

**IMPLICATIONS OF DECENTRALIZATION STRATEGIES FOR
THE SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE
LATIN AMERICAN POPULATION**

Joey Edwardh, Ph.D.
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INTRODUCTION

The area of population distribution and internal migration is still one of great concern to many governments. (United Nations, 1984, p.26).

This document explores the nexus among the spatial distribution of the population of the Latin America region¹, the causes of this distribution and the possible future impact of policies and programs of decentralization on those processes that influence the spatial distribution of the people who inhabit this continent. This document describes the ramifications of decentralization on the dynamic relationship and interaction between the distribution of economic and social opportunities and population groups as they move and are distributed over space. This analysis contributes to the debate related to democratization and decentralization unfolding throughout the region but from the perspective of the multiple and complex processes affecting the spatial distribution of the region's population. It provides information on strategies of decentralization which might modify not only the existing distribution of the people but also the present allocation of economic and social resources.

The purpose of this document is to examine the following inquiries: "What is the dynamic relationship between population distribution and access to economic and social opportunities?" "How will decentralization affect the spatial distribution of a population or

¹ In the context of this document, the Latin American region refers, for the most part, to the twenty Spanish/Portuguese and French-speaking independent countries which, most commonly, are identified as comprising this region.

groups of people?" "How can the issues of population that concern the countries of the region be integrated into/or related to the growing movement to decentralize?"

SPATIAL DISTRIBUTION OF THE LATIN AMERICAN POPULATION**The Making of the Latin American Landscape:
Historical Processes, Future Forms**

One runs the very great risk of imagining space as a white page on which the actions of groups and institutions are inscribed without encountering any other obstacle than the trace of past generations. (Castells, 1978 as quoted in Soja, 1980, p.212).

As one contemplates the spatial distribution of the inhabitants of this vast geographical space, the overwhelming sensation is of continuous change through time. Whatever the demographic and socio-economic forces influencing the spatial distribution of people and their corresponding imprint on the land in one period, it is seldom permanent. Those processes that influence the use of territorial space through time are important if we are to understand the present patterns, not to mention the future trends, of the spatial distribution of people and their activities throughout this region. This assumes even greater importance as governments and civil society, through public policy, develop programs to influence directly or indirectly such patterns of distribution.

In Latin America, the nature of the colonial experience is cited as the context which sets the stage for the patterns observed today. From the early sixteenth century, urban places were established in strategic locations as centers of colonial administration, commerce and religion. M. Prothero argues that in this context:

...the rural areas were subject to major land expropriation into large estates for the production of crops for markets controlled by the colonial powers. Colonial capitalism was firmly established and those dispossessed of their land moved to expanding urban places. Though colonial rule came to an end a century or more ago, and despite various land reform measures, land alienation in large holdings continues and land scarcity and landlessness are still endemic. In many of these large holdings productivity is low, and often when

improvements are made to raise productivity they result in reduced requirements for agricultural labour." (Prothero, 1987, p. 1296).

A logical consequence of these relations with the colonial power is their transformation into the ties that today bind Latin America to the global economic order. Thus, the colonial cities of "yesteryear", along with their hinterlands, and the primate cities of the Latin American region today, along with their rural spaces, are active participants in the flows of capital around the world. (Harvey, 1978).

Whatever the historical period, human beings organize their economic, social, cultural and political activities to guarantee their basic needs.² The manner in which they satisfy these needs varies with historical time and culture. This influences the distribution of people and their activities in territorial space. Max-Neef et al employs the concept of "satisfiers" to explain the dynamic relationship between geographical space and history in the fulfillment of human needs. They wrote:

² There are many existing taxonomies of basic needs. But, most often, in social policy research, need is defined artificially by census type variables thus restricting need to deprivation. However, needs can engage, motivate and mobilize people, and as such, are a potential that may eventually become a resource. To understand human beings in terms of needs, that is, conceived as deprivation and potential, will prevent any reduction of the human being into a category of restricted existence. A categorization of basic human needs might be: Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Idleness, Creation, Identity, Freedom. Each of these needs would be fulfilled by a series of satisfiers. For example, the need for subsistence is satisfied by adequate food, shelter, health care, education and work. On the other hand, the need for participation might be satisfied by rights, responsibilities, duties, privileges, affiliation and the existence of settings of participative interaction. (Max-Neef et.al., 1989, p.26 and 33). Also, the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) has pioneered in the creation of a taxonomy of needs that further articulate the human reality, and therefore, the responsibility of development models and public policy in fulfilling these needs. (UNDP, 1991).

Satisfiers may include, among other things, forms of organization, political and social practices, subjective conditions, values and norms, spaces, contexts, modes, types of behaviour and attitudes, **all of which are in a permanent state of tension between consolidation and change....** The same satisfier can actualize different needs in different cultures and in different time periods.

The reason that a satisfier may have diverse effects in various contexts is due to the following: the breadth of the goods generated; how they are generated; and, how consumption is organized. Understood as objects or artifacts which make it possible to increase or decrease the efficiency of a satisfier, goods have become determinant elements within industrial civilization. In industrial capitalism, the production of economic goods along with the system of allocating them have conditioned the type of satisfiers that predominate." (Max-Neef et al, 1989, p.27).

Basic needs are far from satisfied in the Latin American region. (CEPAL, 1991).³ The failure of the different nations of this continent to develop economic and social policies to neutralize and alleviate the continuing and consistent problems of survival and poverty recently have brought to the attention of politicians and policy makers the importance of local spaces as the social and physical areas in which people can best identify their needs, and then, act to satisfy them. Today, the efforts of the people of the

³ An understanding of the spatial distribution of the population of Latin American can not be removed from the context of crisis and ubiquitous poverty that dominates the area. A recent publication of CEPAL, "Panorama Social de America Latina," (1991) documents the insidious increase of poverty in the region during the 1980's. This document states: "...the number of persons in poverty rose to 170 million (43%) in 1986 and, according to conservative estimates, it is probable that by the end of this decade the poor will have increased to 183 million (44%). This indicates that between 1980 and 1986 the population poor increased at rates superior to that of the total population and to that of the poor during the period 1970-1980. (CEPAL, 1991, p. 18). Moreover, this document emphasizes the continued concentration of wealth within the societies of Latin America with its inherent deterioration in the quality of life of the majority. Of particular vulnerability are young people without educational or work prospects and women who continue to be the "second" sex.

Latin American region to fulfill their basic needs unfolds in local spaces.

The recent data that human ecology has generated on the importance of space and place in the lives of people might well be highlighted here as important in any consideration of policies to affect the spatial distribution of people. The importance of place and space is captured by Lawton who wrote:

The kinds of places where people live can be of major importance in determining many aspects of their inner lives and their behavior. Regional or local norms for acceptable behaviour and attitudes will vary; a greeting to a stranger encountered on the street may be expected in a small town but cause an urban resident to quickly cross the street. The characteristics of other people—their dress, their age, their colour, their homogeneity or heterogeneity—may have a behaviour-instigating effect. The place where one lives may be critical to the satisfaction of a variety of human needs, from basic life-supporting needs, such as medical care, to the most complex social and self-realizing needs. Consequently, the more we know about social, service-providing, and physical aspects of places where people live, the better position we will be in to know how resources outside the person can be mobilized to attain greater need satisfaction for each person. (Lawton, 1980, P.22).

The evidence indicates that it is in the micro spaces where a myriad of forms of participation in the development of one's community can be created.⁴ Neighbourhood and community organizations along with local social organizations contribute to the fulfillment of basic needs. Today, these groups are referred to as the new social movements. Research on popular sectors throughout Latin America has demonstrated that it is people through their organizations that have and will create options and alternatives. (Ballon, undated; Castagnola, 1986; Calderon and dos Santos, 1987; Razeto, 1984; Hardy, 1985; Razeto et al, 1983). This

⁴ Participation in local spaces is discussed in the section of this document entitled, "Decentralization and Democracy,: Expanding Participation."

has important implications for strengthening both economically and culturally local spaces such that people might perceive their place of residence as a place to stay rather than a place to leave.

How can these very different spatial scales--the macro or world system, global space versus the micro or local system, local space-- be integrated conceptually so that the processes influencing the spatial distribution of people and their activities can be better understood? How can we understand the interweave between large economic and social structures and individual lives and the corresponding effects generated by this interaction? This challenge is articulated by C.W. Mills:

The facts of contemporary history are also facts about the success and the failure of individual men and women. When a society is industrialized a peasant becomes a worker; a feudal lord is liquidated or becomes a businessman. When classes rise or fall, a man is employed or unemployed; when the rate of investment goes up or down, a man takes new heart or goes broke. When wars happen, an insurance salesman becomes a rocket launcher; a store clerk, a radar man; a wife lives alone; a child grows up without a father. Neither the life of an individual nor the history of a society can be understood without understanding both. (Mills, 1959, p.3).

To achieve this understanding, Mills calls for a "sociological imagination" which "enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two with society." (Mills, 1959,p.6). In other words, while it might be possible to discuss the spatial distribution of people and their activities as an isolated phenomenon, any meaningful analysis will have to discuss these patterns within the context of contemporary history. Such an analysis will require concepts which link social fact and individual fate, social change and personal experience. This is critical if policies are to be designed to impact on the forces both macro and micro that influence existing patterns of spatial distribution.

