise of planning and which makes it possible to complete the vital diagnosis-strategy-project circuit by closely connecting the strategic conception to the establishment of an integrated set of projects which should be the focus of institutional articulation, the axis for the creation of socio-governmental forms of linkage and the special aspects of the activation proposal for the middle-rank settlement involved. In the great majority of cases, achieving this methodological premise will involve innovations in the task of preparing and evaluating investment projects, given the usual lack of ideas for pre-projects, the insufficient handling of instruments for appraising the social cost-benefit ratio and the generally ineffective way in which the organized social base is incorporated into the definition, evaluation, management and control of projects.

e) Priority should be given, as a basic methodological aspect, to study of the mechanisms by which informal economies function and the specific technologies which operate in them. This field of study is a basic aspect in effectively learning what situation is to be altered and in the corresponding policies for change. This is especially important in making a broad review of the different productive forms of self-provision of basic goods and services, the predominant technologies, the type of inputs utilized and the role played by popular organizations. It is absolutely necessary to project --in each middle-rank human settlement-- both the possible degree of autonomous development of the main forms of the informal economy, and their different margins for integration into the formal economy.

f) Finally, emphasis should be placed, as a methodological orientation, on the importance of the social debate in the design of middle-rank human settlements policies. The basic conclusions of the explanatory diagnoses, the options for strategic action and the policy alternatives set forth in various projects or sets of projects are all areas in which the social debate is irreplaceable as a way of submitting methodological elaborations to social consideration and as a method for selection, discrimination and ranking of policies. The foregoing establishes an important role for the mass communications media and for the social and political dialogues needed to create consensus and the necessary adjustment of the formal educational system.

3. Specific recommendations on middle-rank human settlements policies

The foregoing pages have considered the basic guiding principles of a middle-rank human settlements policy and have set forth general methodological guidelines. It is appropriate at this point to present different specific policy options corresponding to especially significant problem areas in the region. Given the limits of this document, the discussion below will cover only some of these policies, especially those connected --in their meaning and basic approach-- to the main proposals discussed above. This exercise should be understood as being of a general nature and not assigning priorities; in order to be made specific it must be referred to the different specific situations in the intermediate settlements of the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean.

a) Land policies

Authors writing from different disciplinary and ideological points of view and with highly diverse theoretical-methodological approaches have raised the issue of land as a key element in urban development policies in the region. In the specific contexts of middle-rank settlements, it is possible to develop programmes which will permit access to urban land by the social sectors with relatively less income; provide for alterations in land ownership régimes by giving priority to social and co-operative ownership; support State (municipal) land reserve policies for urban expansion; establish specific standards for land division, especially when this involves transfer of land from rural to urban use; design tax policies which will ensure the collection of the unearned increment generated as a result of public sector urban action; establish prompt expropriation mechanisms which will permit planning action by the public sector and establish a fair balance between private interest and social interest, and, in general, define an integrated set of actions which will effectively acknowledge the fact that access to the land lies at the basis of efforts to improve the quality of life and habitat of the masses.

b) Low-cost housing policies

Middle-rank human settlements usually display significant housing shortages; this leads to the urgent need to define policies in this area, which in turn will be one of the most important sectoral areas in approaches to regional economic reactivation. The housing policies considered should be based on a gradual solution of the housing problem and should be linked to policies for giving the marginalized sectors mentioned above priority access to urban land.

These policies should stress the implementation of regional productive technologies, the efficient use of local inputs of materials, and the full occupation of the organized social potential: all aspects which are vital in the design of realistic and effective measures in the area of low-cost housing.

c) Policies for the activation of production

The activation of middle-rank human settlements should rest on the strengthening of their productive sectors, especially those which provide local economic advantages; on the encouragement of activities producing essential goods

/and services;

and services; on the furthering of investment initiatives which will generate stable jobs, and on the promotion of lines of products which favour greater economic interconnections and establish the most significant linking effects.

