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Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean



REPORT OF THE WORKSHOP ON "THE ENVIRONMENTAL DIMENSION IN THE
DEVELOPMENT PLANNING OF THE AREA OF INFLUENCE OF THE
MULTIPLE EXPLOITATION OF SALTO GRANDE
(ARGENTINA-URUGUAY)"

(Buenos Aires, 7 and 8 May 1984)

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Foreword

1. This report contains the conclusions and recommendations of the Workshop on "The environmental dimension in the development planning of the area of influence of the multiple exploitation of Salto Grande (Argentina-Uruguay)", held in Buenos Aires on 7 and 8 May 1984.
2. This Workshop was held as part of the ECLAC/UNEP project on "Incorporating the environmental dimension in Latin American development planning processes: methodological aspects, case studies and horizontal co-operation", assigned to the ECLAC/UNEP Development and Environment Unit and conducted with the collaboration of the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES).
3. The Workshop was organized jointly by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Comisión Técnica Mixta de Salto Grande (CTM) (Argentina-Uruguay) and the Centro de Estudios Urbanos y Regionales de Argentina (CEUR).
4. The aim of the Workshop was to analyse the development policies and their perspectives in the area of influence of the multiple exploitation of Salto Grande, in order to recommend the most advantageous ways of incorporating the environmental dimension into planning processes and to debate, on the basis of a case study, the regional and national outlook as regards this problem.
5. For this purpose a basic document was prepared which was complemented with support documents.*/

*/ See annex 1.

I. ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Place and date

6. The Workshop on "The environmental dimension in the development planning of the area of influence of the multiple exploitation of Salto Grande (Argentina-Uruguay)" was held at the headquarters of the CTM in Buenos Aires on 7 and 8 May 1984.

Attendance

7. The meeting was attended by 24 experts.*/

Inaugural and closing sessions

8. At the inauguration of the Workshop the meeting was addressed by Mr. Winston Mañosa, Head of the Department of Ecology of the CTM, Mr. Ildefonso Neme, Director of the same institution, and Mr. Osvaldo Sunkel, Co-ordinator of the Joint ECLAC/UNEP Development and Environment Unit.

9. At the closing session on 8 May the meeting was addressed by Messrs. Winston Mañosa and Osvaldo Sunkel.

Agenda

10. The Workshop adopted the following agenda:

- a) General presentation of the subject.
- b) Exposition of the case study on the area of influence and multiple exploitation of Salto Grande.
- c) Debate on the incorporation of the environmental dimension in development planning. Main topics: regional problems, development of forestry and agriculture, investment projects, the conflictive aspects of planning, environmental problems.
- d) Debate on priority subjects arising in the Workshop itself.
- e) Preliminary conclusions.

Presiding officer

11. During the two days of debate, the meeting was co-ordinated by Mr. Nicolo Gligo, expert of ECLAC/ILPES.

Outline of the studies

12. Mr. Nicolo Gligo presented the ECLAC/UNEP project "Incorporating the environmental dimension in Latin American development planning processes: methodological aspects, case studies and horizontal co-operation", and Mr. Alejandro Rofman (CEUR) presented the basic study entitled "La dimensión ambiental en la planificación del desarrollo del área de influencia del aprovechamiento múltiple de Salto Grande".

*/ See list of participants in annex 2.

II. CONCLUSIONS

Large water projects

13. There are different methods and degrees of incorporating the environmental dimension into large water exploitation projects, according to the stages considered: preliminary studies, construction of the project and its functioning.

14. In the preliminary studies, experience shows that the environmental dimension has not been given sufficient importance. The decisions on size, location and engineering are normally subjected to the needs of the product generated. When this is energy, it takes precedence over any other aspect. In these preliminary studies, once the aforesaid decisions have been taken, some consideration is usually given to the environment, based on studies on how it will be affected. In these evaluations it is usual to assess the ecological cost to the area of the lake and its surroundings and to propose measures for minimizing this cost.

15. The full incorporation of the environmental dimension at the stage of preliminary studies (pre-feasibility, feasibility, executive project) assumes a decision on environment in which the work is regarded as a factor which can contribute both to the utilization of the ecosystems influenced and also to their deterioration. This makes it necessary to incorporate such environmental criteria as multiple benefits, interactions, ecological cost and capacity for sustaining the transformations, physical and social restrictions, etc.

16. The environmental dimension has been more fully incorporated at the construction stage of the work. The experience of Salto Grande is a clear example. For a long time now experience has been accumulating in different parts of the world in connection with the effects of dams on the physical environment and with the problems of the health, working conditions and safety of the population engaged in the work. On these topics, which are the most frequently canvassed, there is no need to insist. What should be given more importance is the study of the community, since these works have a profound effect on the adjacent population, and this has further repercussions on the reorganization of the systems of utilization of the physical environment.

17. At the production stage, the degree of incorporation of the environmental dimension is basically influenced by the concern to maintain production, which has national priority. It is possible that some importance will be given to the development of a number of local or regional activities, depending on the capacity for co-operation between the region and the centre.

18. The importance of the national production, in this case of energy, determines that the institutions regard the environmental dimension only as a factor affecting productive efficiency and the useful life of the project. The national interest takes precedence over the regional interest. In this context, the measures promoted by those in charge of the national interest (in this case, that of two nations) are confined to the area of the lake and its surroundings. There may be some interest in more distant areas but, in some cases, owing to incorrect methods and systems of soil use, the result could be erosion and consequently sedimentation.