The relationship between history, biography and society takes form in geographical space--that is, in the case of this study, the creation of a heterogenous and multifaceted Latin American landscape. For analytical purposes, the use of different spatial scales in this document contributes to our knowledge of the impact of a world economy on the spatial distribution of people, and at the same time, the role of people as social actors in these spaces and the form their actions take in and between the different geographical units. This is particularly important in the second section of this paper which addresses the impact of decentralization on the patterns of spatial distribution throughout Latin America.

Diagram I, Spatial Dimensions to Human Activity, illustrates the importance of different spatial scales in the social and economic organization of individual and collective experience.⁵ It suggests that today we live in a global economy marked by the internationalization of production controlled by transnational corporations whose practices in the transfer of capital, technology and profits affect profoundly human behaviour and activity and their manifestation through territorial space. While economic activity is international in character, there exist, in addition, two subsidiary layers of understanding. The first of these is the nation state which functions as an ideological entity, a means of articulating collective values and loyalties.⁶ However, individual

⁵ This diagram is a modification of that found in Kirby, A. **The Politics of Location: An Introduction**. London: Methuen, 1982, p.7 who adapted this graphic from Taylor, 1980.

⁶ The concept of ideology in this document refers to the value framework which provides the screen by which an individual sees and interprets the world. The elements of an ideology are the assumptions, beliefs, explanations and value preferences of a group. Thus, it has both cognitive and normative elements. The force of an ideology is that it not only prescribes, it defines what is, what is desired and justifies these prescriptions and presents possibilities. Thus, an ideology is both a morality and a science. Ideologies are the historical products of all societies. In most societies, the dominant ideology is

and societal values are articulated in local spaces--the scale of experience, the scale at which we live our daily lives. It is at this scale that the private costs of an internationalized economy are manifested by unemployment, poverty, spatial concentration of people and their activities. The region, while often criticized in the urban and regional planning literature as an artificial concept, is displayed in this diagram as a buffer between the more macro spatial unit of the nation and the more micro spatial area which comprises the locale.⁷ It is believed that the region is a space that could articulate the special characteristics and needs of the locale with the national while remaining sensitive to the demands inherent in the search and maintenance of local identity. It is argued that the region, as a socially constructed space, facilitates the greater participation of people in the global and national systems that affect their lives. A premise inherent in this document is that certain activities and decisions are scale-specific, and as such, are pertinent to the discussion herein. Policies of decentralization impact at different scales of socio-spatial organization.

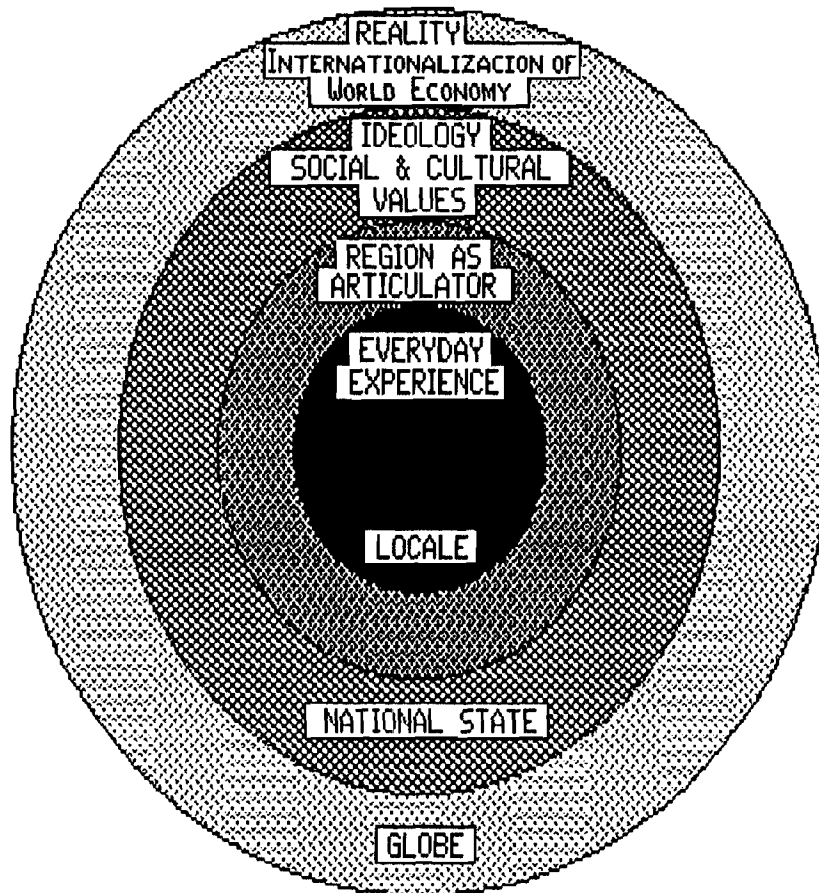
The purpose of this document, as described in the introduction, is to assess the impact of decentralization policies on the spatial distribution of the people inhabiting this continent. Policies of decentralization are not spatially neutral, and therefore, their relationship to processes of spatial distribution must be investigated. In order to do this, a profile of the important factors --direct, indirect and intervening-- and the processes that influence the spatial distribution of people and their activities

reinforced through social structures which manipulate social symbols. Usually, force is unnecessary because values are internalized. (Neysmith, S. and Edwardh, J., 1984, p.125-6).

⁷ It is not within the purview of this document to analyze the many theoretical and conceptual arguments for the myriad of definitions attributed to the different spatial units that comprise the physical structure of modern societies.

will be developed in this section. With this information, policy analysts can deduce the influence of decentralization on these processes of distribution and its corresponding effect on different spatial scales.

DIAGRAM 1: SPATIAL DIMENSIONS TO HUMAN ACTIVITY



**Global Forces: Local Consequences: Patterns of
Spatial Distribution**

There is a vast literature on the spatial distribution of the Latin American population and it is no easy task deciphering the different perspectives inherent in the research conducted in this field.⁸ While it is not the purview of this document to discuss the assumptions underlying the different orientations, it is important to at least mention that they give rise to different causal arguments which, in turn, are used to explain the contemporary spatial distribution of people. Each logic requires different sets of policy recommendations to modify the existing spatial distribution of people. Obviously, diverse policy orientations based on divergent and often conflicting suppositions will be affected differently by decentralization strategies.

The existing research may be classified into the following theoretical orientations: (i) that of historical structuralism--world systems approach; (ii) that of modernization-neo-liberal approach and (iii) that of motives--individual attributes based on cultural, ethnicity and family relations. The literature demonstrates that studies of spatial distribution are, at best, partial in that often the spatial distribution of people is described but the nature of this distribution as a spatial phenomena responding to changes in the macro structural context is omitted. (Muñoz et al 1974, p.12.). The emphasis is on the characteristics of places and individuals rather than on the socio-economic context at different scales of human activity which produce such attributes. On the other hand, those studies based only on the logic of the internationalization of capital have

⁸ The studies on the spatial distribution of the people of the Latin American region which underlie the discussion in this document are found in the bibliography. Due to differing perspectives and methodologies, often the results of this research are not comparable.

tended to exclude the cultural, ethnic and family/household factors shaping the lives of people in micro spaces. The need to integrate research perspectives that lead to greater comprehension of the processes in the structural sphere and in that of the individual and the manner in which they affect the spatial distribution of people reappears through time in the literature. (Muñoz et al, 1974; Prothero, 1987; Lattes, 1989; and Simmons, 1989).

The major premises and conclusions of the literature reviewed will be synthesized briefly in this section of the document in an effort to provide the essential information necessary to explore the question: How will the different policies of decentralization affect the spatial distribution of people or groups of people? At all times, this analysis assumes that the complex factors affecting distributional processes take form at different spatial scales such as those represented in Diagram 1. Moreover, this form varies through time.

According to social demographers, the global tendencies in the spatial distribution of the people of Latin America appear to be rooted in the changing relationship between the demographic variables of fertility and mortality whose interaction alters not only the size of a population but also its structure. More important, given the focus of this document, is the articulation of these variables with the dynamism inherent in the socio-economic reality. It is this relationship which influences the patterns of population distribution.

Table 1 depicts the urban and rural populations of the more and less developed regions along with that of Latin America. These figures indicate that the issues of population growth and distribution continue to be of concern if national development plans are to create the conditions whereby people can meet their basic needs. These estimates demonstrate the increase in the population of the Latin American region from 285 million persons in

1970 to 448 million in 1990 and to 760 million in the year 2025. This represents an increment of 267 percent in 55 years. One might justly query: Where do these people live? Why do they live where they do? What conditions dominate their lives?