Although it is obvious that not all sectoral activities can be given priority over others, since this will depend on the different specific situations, it is possible for policy approaches to give priority in general to labour-intensive technological forms which utilize local inputs; forms of social ownership which favour productive self-management; programmes for effective State support (especially lines of financing and technical assistance) to medium- and small-scale activities, and development of a corresponding human resources training policy.

d) Integral policies in marginal areas

Increasing importance is being acquired by integral programmes for specific areas where marginal social sectors prevail. This is an effective way of confronting the various shortcomings which these sectors display, by incorporating the potential of the informal urban economies. These programmes should be formulated with careful consideration for the current situation, as characterized, inter alia, by land seizures, overcrowded housing and high densities in subcentral areas, lack of saving capacity, shortages of services and infrastructure, and an unhealthy environment. As noted above, the solutions defined should make use of popular organization, incorporate technological innovations, and accentuate the mass-oriented nature of the programmes.

e) Urban development policies

Urban development policies should go beyond the physical conception of the regulatory plan, by bringing to bear integral approaches which will really incorporate the respective social sectors. Solutions involving zoning of the middle-rank human settlements, forms of control of urban expansion, regulations on transport system operation and the programming of investment in infrastructure should be established, in terms of the social objective of improving the quality of life and the functional objective of satisfying the demands created by the productive activation itself. This calls for the definition of precise urban development strategies, which should be submitted to the respective levels of political and social decision-making and which must be made compatible with general development options.

f) Policies for self-sufficiency in services

Especially in marginal areas, shortages of basic services are very marked and the coverage of sanitary, educational, recreational, legal and urban infrastructure services is so low that the criterion of self-sufficiency, inherent in urban survival strategies, begins to assume considerable importance. This situation --insufficiently stressed in diagnostic studies-- necessarily leads both to the need to support realistic policies of self-sufficiency, with full recognition of the role to be played by the community and the organizations of the territorial social base, and to co-ordinate the specific projects and the respective

/governmental authorities.

governmental authorities. A wide range of initiatives may be developed along these lines, through the identification of specific investment projects to which the necessary institutional, technological, dimensional, locational and especially organizational adjustments will have to be made.

g) New forms of urban financing

It appears especially important to introduce substantial innovations in the financing schemes for middle-rank human settlements. These should include, as a specific expression of national priorities a qualitatively higher budgetary allocation for those settlements, while at the same time ensuring the corresponding degrees of autonomy. It is also important to design a clearly redistributive tax policy, which will be a basic instrument in making sure that the territorial imbalance will be overcome with a greater degree of social equity. Finally, these policies should be complemented with growing recognition of non-financial resources as basic factors in defining investment projects.

h) Transport policies

The transport sector is essential to the functioning of middle-rank human settlements, so that policy definition in this sector is of key importance. The policies should consider measures for redistributing urban transport in favour of low-income social sectors, with corresponding improvement of the fleet of public vehicles, the granting of priority to collective transport, adjustment of routes and effective control of private automobile use.

At the same time, regional transport systems should be adjusted and these policies should be extended to freight transport. In this way the country-city links will be strengthened in the different regional contexts, and the rural environment and regional non-urban population will be favoured.

i) Regional integration policies

Policies of this type basically seek to strengthen the layout of the non-central regional system to which the intermediate settlements belong, their guiding objective being to improve the quality of life of the inhabitants of the entire region, especially of the most underprivileged social sectors. This involves adjusting previously-established policies in line with a regional dimension, in which there may be some margins of influence of external factors and where it is necessary to assimilate and maximize the territorial effects of the most significant projects, by co-ordinating, among other actions, those in the areas of transport, communications, energy infrastructure, basic social infrastructure, marketing networks, supply centres, administrative reorganization and other actions of vital importance to regional structuring. Likewise important in efforts at territorial organization at the regional level are policies designed to further the establishment and consolidation of a system of settlements suitably structured from the point of view of function and rank.