19. At the production stage, if the region or regions have bargaining power, an attempt will be made to promote environmental projects which will facilitate local development. In the case of Salto Grande the projects for the development of tourism, river transport and fishing obviously offer good prospects and their feasibility studies make them recommendable. If the impact of the water exploitation project is so great that it can be an important factor of economic activation in the area of influence, the region will try to promote works which transcend the national interest in the basic production (energy) and the environmental management of the lake and its surroundings. These considerations become superfluous if the dam is conceived as part of an integral plan for regional development, since they would have been taken into account in the relevant programmes.

Projection of the case study to the regional and national sphere

20. A large dam, because of its major contribution to the introduction of artificial elements into the ecosystem, is in itself an environmental project which has a powerful influence, not only on the transformation of the physical environment, but also on all the socioeconomic aspects, such as population changes, the modification of human settlements, the restructuring of the productive system, etc.

21. The dynamic imposed by the large works of infrastructure demands, once they are completed, the addition of a regional development plan, based in the main on the expectations created in the region, which are currently linked only with the project execution programmes. Logically the inverse should apply: a global regional development plan should include the works of infrastructure.

22. The Regional Development Plan considered jointly by CTM and the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) is an example of the first procedure, and should not be regarded as a product of a planning system but as a coherent ranking of projects in order of priority. Admittedly, the Plan gives marked importance to environmental issues.

23. The question of the environment, in a reallocation of tasks within the planning process, brings to the fore the subject of regional development. The discussion between centre and region might come to be regarded as the struggle for a share in the overall income. A federalist conception such as that of Argentina would tend towards the integrated development of the country, which presupposes a regional redistribution, with agreements between province and nation and province and province. The incorporation of the environmental dimension in a planning process conceived on these terms modifies the conception of each regional plan and consequently of each large project fomented by the plan.

24. In analysing the environmental problem political aspects must be taken into account in which connection a dimension is considered important if it tends to satisfy the needs of the national communities. In this context, the two countries are at different stages of evolution. In Argentina the politico-administrative structure is being readjusted to the purposes and strategies of the new democratic government. In Uruguay the structure is being administered without variations, in expectation of agreements which will make possible a change to a democratic government. Obviously, there are many more opportunities for innovation in Argentina than in Uruguay.

25. To analyse, on the basis of the case of Salto Grande, the functioning of the institutional machinery of the national planning systems, one must begin with the actual situation. It may be that plans existed, both in Uruguay and in Argentina, but it is quite clear that (at least until the change of government in Argentina) there is no coherent planning process. In this context the legal bases, such as those of the CTM, in being binational, give great institutional flexibility to the development activities.

26. In Argentina the macro-environmental questions should inevitably be dealt with by the National Planning Secretariat, though the specific operations of planning may be carried out at sectoral and regional level. This makes it possible to incorporate the environmental dimension in development planning, while at the same time co-ordinating at global level the intersectoral and multiregional programmes. This formula does not exclude the possibility of entrusting environmental management to special agencies such as the binational Commission of Salto Grande, but it assumes that all such agencies should adhere to the broad outlines programmed by the National Planning Secretariat.

27. The execution of a large water project such as that of Salto Grande generates initiatives and measures which are not necessarily contemplated in the Global Plan or in a regional plan. An example of this is the Entre Ríos government Law on the use of space and preservation of the environment in the Salto Grande region, which is aimed at environmental management and the control of waste and over-exploitation of renewable natural resources.

28. A basic issue which has been greatly neglected is the participation of the population in the planning process. Efficient mechanisms of active participation are needed, which should not be associated solely with the institutions of construction and administration of the large projects, but with the regular politico-institutional channels of the region or the bodies created for this purpose. In this connection consideration should be given to the creation of regional councils for the environment.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

29. The Workshop formulated the following recommendations:

a) That the regional planning functions should be retained in the CTM, giving due importance to the environmental dimension, as was done in the CTM/IDB Regional Development Programme.

b) That the agreements between the aforesaid Commission and ECLAC/UNEP should be maintained, so that the Salto Grande experience may serve as a pioneer study for other water exploitation projects in the Río de la Plata Basin.

/c) That

c) That seminars, workshops and meetings should be promoted on other projects of water exploitation in the Río de la Plata Basin.

d) That the Planning Secretariat of the Presidency of the Argentine Republic should incorporate in its new organic statute the points of view on the directive functions of the said Secretariat in relation to environmental macropolicies.

e) That background data should be prepared and recommendations formulated to improve the efficiency of regional planning.

f) That provincial meetings should be organized locally to discuss the problem of development planning in terms of the environment.

g) That a similar Workshop should be held in Uruguay during 1985.

Annex 1

PAPERS PRESENTED AT THE WORKSHOP

Symbol	Author	Organization	Title
E/CEPAL/R.356	Alejandro B. Rofman	(Consultant)	La dimensión ambiental en la planificación del desarrollo del área de influencia del aprovechamiento múltiple de Salto Grande
<u>Support papers</u>			
E/CEPAL/G.1242	Joint ECLAC/UNEP Development and Environment Unit		Incorporación de la dimensión ambiental en la planificación
E/CEPAL/L.262	ECLAC		Informe del Seminario regional sobre gestión ambiental y grandes obras hidráulicas
E/CEPAL/ILPES/R.46	Nicolo Gligo		Medio ambiente en la planificación latinoamericana: vías para una mayor incorporación
CDA-38	Oswaldo Sunkel and José Leal	ECLAC/ILPES	Economía y medio ambiente en la perspectiva del desarrollo

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