Table 1
Total, Urban and Rural Population by Major Area, 1970-2025

Population group	Population (in millions)											
	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
World												
Total population	3697	4079	4450	4853	5292	5765	6251	6728	7190	7639	8062	8466
Urban population	1374	1568	1770	1997	2260	2567	2916	3307	3736	4188	4649	5118
Rural population	2323	2510	2680	2856	3031	3198	3334	3421	3454	3451	3413	3347
More developed regions												
Total population	1049	1095	1136	1173	1205	1234	1262	1286	1307	1325	1340	1352
Urban population	698	753	798	839	875	911	944	976	1003	1028	1050	1068
Rural population	350	341	338	334	329	323	317	310	303	296	290	283
Less developed regions												
Total population	2648	2984	3313	3680	4086	4531	4988	5441	5883	6314	6722	7114
Urban population	675	815	971	1158	1384	1655	1971	2331	2732	3159	3599	4050
Rural population	1973	2169	2341	2522	2702	2875	3016	3110	3150	3154	3123	3063
Latin America												
Total population	285	322	361	403	448	493	539	585	630	675	719	760
Urban population	163	198	236	279	324	370	416	463	508	555	600	644
Rural population	121	124	124	124	123	123	122	122	121	120	118	115

Source: United Nations (1989): Prospects of World Urbanization 1988, New York, 1989, Table 2.

The Latin American landscape depicts a continent in which the population is highly concentrated in urban spaces.⁹ The concentration of people in urban areas is demonstrated in Table 2, Percent Urban in Latin America Countries: 1950-2025. It indicates clearly that, today, this continent is approximately 70 percent urban. A number of countries such as those of the southern cone have over 80 percent of their population living in urban spaces. (Ebanks, 1991a, p.1). The hierarchy of urban spaces in the majority of countries is dominated by a primate city which is, at least, several times larger than the following three urban areas. (Miró and Potter, 1980. p.118). A recent document published by CELADE indicates a new pattern is emerging such that the urban dynamism of recent years has occurred in small and medium sized cities rather than in the large urban areas of 1 million or more, (CELADE, 1991, p.5.). See Appendix 1 for substantiating evidence. This pattern has important ramifications for public policy and strategies of decentralization. On the other hand, vast frontier areas still exist that are sparsely populated.

It is important to mention again the historical antecedents of these urban spaces. Centuries ago, they were located in strategic positions or along transportation routes but in no way were these spaces selected to sustain ecologically the concentration of persons that now inhabit them. This is manifest in the high levels of pollution or smog found in topographical basins such as Mexico City or the usurpation of excellent agricultural land for urban dwellings such as Santiago's encroachment on the fertile central valley of Chile.

⁹ The diseconomies of urban life have yet to reach a scale where migration to cities and between them is and will be deterred. While the literature on urbanization clearly articulates the social, economic and political problems associated with life in large Latin American cities, no consensus appears to exist on when cities are too large. Outside of the limitations imposed by the geographical "carrying capacity" of an urban physical space, the issue of urban management becomes paramount.

Table 2
 Percent Urban in Latin American Countries:
 1950-2025

	Percentage Urban															
	1950	1955	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015	2020	2025
Latin America	41.5	45.4	49.3	53.4	57.3	61.4	65.4	69.2	72.3	75.0	77.2	79.1	80.7	82.2	83.5	84.8
Central America	39.8	43.3	46.8	50.4	54.0	57.4	60.6	63.6	66.4	68.9	71.1	73.2	75.2	77.1	78.8	80.5
Belize	57.1	55.6	54.0	52.5	50.9	49.4	49.4	50.0	51.6	54.2	57.8	61.1	64.3	67.2	69.9	72.4
Costa Rica	33.5	35.0	36.6	38.1	39.7	42.2	46.0	49.8	53.6	57.3	60.8	64.1	67.0	69.8	72.3	74.6
El Salvador	36.5	37.4	38.3	38.9	39.4	40.4	41.5	42.7	44.4	46.7	49.5	52.7	56.3	59.8	63.0	66.0
Guatemala	30.5	31.7	33.0	34.3	35.7	37.1	38.5	40.0	42.0	44.5	47.5	50.8	54.6	58.1	61.4	64.5
Honduras	17.6	20.0	22.7	25.7	28.9	32.3	35.9	39.7	43.6	47.5	51.5	55.2	58.7	62.0	65.1	67.9
Mexico	42.7	46.7	50.8	54.9	59.0	62.8	66.4	69.6	72.6	75.2	77.4	79.3	81.0	82.6	84.0	85.4
Nicaragua	34.9	37.2	39.6	42.7	47.0	50.3	53.4	56.6	59.8	62.9	65.9	68.7	71.3	73.7	75.9	77.9
Panama	35.8	38.5	41.2	44.4	47.6	49.1	50.5	52.4	54.8	57.5	60.4	63.6	66.6	69.4	71.9	74.3
South America	43.2	47.4	51.7	55.9	60.0	64.5	68.8	72.8	76.1	78.8	81.0	82.7	84.1	85.3	86.4	87.5
Argentina	65.3	69.6	73.6	76.1	78.4	80.6	82.7	84.6	86.2	87.6	88.8	89.8	90.6	91.3	92.0	92.7
Bolivia	37.8	38.5	39.3	40.0	40.8	41.5	44.3	47.8	51.4	55.0	58.5	61.8	64.9	67.8	70.5	72.9
Brazil	36.0	40.4	44.9	50.4	55.8	61.8	67.5	72.7	76.9	80.2	82.7	84.5	85.8	87.0	88.0	89.0
Chile	58.4	63.3	67.8	71.7	75.2	78.3	81.1	83.6	85.6	87.3	88.6	89.7	90.5	91.3	92.0	92.7
Colombia	37.1	42.5	48.2	53.5	57.2	60.8	64.2	67.4	70.3	72.9	75.2	77.2	79.1	80.9	82.5	83.9
Ecuador	28.3	31.3	34.4	37.2	39.5	42.4	47.3	52.3	56.9	61.1	64.9	68.0	70.7	73.1	75.4	77.4
Falkland I. (Malvinas)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	...
French Guiana	53.7	58.6	63.3	65.7	67.4	69.0	70.7	72.6	74.6	76.5	78.5	80.3	81.9	83.4	84.8	86.1
Guyana	28.0	28.5	29.0	29.2	29.4	29.6	30.5	32.2	34.6	37.8	41.8	45.8	49.7	53.5	57.1	60.5
Paraguay	34.6	35.1	35.6	36.2	37.1	39.0	41.7	44.4	47.5	50.7	54.0	57.4	60.8	64.0	66.9	69.7
Peru	35.5	40.8	46.3	51.9	57.4	61.4	64.5	67.4	70.2	72.8	75.2	77.3	79.2	80.9	82.5	84.0
Suriname	46.9	47.1	47.3	47.1	45.9	44.8	44.8	45.7	47.5	50.4	54.1	57.7	61.0	64.2	67.1	69.8
Uruguay	78.0	79.1	80.1	81.1	82.1	83.0	83.8	84.6	85.5	86.4	87.3	88.3	89.2	90.1	90.9	91.6
Venezuela	53.2	60.1	66.6	69.8	72.4	77.8	83.3	87.6	90.5	92.4	93.7	94.5	94.9	95.3	95.7	96.0

Source: United Nations, Prospects of World Urbanization 1988, Table A-3, page 42.

The movement of large numbers of rural residents to urban centers, thus concentrating the population in urbanized spaces is associated with the implementation of the economic model of import-substitution. This model was promoted in many countries of Latin America after the crisis of the 1930's, and more particularly, in the post World War II period. (Lefebvre, 1978; Lattes, 1989, p.262.). In the period 1930 to 1990, Lattes estimates that a rural-urban transfer of 100 million people occurred due to: (i) the impressive balance of permanent/long term territorial mobility; (ii) the reclassification of rural localities as urban and (iii) the changes in urban boundaries. (Lattes, 1989, p. 262).

Since the existing hierarchy of cities was weak and the dominant political ideologies bred concentration in all forms, the tendency was to flow to the metropolis in search of work and opportunity. (Véliz, 1980.). Centralism in conjunction with the adoption of this economic model pushed rural development to the periphery of the political and economic agendas of countries.

Simultaneously, social demographers have documented that between 1930 and 1960 the natural increase of the Latin American population rose from an annual rate of 1.8 to 2.7 per cent. (Lattes, 1989, p.262.). This demographic factor has played an important role in the massive transfer of persons from rural to urban area and is an important contributor to the accelerated growth of urban populations particularly that of the metropolis during the last forty years.

The decade of the 1950's was marked by a reduction in the fertility rate which became manifested through a decrease in the natural increase of the population. Chackiel and Schkolnik while discussing the total fertility rate in rural and urban areas for selected countries of Latin America indicate that women in rural areas have more children than women in urban areas. (Chackiel and

Schkolnik, 1990, Table 6). However, the existing concentration or number of women in cities has generated the situation where natural increase today is the motor behind population growth in cities. CELADE confirms this tendency:

Information from the majority of countries in Latin America indicate that the increment of the urban population is due, principally, to the natural increase of the population and a small direct contribution is from rural migration. In respect to the metropolis, the same pattern exists except that migration is of urban origins. (CELADE, 1991,p.2).