/j) Institutional

j) Institutional reorganization policies

Although each specific type of policy involves substantial institutional reorganizations, the customary inadequacy of the institutions (in structure, legal framework, technical capacity and specific functions) usually makes it necessary for institutional reorganization to be a policy in itself, and this is particularly so in contexts of new and active forms of social participation and in the framework of new conceptions of local development. Suggested policies should include measures for the professionalization of public functions and the qualitative improvement of forms of social control of government actions.

k) Environmental control policies

These policies relate to the adoption of measures in the different spheres which influence the behaviour of the natural ecosystem and of the constructed environment, especially in relation to the main factors of environmental imbalance, balance in the rural-urban relationship, the control of water and air contamination, and the conservation, use and renovation of resources.

These proposals are especially valid for middle-rank human settlements and their respective regional contexts, since the imbalances referred to can often be effectively corrected through the comprehensive design of timely environmental policies.

D. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INTERNATIONAL ACTION

1. International action: a critical analysis

International co-operation bodies have played a significant role in human settlement programmes, policies and projects. The World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), the Central American Bank for Economic Integration (BCIE), the Caribbean Development Bank (BDC), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) are some of the main multilateral agencies which have carried out noteworthy actions in the sphere of human settlements.

Blitzer and Hardoy ^{21/} have made a thorough study of this topic, basically seeking to detect the spatial distribution of the projects with a direct impact on settlements --distributed according to size of their population-- and subsequently to compare the spatial distribution of the loans with the respective government policies. These authors conclude that the projects having direct impact on human settlements were concentrated in the largest population centres and the capital cities, while credits were directed more towards urban areas than to rural ones. The projects concerning middle-rank human settlements ^{22/} were considerably smaller in number and in volume of resources than their importance in the region world warrant.^{23/}

/Although the

Although the great challenges of construction of the habitat and mobilization of new resources to meet proposals for revitalization of middle-rank human settlements basically depend on internal efforts to generate and channel work and savings, external financial aid could play a much more effective role than has generally been attributed to it. The mere fact of attaching priority to action in regions of medium-sized and small settlements as a centre for the attention of international co-operation would aid the channelling of external resources towards this basic sphere in the human settlement pattern of the region.

2. Specific lines of action

The general reorientation of international technical and financial assistance in respect of human settlements should involve the assignment of definite priority to the design of measures to improve the quality of life of the masses in the rural and urban environments, who are predominantly found in medium-sized, small and rural human settlements. Thus, programmes for satisfying basic needs in the area of social infrastructure, for production of essential goods and for programmes of urban services, low-cost housing and access to land for the low income social sectors are especially important.

Under these activity headings, international action should focus on certain precise areas: training and education of technical staff; development of suitable national and regional technologies; generation of programmes and projects, and establishment of data systems and design of methodological matrixes.^{24/} This set of activities for reorienting international technical and financial assistance should involve all institutions and, especially, should attach priority to channels of horizontal co-operation, the role of the agencies of the United Nations system and non-governmental institutions.

On the basis of the foregoing, the following are some specific lines of action in which international action may be especially fruitful.

a) Comprehensive programmes and projects for improving the quality of life

Comprehensive programmes and projects for improving the quality of life of the marginalized masses in middle-rank human settlements should receive significant and growing amounts of international financial and technical co-operation resources.

This growing participation should stress integration of sectoral projects, the best possible use of external factors, and greater incorporation of the organized social base into the preparation, appraisal, implementation and effective control of the programmes.

b) International collaboration in training and instruction

The training of technical staff in project planning and formulation for middle-rank settlements is particularly important, and various challenges are met with in this respect: lack of interdisciplinary teams; training processes are often suited to other situations; formative schemes are often excessively theoretical and academically-oriented, and the level of training is inadequate.^{25/}

/It appears

It appears especially urgent to design actions for tackling the complex particular features of Latin American human settlements in the formative university processes and reorienting teaching by making the practical contrast and critical systematization of experiences in the region more effective.

However, the greatest effort should be made to open up training and instruction to the population of the middle-rank settlements as a whole, giving priority to involving the organized social base so that it can be an effective focal point for planning and project proposals. As indicated above, this implies an active role for the mass communications media and the effective incorporation of the specific topics of the habitat and development into basic education programmes.