The estimates presented in Table 1 suggest that the urban population will increase from 163 million in 1970 to more than 416 million in the year 2000. This is an increase of more than 225 percent while the rural population will increase by 0.8 percent. However, as has been pointed out in the discussion, the concentration of persons in urban areas has its roots in the post World War II period where rural to urban migration has been estimated to have increased urban populations by 20 percent to 80 percent depending on the particular city or town and the particular historical moment. (Ebanks, 1991b, p.68). Given the young age composition of such migratory streams, the reproductive stage in the life cycle of many migrants occurred in cities. While natural increase may be the driving force behind urban population growth, internal migration, with its continuously changing form, is still an important actor in the spatial distribution of the population.

The patterns of territorial mobility which have affected and continue to influence the spatial distribution of people, generally have been divided into the following population streams:¹⁰

¹⁰ A number of authors have raised questions about the data sources often employed in the study of migration. Graeme Hugo commented in his article on migrant women in developing countries that studies based on census data identify categories of migrants that to a great extent are determined by the type of data available. (Hugo, 1991, p. 6). In other

1. Rural to Urban Migration--Rural to urban migration has always been present; however the volume, pattern and composition of the streams had changed and will change along with transformations in the socio-economic and demographic parameters of society. As mentioned earlier, economic policy in the post World War II period, has been dedicated to the development of the manufacturing and service industries both of which are associated with the spatial concentration of people in urban areas. This development style has occurred not in conjunction with rural development but at its expense. Deprivation relative to urban centers dominates rural areas. Therefore, characteristics such as the land tenure system, employment, and income levels indicate a propensity for outmigration. Population growth without corresponding work opportunities, low productivity and the mechanization of agriculture provoke mobility in search of work.

Moreover, formal and informal communication links between a rural area and a selected urban space will facilitate the decision to move. Prothero suggests that in fact destinations to which people move become in part extensions of their places of origin. (Prothero, 1987, p. 1301). This, of course, has been well documented in the field of urban ecology which suggests that immigrant receiving areas replicate many of the socio-cultural institutions and practices of "home". (Park, Burgess and McKenzie 1925; Wirth in Reiss, 1967).

Amenities associated with life in the modern sector of society

words, this construes a limited understanding of the complex combinations of moves that people make. Also, Ebanks in his analysis of internal migration in Latin America emphasized that using census data only, curtails an analysis of migration as it is not possible to assess return migration, seasonal migration, circular migration, step migration and other emerging patterns. (Ebanks, 1991b, p.63).

are often inadequate or inaccessible in rural areas--health and educational services, electricity, potable water, telephone, transport etc. Thus, conditions in rural areas relative to urban areas are considered at best inadequate and at worst pathetic, and as such, are sufficient to expel population to other areas which, for the most part, were and are urban spaces. The importance of these characteristics in the migration experience vary through time.

2. Urban to Urban Migration-- In a highly urbanized society, the movement of people from urban area to urban area becomes more prominent. During the 1980's, this pattern has evolved into the most important migration tendency in Latin America today producing the phenomenon of urban deconcentration from the metropolis. (Ebanks, 1991b; Lattes, 1989; Prothero, 1987). Researchers believe that in countries with a well established urban hierarchy, a process of step migration from rural areas to smaller cities and towns and then to the metropolis is occurring. It is argued that this may be advantageous as it provides the opportunity for rural migrants to learn new skills and become accustomed to "urban ways" before this migrant and his/her family move on to yet another urban center. On the other hand, urbanites from the primate city may move to smaller urban centers in the attempt to improve the quality of their lives--less pollution, less congestion, lower housing costs, personal security, and of course, upward mobility through improved employment. This migratory pattern may signal the development and strengthening of a network of cities in the continuing process of urbanization yet urban deconcentration in Latin America. Much will depend on whether public policy can locate productive endeavours and amenities throughout the cities of a nation. However, on the eve of the 21st century, this form of territorial movement will be one of the primary forces affecting the spatial distribution of the population particularly when analyzing long term migration.

It will have major political and social ramifications for the distribution of economic and social opportunities.

3. Urban to Rural Migration--This migration flow is a pattern identified recently and is not large in the Latin American context. It probably reflects at least two tendencies: (i) the movement of the urban poor who may migrate to rural zones where developments in the primary sector such as agribusiness, mining and forestry have created job opportunities and (ii) the movement of relatively affluent urbanites to the rural zone within commuting distance of the large metropolis. This is a life style option and probably reflects a move to an ecologically more attractive area, an escape from the overcrowding of the urban spaces, or flight from the crime and violence so prevalent in large cities.

A not well understood pattern of return migration exists where individuals and households return to their place of origins. This may reflect nostalgia for "home" and family, responsibilities to family members who had been left behind, the possession of assets such as family lands, economic opportunity or an effort to establish oneself with income earned in the city.

4. Rural to Rural Migration-- In Latin America, rural to rural migration has always been a feature of this landscape as a result of the unequal distribution of the population and productive agricultural land. More recently, the movement of people from one rural area to another reflects mobility to jobs in the extractive industries such as mining. The development of agribusiness--agricultural products for export, an essential component of the dominant economic model--has created a seasonal labour force that responds to the needs of this sector. Also, this migration takes the form of a move to agricultural activities in the existing frontier areas where

cheap land has been made available, most often through government programs. A CELADE study concluded that between 1960 and 1980, traditionally deserted zones like the Amazonas and the Orinoco watersheds, and the Patagonia--covering more than 45 per cent of the Latin American territory-- have increased their share in the population from 3.4 to 5.4 per cent. (CELADE, 1983 as quoted in Lattes, 1989, p.263.). However, not only the stability of the colonialization experience but also its role in the spatial distribution of people throughout Latin America is questionable. Recent research reviewing the colonialization of frontier lands has concluded:

...today there are literally thousands of people who go to the frontier... many do stay there, but only a small fraction realize their dreams. The twin processes of soil depletion and indebtedness foster population turnover, income differentiation, and mobility, rather than stability and success. A fundamental reorientation is needed...(Findley, 1988, p. 307).

5. Circulatory Migration-- This pattern, while little understood, describes the daily, periodic and even seasonal mobility away from one's place of residents but with an eventual return to it. No permanent change in place of residence occurs "although a growing part of the population of Latin America faces daily some type of transfer or spatial movement, difficult to predict due to its variety." (Lattes, 1989, p.267). These movements do not fall into the traditional analysis of spatial distribution but are the patterns of the 1990's that social policy makers must address. These movements may be part of the survival strategies of individuals and families in order to face an unstable and unpredictable socio-economic environment. Also, this form of territorial mobility might be interpreted as a reflection of the fact that modern transportation and communications systems

have collapsed the variable of distance. Moreover, it is a mirror of the changes wrought by the transformations taking place in the labour market. Concerns regarding the spatial distribution of the population must incorporate conceptually the fact that societies are developing a "floating " population mass whose movements have serious consequences for social organization and individual and family well being. (Lattes, 1989, p. 269.).

Many researchers discussing the spatial distribution of Latin America's population argue that this distribution is directly related to changing structural conditions through time that reflect the exigencies inherent in the existing economic model and development style. (Ebanks; Hugo; Miró and Potter; Muñoz et al; Lattes; Prothero; Sassen-Koob; Simmons et al; Urzúa; United Nations; Villa). Supporting this affirmation, ECLA has argued "that the patterns of Latin American development have had a profound effect on the productive structure, the distribution of the benefits of development, emerging life-styles and demographic change." (ECLA, 1983a, p. 4). Furthermore, ECLA emphasizes that the power of transnational corporations have made them the main agents of production and financing in the new Latin American "style of development" and that the spatial impact of the new technology of the 1980's and the 1990's remains unclear. (ECLA, 1983b, p. 6). Sassen-Koob argues that territorial mobility, along with other factors affecting the spatial distribution of people, must be analyzed within the central features of the current global process of economic restructuring which is one, albeit fundamental, element in the current phase of the capitalist world economy. (Sassen-Koob, 1984, p.1149).

However, the costs and benefits of a global economic order take form at the scale of nation and community. It is the structural inequities with their inequitable distributional effects that prevent access to the opportunity structures of society that preoccupy governments and civil society throughout the region.

This concern is a reflection of the existing inequalities and inequities that are immediately visible--environmental deterioration such as urban pollution and congestion or depletion of natural resources in rural areas; inadequate housing, sewage and potable water; inadequate health and education services; inadequate transportation systems; high levels of underemployment and unemployment; immense wage differentials; ubiquitous poverty. The social face of these inequities can be described through mortality and morbidity statistics; fertility rates with increasing adolescent pregnancy; low educational levels; the structure of labour force participation; highly skewed income distribution; increasing rates of delinquency; changing family structure with increasing female head of households etc. These elements ascribe for the great majority, a quality of life dominated by poverty and pathos.

Socio-Economic Characteristics Contributing to Population Movements and Spatial Patterns

Studies investigating the spatial distribution of people suggest that the following characteristics and processes must be taken into consideration in the development of policies and programs to influence the present patterns of spatial distribution and their corresponding social ramifications.

First, the demographic and socio-economic conditions both at the place of origin and at the place of destination are important elements in the decision of individuals and families to move. By far the predominant factor influencing the spatial mobility of individuals, families and households is survival which is articulated in the search for a place in the labour market that offers a better standard of living and access to opportunities and amenities existing in the modern sector of Latin American

societies. (Ebanks; Miró and Potter; Hugo; Simmons et al; Szasz; United Nations; Villa). As mentioned above, this search for work is dictated by the division of labour corresponding to a global economy and its spatial expression. The heterogeneity of the productive processes have generated selective streams of migrants.

Differential Characteristics Affecting Territorial Mobility and the Spatial Distribution of the Population

Those who choose to migrate, and thus, form part of a particular migratory stream can be differentiated by a number of demographic and socio-economic characteristics. Any public policy measures to influence the patterns of the spatial distribution of the population must be sensitive to the characteristics of these groups of people. Options must be created for them as they are the persons and/or families that make the decision to move. The socio-demographic composition of migrant flows can be differentiate by factors such as gender, age, ethnicity, race, educational status, occupational status, health status, family and household structure, kinship networks in the place of destination. Moreover, the research in the field of migration is unequivocal in suggesting that people who move to do so for economic reasons--a better life for themselves and their families. Less tangible to measure but of importance is the desire beyond subsistence of the migrant and his/her family for a degree of social mobility obviously denied them in their place of origin. An understanding of the different characteristics of those who move and those who stay is important for policy and program development.

In summary, the evidence indicates that the following personal and structural attributes influence people to move: (i) the lack of economic opportunity that is the need to guarantee through labour force participation the basic needs of one's family; (ii) the inadequate distribution of health and social services; (iii) the structure of employment; (iv) the existing system of social

stratification; (v) political corruption and oppression; (vi) the stage in the life cycle; (vii) the nature of family, household and kinship networks.¹¹ Moreover, two additional traits are critical in determining territorial mobility. They are:

--age--young individuals in the age group 15 to 30 years of age are the most spatially mobile in Latin America. However, an age-gender issue is the small migration stream of older women, those over 50 years of age, which has emerged reflecting the movement of older women to urban areas to be with and support, through their domestic labour, their families as they live in cities. In Latin America older women have not had the same involvement in agriculture as women in other regions of the world. Therefore, as they are widowed, the family ties that bind them to the countryside are lessened and with a limited role in agriculture the conditions exist for them to move.

--gender--the differential importance of gender in the decision to move has not been given the attention that it merits. No longer is it sufficient to attribute the migration patterns of women to their family obligations. In Latin America, women have outnumbered men in the migration stream to urban areas as the structure of urban employment offered them low paid wages in the service industry and as domestic help. More recent trends indicate a feminization of the labour force within the context of the expansion of export manufacturing

¹¹ Simmons in his article, "World System-Linkages and International Migration: New Directions in Theory and Method, with an Application to Canada," explores new issues in international migration research. He argues that researchers have identified a trend towards a transnational family structure. He wrote: "These studies point to the emergence of the transnational family as part of survival and mobility strategies, in which Third World households adapt to declining economic opportunity by inserting one or more members on either a temporary or permanent basis abroad in a First World sector of relative greater opportunity." (Simmons, 1989, p. 159).

and export agriculture in Latin American countries. (Burbach and Flynn, 1979; García, 1991; Hugo, 1991; PRELAC, 1991; Sassen-Koob, 1984; Szasz, 1991; UNIDO, 1980). In some countries of the region, work in the export-production sector has mobilized young women in the 20 to 24 age group into regional and long distance migrations to the new industrial zones or sites of agribusiness. In other countries, it ties women to life in a semi-rural context. Sassen-Koob summarizes the impact of these productive trends. She wrote:

In brief, I am positing that the distinctive traits of export manufacturing--notably its locational concentration, labor intensity and use of young, mostly first-time entrants into waged employment--makes it into one of these processes for structural and subjective linking. (Sassen-Koob, 1984, p.1152).

The magnitude and type of female migration is changing and this initiates changes in gender roles and has ramifications for the organization of family life.

These very complex and interrelated factors influence the decision to move differently in diverse situations and historical moments.

The factors affecting the spatial distribution of the population in Latin America are complex. Given the perception of national governments that the existing spatial distribution is problematic, various policies to influence this distribution have been developed. These policies generally attempt to: (i) control fertility; (ii) retain the population in their original setting; (iii) return migrants to their place of origin; (iv) reorient migration streams to other destinations; and (v) attract people in areas of high concentration to other supposedly more desirable locations. Strategies ranging from land reform, colonialization programs, subsidies for agricultural products, etc. have had little impact on the processes affecting the spatial distribution of the population. Normally such programs have not taken into account the

complexity of the economic and social processes, along with the myriad of intervening variables, which affect the spatial distribution of people. The different spatial scales, as represented in Diagram 1, --the macro or global and the micro or local--in which human beings are forced or elect their residence often is left unexplored.

This document will turn now to the issue of decentralization. The above analysis provides the necessary information to investigate the question: How will the different policies of decentralization affect the spatial distribution of people or groups of people?

**DECENTRALIZATION: RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE SPATIAL
DISTRIBUTION OF THE POPULATION**

Systems in Change: The Role of Decentralization

There is little dispute that the world in which we live today is ever changing and increasingly complex. C. W. Mill's call for a conceptual framework, "a sociological imagination", that integrates processes and structural changes at the global scale with those in local spaces, is a necessary condition to make sense of the kaleidoscope of contrasting images and events that comprise the present. Decentralization is one of the policies that has been advocated by persons of diverse ideological orientations to ameliorate many of the problems dominating the nation states of Latin America at the end of the twentieth century. Decentralization is a word, laden with emotional overtones, that often obscures the nature of the issue to be understood. As the philosopher A. M. Hare wrote:

In a world in which the problems of conduct become every day more complex and tormenting, there is a great need for an understanding of the language in which these problems are posed and answered. For confusion about our moral language leads, not merely to theoretical muddles, but to needless perplexities. (Hare, 1952, p. 1-2).

It is the purpose of this section to clarify the historical and present context of the debate on decentralization in Latin America. Moreover, the multiplicity and complexity of the decentralization polemic will be unraveled in order to understand the myriad of meanings attributed to the word, decentralization. With this as background information, it will be possible to speculate on whether decentralization will influence directly or indirectly those socio-economic processes molding the future patterns of population distribution throughout the Latin American continent.

One might ask quite rightly: Why do politicians, planners, members of corporate management, leaders of social movements and ordinary citizens talk of the need for decentralization? That the motives of these diverse groups of people are similar, is questionable. However, there are some commonly held premises or beliefs, most yet to be substantiated by evidence, that make decentralization very attractive. At the same time, the changing productive patterns associated with the internationalization of world capital, along with the accompanying policies of structural adjustment and those of economic specialization to guarantee access to international markets have placed, the issue of decentralization on public and private agendas. Decentralization also is associated with the processes of democratization and public participation sweeping the continent. In other words, decentralization is a central theme in the winds of change that are blowing throughout the world and the Latin American region. Within the boundaries of this continent, some have argued that it is a critical component to the period of political and economic transition that the countries and the populations of this region are experiencing. It is part of a shift from one paradigm to another where local and regional spaces, that is the micro, will assume a central role in the economic and social organization of the life of an individual, his/her family and social group. (Boisier, Sabatini, Silva, Sojo, and Vergara, 1991). Others warn that it may be nothing more than a strategy to localize the social costs of an international economy. (Mattos, 1989 a,b,c, and d; Nef, 1991; Slater, 1989; Smith, 1985). Complementing this concern, Nef warns that modernization theory, albeit discredited intellectually, has come back with a vengeance under the guise of transition theory. He argues that the prevailing transition paradigm is constructed upon three observable trends which are synonymous with modernization and stability. They are: (i) the shift from military to civilian rule; (ii) the shift from economic nationalism to neo-liberalism; and (iii) the shift from populism to limited democracy. However, he writes that "the profound and

explosive social tensions brewing under the "transitional" surface have not disappeared. On the contrary, they have compounded over time. The vicious spiral of poverty and violence--repressive, institutional and insurgent--has not been arrested. It has accelerated. Politically, the weak and entangled civilian governments that emerge out of the authoritarian nightmare of the last two decades find themselves confronted with unmanageable contradictions. These express themselves in the utter lack of effectiveness, eroding legitimacy and increasingly with the real probability of the very collapse of state authority." (Nef, 1991, p. 2-3). Martin Hopenhayn also summarizes the intense, contradictory and counterpoising forces that have come together in this historical moment--a transition to a new paradigm-- marked by emergent forms of democracy and modernization.¹² He wrote:

¹² The new forces of modernization are described in CEPAL's document, **Transformación Productiva con Equidad**, Santiago de Chile, 1990. Productive transformation will occur through the integration of technology into the productive process thus enhancing the international competitiveness of a nation's exports. This document argues that it is technology, not reduced salaries, that creates the conditions for increased competitiveness.