Within the set of initiatives mentioned above, co-operation by international bodies plays a basic role in putting into operation innovative programmes and is essential in designing initiatives for horizontal collaboration among the governments of the region.

c) Design of methodological guides

At the level of basic orientation, the preparation of methodological guides is especially important in order to carry out the tasks of formulation of diagnoses, elaboration of strategic proposals and preparation and appraisal of investment projects. The shortage of effective professional teams in the area of middle-rank human settlements and the extreme precariousness of the conditions under which they work is an especially serious problem, and it is therefore essential to develop greater methodological and technical autonomy in the main areas connected with the policy and programme planning and design effort.

d) Regional dissemination programmes

Here the fundamental international action required consists of efforts to foster the exchange of experiences in planning and policy and project formulation and promote meetings of professionals, technical staff and social leaders, in the area of government and community practices in the specific sphere of middle-rank human settlements. International agencies and organizations could play an essential role in this field through meetings, seminars and congresses; through the design of collaborative research, and through support for the creation of publications dealing with the problems of medium-sized and small settlements from a regional point of view and making a critical review of planning practice.

In these cases non-governmental organizations could play an essential role in more effectively ensuring a many-sided, independent and critical debate.^{26/}

Notes

1/ In this context, "threshold" is understood as a minimum level of demand which makes the production of a good or service viable.

2/ In this document, "urban network" is understood as the set of urban centres and zones of influence within a region or nation that is led by a regional or national centre.

3/ Alen, K. and Tormod Hermosen (1968): "Economic growth. Regional problems and growth centers", in EFTA: An examination of the growth center idea. Edinburgh; Oliver and Boyd, 1968.

4/ The CELADE estimate is based on the assumption that the natural growth rate of the urban population is similar to that of the total population, for which reason the difference between the two growth rates would be due to the net effect of rural-urban transfer (net rural-urban migration, plus reclassification and physical annexation). That assumption could imply an overestimate of the natural growth effect. The "transfer" values which may be obtained with this procedure could be high, both in countries with a low degree of urbanization, where a relatively low volume of migration and reclassification may have a great impact on the change, and in those where, together with a low degree of urbanization, there are low natural growth rates.

5/ Although the countries of the region have common features in their respective development processes, which indicates a typically Latin American set of problems (growing concentration in the urbanization process, disfunctionality between population distribution and natural resources, rural dispersion, etc.), the historical factors of the settlement process, specialization of production, the form of insertion into the international economy and the heterogeneous national cultural features of the region give them a particular set of characteristics which is reflected in a set of human settlement problems that is different in each case. In Brazil, for example, the subject of human settlements comes under national urban policy, while in Bolivia, given the predominance of primary activity and the lower relative level of urbanization, human settlements are approached from the perspective of agrarian policies and the typically rural settlement.

6/ Such as those relating to poles of development; strategies of deliberate urbanization; integrated rural development; agropolitan districts; paradigms of regional development "from the bottom up"; structural dualism approaches, etc.

7/ An analysis of the regional planning experience indicates that such planning is oriented towards the elaboration of intra-regional programmes that are strongly sectoralist. From the 1970s on, there is a trend towards regional planning on a national scale with emphasis on territorial planning in which the different experiences have been marked by functional objectives where regionalization and governmental decentralization have been given priority. For more extensive reading on this topic see: Experiencias de planificación regional en América Latina, Santiago, Chile, Editorial ILPES-SIAP, 1981, and Galilea, Sergio, Planificación de los asentamientos humanos en América Latina y el Caribe: Teorías y metodologías, ECLAC, July 1983.

8/ This exploration would include a large number of variables, which would necessarily mean that it would have a low methodological value. It would be more suitable to carry out a case-by-case review of national experiences.

9/ The public nature of policies and the role of the State are central elements in the policy proposals of the majority of the countries of the region. Sectoral decentralization, development corporations, municipal action, special public funds of a territorial nature, etc., are customary mechanisms in those policies.

10/ Or efforts aimed at deconcentration of the population and the productive apparatus.

11/ ILPES, Estado actual de la planificación en América Latina y el Caribe, "Cuadernos del ILPES" series, No. 28, May 1982.