At the same time, this period of transition is influenced by a number of "megatendencias" that affect all nations in our world community. The forces that will transform the industrial landscape are: (i) the replacement of the fordist model of production; (ii) the dissolution of the large trade union movements that dominated the political scenario of the twentieth century; (iii) the prevalence of technological knowledge such as computer assisted design, computer assisted manufacturing and flexible integrated manufacturing; (iv) industrial structures that deconcentrate and decentralize production, **albeit, power and decision making may be increasingly centralized**; (v) the revolution in telecommunications such as the transmission of images and data by fax; (vi) high speed transportation modes such that the friction of distance is becoming an issue of the past. (Boisier, Sabatini, Silva, Sojo, Vergara, 1991, p. 27-30).

On the other hand, other research findings that are not easily available in Latin America predict a very different and rather dismal future. They argue that the new technology is generating poverty, inequality and inequity. See the bibliography for the works of: (Amin, 1989; Amin, Johnson and Storey, 1986; Burbuck and Flynn, 1980; Castells, 1987; Cooke, 1983; Cooke and Pires, 1985; Ferroa, 1987; Hadjimichalis, 1987; Harvey, 1987; Hyman, 1980; Leborgne and Lipietz, 1988; Lewis and Williams, 1986; Linge, 1987; Massy, 1984; Pollert, 1988; Schoenberger,

Counterpoising forces intersect at this crossing. On the one hand, the breakdown of the existing model of articulation between the state and civil society; and on the other hand, the struggle to consolidate democratic institutions with the emerging new type of modernization which while offering new perspectives of reinsertion in the world economy, threatens to reinforce patterns of exclusion and stratification. At the same time, profound problems of political legitimacy exist which are being addressed not only through constitutional reforms but also through the search for new instruments of cooperation that permit the development of a broad social consensus. However, the economic crisis and social disintegration have spawned problems of governability. Moreover, tensions are present between the diverse political and economic actors whose different interests hence praxis are difficult to reconcile. This creates obstacles for the emergent democracy and the exigencies of productive transformation. (Hopenhayn, 1991, p.1).

Decentralization: A Response to the Issue of Governance in Latin America¹³

Decentralization is the term that refers to the processes and the diverse forms associated with the transfer of responsibilities and powers from one level of government to another within different scales of spatial organization. From the administrative perspective, Rondinelli and Nellis define decentralization as "the transfer of responsibility for planning, management and the raising

1988; Scott and Storper, 1987; Standing, 1985; Vinay, 1985;

¹³ Jorge Nef's in his paper "Democratization, Stability and Other Illusions: Militarism, Nationalism and Populism in the Political Evolution of Latin America with Special Reference to the Chilean Case," (1991) argues that the issue of governance instead of governability or management is at the heart of the political crisis in Latin America. He writes that "governance, unlike the top-down concept of governability, involves the intricate and necessary relationship between both the officialdom and the governed. It rests upon limits to what is considered legitimate power. In this sense, the question of governance clearly overlaps with the issue of procedural and substantive democracy." (p. 4). Governance demands processes constructing consensus which permits a myriad of issues and participants to be represented, making it possible for the latter to share in the governance of the system.

and allocation of resources from the central government and its agencies to field units of government agencies, subordinate units or levels of government, semi-autonomous public authorities or corporations, area-wide, regional or functional authorities, or non-governmental private or voluntary organizations." (Rondinelli and Nellis, 1985, p.5).

Moreover, there are often a series of political objectives ascribed to decentralization such as: popular participation, local democracy, distribution of political power, relevant development, efficacious use of human and financial resources, more effective identification of basic needs, social integration, coordination and debureaucratization. All these ascribed characteristics are manifest in different forms at different scales of territorial organization. The changing dynamics of global processes at the macro level will entail territorial reorganization at the local level. Recent European history confirms this.

Given the myriad of meanings associated with decentralization, a characterization of this process has been developed in the literature concerned with this subject. The political administrative entities, with their corresponding responsibilities and powers, resulting from policies of decentralization take form directly through the territorial organization of a national space. While the following description is not exclusive, decentralization is frequently conceptualized as: ¹⁴

1. **Deconcentration** is the distribution of administrative authority or responsibility to lower levels within the central government and its ministries and agencies. It represents, in

¹⁴ The following description of modes of decentralization borrows heavily from the analysis of: Cochrane, G. (1983); Conyers, D. (1983: 1984: 1986); Rondinelli, D. (1982: 1986:); Rondinelli, D; Nelli, J. and Shaiver, S. (1983); Rondinelli, D., McCullough, J., and Johnson, R. (1989).

its most limited form, the shifting of the workload from centrally located staff to offices outside the national capital. Responsibility remains with the central government. Since the 1970's, deconcentration is the most frequently used form of decentralization in developing countries. (Rondinelli, Nellis, Cheema, 1983, p. 14).

2. **Delegation** is the shifting of responsibility to either semi-autonomous public corporations or to publicly regulated private enterprises in order to plan and implement activities, produce goods and/or supply services that were previously offered by the central government and its ministries. Delegation implies that an authority transfers to an agent specified functions and duties which the agent has broad discretion to carry out. However, the ultimate responsibility remains with the delegating authority. Delegation became important as a mechanism to circumvent the inefficiency of the central bureaucracy in order that essential development tasks could be expedited. In other situations, politically sensitive activities may be delegated to such entities.
3. **Devolution** is the creation or strengthening-- mandate, finances or legal jurisdiction-- of subnational units of government. The activities of these entities are substantially outside the direct control of the central government. Under devolution subnational units of government are separate legal entities and as such are autonomous and independent. It is argued that devolution places the mechanisms of governance much closer to the citizenry thus opening up new channels of participation. It is believed to be a response to the articulated need for greater autonomy and self-sufficiency at the regional and municipal levels. It is a functional mode that respects the heterogeneity of regional and local spaces.
4. **Privatization and Deregulation** is the procedure by which some governments have divested themselves of responsibilities and

functions by transferring them to voluntary organizations, non-governmental organization or by allowing them to be assumed by private enterprise.

Decentralization policies have been advocated to ameliorate a series of troubles identified with the structure and organization of most Latin American states. Researchers concur that decentralization in its various forms provides an alternative to the ills of the macrocephalic Latin American state. Many analysts discuss decentralization as the antithesis of centralization rather than as a continuum of mandates, responsibilities, powers and resources divided among autonomous levels of government: central, regional and municipal.¹⁵ They argue that decentralization stands in contrast to the extreme centralization of government and decision making power within the Latin American State.

Decentralization and the State

Historically, the roots of a strong central state structure in Latin America were modelled after the French and Spanish experiences of the nineteenth century where the essential role of the State was the construction of national unity. (Rufián and Palma, 1991, p.2; Graham, 1981, p. 488; Véliz, 1980). In the states of Argentina, Brazil, Venezuela and Mexico where federal systems were implemented, at least in form, state structures and organization have become centralist in their functioning and their impact. (Graham, 1981, p.488).

The ramifications of increasing centralization and central state

¹⁵ In the countries of the region the spatial division of the national territory will be different reflecting a number of factors: (i) the political consensus existing over the goals of decentralization; (ii) the geography of the country; (iii) the existing natural cultural regions; (iv) economic activity; and (v) the historical territorial organization of space. In addition, different nomenclature is employed for rather similar territorial units.

supremacy in the nations of Latin America during the twentieth century are manifest in:

the concentration of economic and political resources in the hands of national governments confined to a single decision-making center whose political, economic and social significance overwhelms that of any other single area under its jurisdiction. The economic form taken in such instances is usually that of state capitalism, whereby the public sector assumes primary responsibility for promoting economic growth and mediating between national and international market forces. The administrative formula adhered to more often than not exalts the maintenance of a common set of central ministries designed to regulate public and private activities in each of the major sectors of the economy, concurrently with the random creation of a host of decentralized, autonomous agencies, in order to meet specific needs in stimulating economic growth and in providing new social services. (Graham, 1980, p.488).

Moreover, as others have pointed out the central government over the years assumed greater and expanded responsibilities in the socio-economic affairs of the country with the corresponding formation of complex and intricate governmental bureaucracies whose sectorial ministries and public organizations were and are not only jealous of their prerogatives but also were and are in competition with each other for limited human and financial resources. (Rondinelli, Nellis, Cheema, 1983, p.6-7; Slater, 1989, p.503). Moreover, state bureaucracy became a source of power, wealth, and privilege and as a result control of this political administrative apparatus was essential. At the same time, the internal logic of bureaucratic development continued the tendency of centralization through its proclivity for the "self-sustained and self-accumulating growth of the bureaucracy itself, of its power and spheres of action, and to the emergence of a constellation of groups and interests around it." (Kaplan, 1985, p. 82).

In conjunction with the above trends, nuclei or nodes of political power, dominated by political classes, have been formed which are accustomed to functioning in a centralized manner. Slater contends that this along with "the concentration of power in the executive,

the inflation and compartmentalization of administration, the previous phases of public sector intervention in the economy and the frequent localization of industrial and commercial activities in or around the capital city, have all contributed to reinforcing the centripetal bias of development." (Slater, 1989, p.504). Centralization is consistent with the interests of political elites throughout Latin American societies.

Decentralization and Democracy: Expanding Participation in Local Spaces

Decentralization in Latin America has become synonymous with the expanding participation of people in the decisions that affect their lives and that of their communities and regions. It is associated with the opening or the increasing democratization of the opportunity structures of society to guarantee social mobility. It is a part of the search for equality and equity-- a necessary condition to alleviate the ubiquitous poverty that encompasses the nations of this continent.¹⁶

Decentralization is part of the search to articulate new relations between the state and civil society by empowering the different levels of spatial organization to respond more efficiently and efficaciously to the issues of equality, equity and social and physical mobility. The hypothesis is that the construction and

¹⁶ It is interesting to note that the present debate on economic transformation in Latin America mentions equity but the concepts inherent in equality have been disregarded. It is pertinent to ponder if equity can exist without equality and if equality must be tempered by degrees of equity. Is fairness possible without equal access to the opportunity structure of a society? The Webster Third New International Dictionary defines equality as "the quality or state of being equal as: (a) sameness or equivalence in number, quantity, or measure; (b) **likeness or sameness in quality, power, status or degree...**". On the other hand, equity is defined as: "(a) a free and reasonable conformity to accepted standards of natural right, law, and justice without prejudice, favoritism, or fraud and without rigor entailing undue hardship: justice according to natural law or right: **fairness...**".

empowering of local and regional spaces will generate creativity which will unleash a democratic local development process that guarantees spatial equilibrium and that is more sensitive to the basic needs of local people. (Arocena, 1989; Boisier, 1987 and 1988; Hopenhayn, 1991; Max-Neef et al., 1989). Since it is in local and regional spaces that this development will be occurring, it will consider the cultural heterogeneity of the inhabitants, respecting diversity and difference.

It is clear that administrative decentralization is a necessary condition for democratization and participation. However, it is not sufficient. Formal democratic structures whether in the centre or located in the regions and municipalities can be exclusive beginning with the nomination rather than the election of local government representatives. Democratization at the local level can be conceptualized by the questions: How can municipalities, through decentralization strategies, be granted greater autonomy--mandate and financial-- so that they can better identify and respond to the social and economic demands of the people and their organizations that are located within their jurisdiction? How can the relationship between local government and popular grass roots organizations be democratic and fluid? How can capacities for decision making be shared among the different levels of government?

In a continent dominated by authoritarian and patriarchal cultural patterns and where local and central elites have maintained their power through hierarchical decision making structures, the development of real mechanisms and entities of decentralized local participation represent a major challenge to the future of democracy throughout the region. José Arocena suggests that to nurture local creativity and surmount cultural authoritarianism and centralist tendencies, a well articulated civil society is needed if decentralization strategies are to be successful. This supposes the existence of a myriad of territorial based organizations that can be characterized in the following

manner: (i) economic organizations such as workshops, co-operatives and micro-businesses; (ii) socially based territorial organizations;¹⁷ and (ii) inter-institutional initiatives such as coalitions which build local consensus and identity. (Arocena, 1989, p. 51).

In discussing the importance of these territorially based organizations that go hand in hand with policies of decentralization, Arocena concluded:

From the point of view of development, these small economic endeavours tend to consolidate the socio-economic fabric of local spaces. This dimension creates the possibility of establishing relations with micro-local realities which take into account their specific needs. These small businesses are a source of local employment and the generation of local wealth, thus fortifying civil society. In this sense, the stimulation of small private initiatives will be enhanced by policies of decentralization that augment local autonomy....**Decentralization and the creation of small businesses are two processes that reinforce one another, and at the same time, strengthen civil society.** (Arocena, 1989, p.52).

Research suggests that the new social movements are the bases of networks of solidarity and alternative forms of survival that grew up under the authoritarian regimes prevalent throughout the continent and/or as a response to the structural adjustment policies implemented throughout Latin America during the last

¹⁷ These organizations, referred to as the new social movements, range from territorially based advocacy groups concerned with housing, social services and health care. Also, associations of street vendors, popular economic organizations and local self-help groups would fall under the auspices of the new social movements. There is a growing body of literature on these organizations which assesses their experiences and potential for the future, especially as local protagonists that collectively may enhance the quality of life of their members at the local level of social organization. See bibliography for the work of: Arocena, 1989; Castagnola, 1986; Chateau et al, 1987; Razeto, 1984; Razeto et al, 1983; Ballon, undated; Calderon and dos Santos, 1987; Hardy, 1985; Jelin. 1987).

decade. The new social movements are part of the socially based territorial infrastructure that provides sustenance to many during the difficult period associated with the transition to a new paradigm dominated by technology and international capital. They provide forms of participation through which both needs, along with strategies to resolve them, are identified.¹⁸ The articulation of these new social movements, protagonists in local and regional development, with resurgent democratic institutions will not be easy. Castagnola commented:

The nature of the articulation between new actors and others already constituted is not evident. Political leaders have great difficulty recognizing and accepting new forms of auto-organization as legitimate interlocutors. In front of this, the new organizations must develop simultaneously pressure group strategies directed at the body politic and the state and strategies of self-sufficiency to respond to the problems that present themselves in their own autonomous space. (Castagnola, 1986, p.77).

Thus, Arocena concludes that **"decentralization and the generation of social organizations are two processes that mutually support one another and strengthen democracy"**. (Arocena, 1989, p.53).

Participation in local spaces must be forged through broad based organizations comprised of various interest groups who negotiate with each other to construct a social consensus. It is this consensus that validates their locale and then their region as important intermediaries between the individual--personal space--and the nation and the global reality. This reflects the search for territorial identity and spatial differentiation that is affecting national landscapes across the globe.

¹⁸ Recent research indicates that local organizations can effectively organize and deliver social services.

Decentralization: Panacea or Myth: Arguments for Caution

The above, rather brief, synopsis, of decentralization discusses political administrative reforms which could establish regional and local governments with the powers to respond to a myriad of issues dominating their territorial jurisdictions. At the same time, the linkages between decentralization and the desire for increased participation in decision making at all scales of society has been considered. Thus, decentralization becomes a question of the distribution of power throughout a society, control over local resources, and equity. It is at this point where a number of researchers question the capacity of decentralization to affect the economic bases of the societies of this continent. They would argue that the advocates of decentralization have not addressed sufficiently the dependent nature of the Latin American economies, and therefore, decentralization remains an open issue until the following question is resolved: Is local development possible under the prevailing model of capital accumulation? Some go on to argue that under the rhetoric of decentralization, practices of privatization can be used to put into private hands the precarious social safety net developed over the past decades. (de Mattos, 1989a-d; Slater, 1989; Smith, 1985).

Whatever one's perspective, decentralization is still at best a vision for the future. For the most part, the desired accomplishments of decentralization are projections in time and space which do not diminish the importance of decentralization strategies in the alleviation of various problems particularly the extreme centralization that exists throughout Latin America. Rather, it implies that the structural, ideological and cultural limitations that encompass decentralization strategies must be considered with care so that programs to support policies of decentralization can be better conceived. Decentralization will not always have desirable or beneficial effects. They will vary depending on the "type of decentralization policies and programs,

the extent to which they are implemented, the situation prior to decentralization and what the state and civil society considers desirable and for whom it is desirable." (Conyers, 1986, P.596). The following is a listing of some of the considerations and/or dilemmas that must be addressed if decentralization practices are to be implemented successfully:

- i) that administrative reforms can not be confused with collective empowerment at the regional and local level.
- ii) that decentralization could increase regional disparity unless central government practices guarantee the distribution of productive activities and social benefits thus promoting equity and spatial equilibrium in the distribution of the population.
- iii) that decentralization instead of nurturing diversity could cultivate instead individual narcissism, affirming the dominant cultural patterns of authoritarianism, individualism and social differentiation.
- iv) that decentralization can reinforce the power of existing local elites and the structural arrangements that maintain them.
- v) that decentralization can not be successful unless government agents and social organizations exist in the regions and local spaces that can take responsibility for the powers and obligations distributed to them. Decentralization demands a management capacity.¹⁹ Technical assistance empowering local

¹⁹ Institution building, data bases, evaluation methodologies, and personnel development are not just the responsibility of local governments. A synergic and cooperative relationship among international agencies, the central government and that of the regions and municipalities together should develop sufficient management capacity for

governments to successfully fulfill their mandate is essential.

vi) that decentralization can not be successful unless the appropriate fiscal powers and judicial arrangements are implemented to assure autonomy and self-reliance. All too often local government is invisible.²⁰

vii) that decentralization can not be successful unless government at all scales of spatial organization designs new ways of interacting with the new social actors found in the micro spaces of society.

viii) that decentralization is dependent on the political will of representatives of government and civil society to resolve meticulously and through time a number of highly conflictive themes linked to equity and social justice, such as, the following:

--the problem of public control over the decisions that allocate resources whether they flow from the tax system, from social benefits or from economic policy.