12/ See: The process of human settlement in Latin America (E/CEPAL/Conf.70/L.5), November 1979; B. Cuenya, R. Gazzolo and O. Yujnovsky, Políticas de asentamientos humanos, Ediciones SIAP, Colecciones Planteos, Buenos Aires, October 1979; ILPES, Estado actual ..., op.cit.; Experiencias de planificación ..., op.cit., and Planificación de los asentamientos ..., op.cit.

13/ The centralized nature of decision-making in many of the countries of the region has hindered the development of participative proposals from the community point of view.

14/ The lack of integration is often reflected in the creation of autonomous and semi-autonomous State bodies whose work is specialized and which tend gradually to become disconnected from the rationally-established objectives and priorities. For more details see: CIID-SIAP, Políticas agrarias y urbanas en América Latina, Bogotá, 1981, which analyses the impact and experience of agrarian and urban reform schemes in Bolivia, Colombia, Cuba, Guatemala and Peru.

15/ See: The material base of the habitat, E/CEPAL/Conf.70/L.6.

16/ Chonchol, Jacques, "Por numerar estrategias de desarrollo rural", in Revista de la SIAP, Vol. XV, No. 58, June 1981, pp. 107-121; John Friedmann and Clyde Weaver, "Territorios y función", Colección Nuevo Urbanismo, Instituto de Estudios de Administración Local, Madrid, 1981, pp. 286-313.

17/ See, in Sergio Galilea, Planificación de los asentamientos ..., op.cit., the chapter on rural human settlements.

18/ See Sergio Boisier, Diseño de planes regionales: Método y técnicas de planificación regional, Madrid, Centro de Perfeccionamiento del Colegio de Ingenieros de Caminos, Canales y Puertos, 1976.

19/ Chiefly Loesch and Christaller's approach to central places.

20/ See FLACSO-IIED-SIAP, Acta de Tepoztlán, Mexico City, May 1980; Blas Tomić, "El porqué y el cómo de la planificación participativa para las necesidades básicas: Un análisis prioritario para su estudio", in Revista de la SIAP, Vol. XVI, No. 62, June 1982, and the conclusions of the Technical Seminar on Participative Planning, Panama City, 1982.

21/ Blitzer, Silvia and J.E. Hardoy, "La distribución espacial de los préstamos para los asentamientos humanos en América Latina: Las actividades de las agencias multilaterales, 1970-1979", in Revista de la SIAP, Vol. XVII, No. 65, Mexico City, March 1983, pp. 102-126. This research also considers the Special Fund of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries, the Inter-American Savings and Loan Bank, the Andean Development Corporation and the European Development Fund (EDF).

22/ The work cited defines this category as including intermediate cities (between 500 000 and 100 000 inhabitants) and small cities (between 100 000 and 2 000 inhabitants), whose inhabitants in 1980 comprised approximately a third of the population of Latin America.

23/ This work considers loans for projects having a greater direct impact on human settlements, such as projects for urban development, supply of drinking water and sewerage and building materials, as well as those having less direct impact, such as projects for education and health, infrastructure and tourism, technical assistance for human settlements projects and other programmes in such areas as nutrition and family planning.

24/ This list does not imply an order of priority, but establishes the types of technical co-operation tasks that are absolutely necessary for carrying out an assistance programme for the previously mentioned programmes. A more comprehensive option for action in the area of human settlements, especially as regards international action, is found in "Acta de Tepoztlán", Revista de la SIAP, Vol. XIV, No. 53, pp. 5-9, Mexico City, March 1980.

25/ An interesting and updated debate on this issue can be found in the set of articles in Revista de la SIAP, Vol. XVII, No. 67, Mexico City, September 1983.

26/ An interesting case in the region was the Latin American seminar, "El rol de las ciudades intermedias y pequeñas en el desarrollo socioeconómico de América Latina", held at Morelia, Mexico, in July 1983 and organized by the Sociedad Interamericana de Planificación (SIAP), the Urban and Regional Development Committee of CLACSO, and the International Institute of Environment and Development (IIED).

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