--the inability of the higher levels of government to

all scales of government. Cochrane suggests in his document, "**Policies for Strengthening Local Government in Developing Countries**," that local personnel performance is improved by (i) well planned horizontal or vertical integration of personnel systems; (ii) adequate compensation and incentives; (iii) a determine effort to make officials accountable to local people for their performance; and (iv) effective training of local officials. (Cochrane, 1980, p. 23-26).

²⁰ The responsibilities of local government have tended to be residual. Local governments have limited revenues since the only sources left to draw on are limited to areas such as levies on property, fees from municipal licenses and taxes collected on sports and cultural activities. Local government has had to continue extracting resources from the central government for the provision of needed services. In these circumstances, the development potential of local government remains underutilized.

process and comprehend the diverse demands flowing from below.

--the inadequate distribution of goods and services

--spurious modes of participation beginning within non-elected representatives.

- ix) that the successful implementation of decentralization policies is dependent not on the polarization of government between the center and the periphery but rather on an holistic view of government that argues for integrating the efforts of all levels of government.

Decentralization: Population Dynamics and the Spatial Distribution of People

Decentralization is part of the agenda for political and economic transformation and as such is intricately interwoven with population distribution. This document has demonstrated that the developmentalist perspective views decentralization as a process which is instrumental in bringing about other forms of social, economic and political change. As has been established, the issues enveloping decentralization are complex and raise important questions that must be confronted by each society such as questions that concern the nature of the state, the metamorphosis in the physical landscape created by the "new technological revolution", the exigencies of the internationalization of capital with its social costs and benefits and changing territorial expression.

This document argues that a complementary and symbiotic relationship must be negotiated between the central government and its subnational units such as regions and municipalities. The politically sensitive theme of economic decentralization is related directly to the distribution of the population. However, the

forces affecting the decentralization of production are transnational in nature and habitually outside the scope of the economic development planning of an individual nation. However, within the international division of production where nations and regions attempt to create economic spaces for themselves in the world market, it may be possible for central governments to encourage not only the location of decentralized export productive units but also those enterprises and micro-businesses geared to the production of goods and services for the local market throughout the different regions and urban centers of the nation. People in Latin America relocate in order to participate in the labour force--formal or informal-- so that their basic needs and those of their families can be satisfied. As job opportunities are distributed geographically, whether through government incentives or the market mechanism, people will move in order to work and thus enhance their quality of life. If the emerging economic model demands the same economies of scale as the productive forces over the last fifty years, the disequilibrium inherent in the spatial distribution of people will continue. On the other hand, the allocation of work opportunities more equitably over the national territory implies, ipso facto, a different pattern--less concentrated--of population distribution. However, this changing distribution of the population will affect the organization of geopolitical spaces and the social infrastructure needed to support the inhabitants of these local spaces.

It is assumed in this discussion that a central government, through its economic and social development planning, will direct or steer, albeit with limitations, productive enterprises to different regions and urban centers. At the same time, these regions and urban centers, imbued with diverse human and physical resources, will be in competition with one another for these activities. The central government through equalizing transfer payments and other subsidies can attempt to prevent regional disparity in the location

of productive activities and the availability of goods and services.

In addition, if political administrative decentralization strategies are implemented, they too will influence how people, their households and their families live. This, in turn, will affect the "sense of place," and sense of identity projected by these persons on to the geographical spaces in which they live. Concretely, bonds of commitment to place, that is local spaces, can be reinforced if citizens feel that they can influence many of the decisions that affect their lives. The devolution of responsibility and fiscal power to municipalities so that they can respond more fully to local needs is an important step in creating an environment which will retain local inhabitants. It may even contribute to the redirection of migration streams and the deconcentration of people from the primate city to other urban areas. This may contribute to the development of a hierarchy of urban places in which the cultural, economic and social amenities of modern life are found.

As mentioned in the previous discussion, municipalities and community based organizations often develop far more creative solutions to social problems and human need. These initiatives complement, and all too often, supplement the social safety net prescribed by highly centralized ministries.²¹ The premise in this document is that local governments will be representative and democratically elected. It also presupposes the development of

²¹ This does not diminish the need for universal standards that must be implemented at all levels of social organization. This attempts to prevent disparity in critical services such as health care and education. Obviously, communities and regions better endowed with such amenities attract population as they are associated with social well being and certainly, in the case of education, with social mobility. If goods and services are more equitably distributed, population distribution will be influenced in that people will not feel forced to search for an enriched life style in the large cities of a nation.

synergic relations among representatives of business, local non-governmental organizations and the new social movements. When people feel involved in an emerging social consensus, their interest in moving to another center will be more limited. Consensus building and identification with a locale strengthens the fabric of civil society in local spaces. Again, central government transfer payments based on population could guarantee accessibility to goods and services that once were available only in the mega cities of the Latin American region. Therefore, decentralization is linked to the role of local and regional entities in the development of activities that improve quality of life--to cite a few; employment, social services, housing, and cultural activities. This indirectly affects the need or desire of an individual or family to move. Also, the "revolution in telecommunications and transportation" will influence the spatial distribution of the population as the networks of satellite towns around urban agglomerations will allow rapid commuting or simply expeditious communication with the center. People will not have to move physically from their homes and communities. This modifies spatial mobility through commuting patterns.

The role of decentralization in the "social construction" of regions and municipalities will engender differences between regions and municipalities, as this process enhances differentiation and diversity in all areas: economic, social and cultural. Moreover, the role of civil society in the development of these entities will vary with the cultural and historical experience of these spaces.

In conclusion, the recommendations found in this document could be considered as initiatives to support the successful implementation of decentralization strategies that will impact on the spatial distribution of the population by: (i) fomenting the development of local spaces with those characteristics that retain population; (ii) creating local spaces within mega cities that nurture the

development of networks of solidarity and identity such that these cities become both more manageable and livable; (iii) diverting migration streams through a more egalitarian regional and local economic and social development processes; (iv) providing services and incentives that create an attractive living and working environment where basic needs can be satisfied such that deconcentration of the population occurs; and (v) providing services and incentives such that the "floating labour force", becoming more visible in Latin America, will have access to a mobile set of opportunities that guarantee their needs and rights. The following recommendations suggest procedures and practices that could expedite the attainment of successful decentralization. They are:

1. to carry out detailed analyses of decentralization particularly in-depth empirical studies of decentralization in individual countries and of individual decentralization programs.
2. to conduct social impact studies of decentralization at different subnational units on different population groups assessing its influence on the demographic variables of fertility, mortality and migration. The ramifications of decentralization as a development process on individuals, families and households as they live in space should be documented.
3. to develop a methodology to conduct detailed community profiles of municipalities which identify (i) the socio-economic characteristics of the population; (ii) the needs of that population and their spatial distribution; and (iii) the nature of and distribution of services and other amenities responding to those needs. Determinants of spatial mobility, such as, unemployment, distribution of work opportunities, existing service and physical infrastructure, system of local

government and the nature of civil society, could be analyzed to develop a coefficient of the municipality's potential to retain or expel its residents. This information forms part of a community data base essential for local development which is integral to understanding the forces influencing the spatial distribution of the population. These profiles empower local communities and civil society to meet basic needs through more sensitive public and private social investment programs.

4. to document through case studies the hypothesis that local participation modifies, that is, opens the structure of opportunities in local communities and thus limits spatial mobility.
5. to investigate the mix between centralization and decentralization programs which will best modify the discriminating characteristics affecting migration.
6. to consult and facilitate government at all levels of spatial organization to articulate clearly the division of powers among them, and thus, create the appropriate mechanisms to fulfill their respective mandates with particular emphasis on the active participation of the organizations of civil society.

APPENDIX

**CONCENTRACION DE LA POBLACION EN CIUDADES
DE GRAN TAMAÑO:
1950 Y 1990**

**CONCENTRACION DE LA POBLACION EN CIUDADES
DE GRAN TAMAÑO:
1950 Y 1990**

	Ciudades de 1 millón o más habitantes en:			Ciudades de 5 millones o más habitantes en:		
	1950	1970	1990	1950	1970	1990
Número de ciudades	7	18	20	1	4	5
Población (en miles de personas)	17099	56803	132245	5042	32899	66057
Porcentaje de la población total	10.72	20.51	30.26	3.16	11.88	15.11
Porcentaje de la población urbana	25.77	35.63	42.61	7.60	20.64	21.28
	Ciudades que tenían 1 millón y más hab. en el año 1990			Ciudades que tenían 1 millón o más hab. en el año 1950		
	1950	1970	1990	1950	1970	1990
Número de ciudades	38	38	38	7	7	7
Población (en miles de personas)	26931	68570	132245	17099	38648	67950
Porcentaje de la población total	16.88	24.76	30.26	10.71	13.95	15.54
Porcentaje de la población urbana	40.58	43.02	42.61	25.77	24.25	21.89
Tasa media anual de crecimiento (por mil)	46.73		32.84	40.77		28.21
Indice de predominio urbano (por mil) ^{a/}	2.92		-.48	-3.04		-5.12

Fuente: Documento inédito, CELADE (1991): "Población y transformación productiva con equidad".

^{a/} Corresponde a la tasa media anual de crecimiento del porcentaje de la población urbana que reside en las ciudades de 1 millón o más de habitantes.

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