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Elusive Development: The quest for a unified approach to development analysis and planning

*Marshall Wolfe**

The efforts to incorporate the 'social dimension' into development policy or to formulate alternative styles of development are constrained not only by suppositions concerning the rationality and benevolence of governments and their accessibility to generalized advice but also by the feasibility of offering practical prescriptions for development without prior agreement on a theory of societal change.

On the basis of an analysis of the project on a unified approach carried out under the auspices of the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development and CEPAL, the author examines the different criteria used to approach these issues—technocratic or participationist, universalist or particularist, etc.—and after rejecting the idea of a universal action model for development, purporting to be suitable for all types of developing countries, he suggests that there is a need for a flexible attitude to development and the application of minimum criteria of acceptability and viability to the internal and external situations of the countries.

Finally, the author outlines a series of dilemmas and challenges for future policy-oriented research and notes that if this is to make a real contribution to human welfare it must maintain a critical attitude to its own terms of reference and the suppositions underlying them.

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I

The setting of the 'unified approach' project

In February 1971 a team organized jointly by the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL), and the Social Development Division of the United Nations Headquarters Secretariat met in Geneva to plan a project in search of a "unified approach to development analysis and planning", with a scheduled duration of some eighteen months. Resolutions approved the previous year by the United Nations Economic and Social Council and General Assembly specified the kind of social-justice-oriented development to be sought.

It is hardly surprising that the team did not produce a 'unified approach' meeting the specifications of the resolutions during its life span or that subsequent efforts by UNRISD staff have not been able to synthesize such an approach from the materials it left behind. As the decade of the 1970s nears its end the shortcomings of current development processes and policies are even more conspicuous than at its beginning, and the range of contradictory attributes demanding 'unification' has widened; the reconciliation of technocratic rationality with popular participation, of continually expanding production with protection of the human environment and resource endowment, of continually diversifying human wants with priority to the satisfaction of basic human needs poses questions that may be somewhat clearer than before, but that are as far as ever from plausible answers. The unified approach project has been one among many attempts to grapple with this recalcitrant reality. In some respects, it has been left behind by other explorations commanding larger resources and starting from more radical challenges to the conventional wisdom of development.

Nevertheless, the unified approach project helped to incubate ideas and slogans that continue to evolve and ramify in sometimes unexpected ways in the international organizations and in different regional and national settings. It may be useful to take a critical look at

its history, not as a source of developmental prescriptions but as a source of insights into the ways in which the quest for such prescriptions has been and is being pursued in the international organizations; at the ideological preconceptions and bureaucratic rituals shaping this pursuit; at the disciplinary and theoretical positions that converge and seek compromises (or ignore each other) in a team such as that undertaking the project; and at the interactions, if any, between initiatives of this kind and the evolution of public policy and public opinion.

In the quest for means of bringing the human future into closer correspondence with professed values there has been a tendency to substitute terminological innovation for conceptual innovation, to reinvent 'practical' solutions that have long been current, and to evade definitions that would reveal lack of consensus on the present nature of human societies and on the nature of the Good Society that is sought. These traits derive from the constraints under which the quest is conducted, particularly within the international organizations, and from the role of development research as an employment-providing industry that encourages its practitioners to attempt a judicious mixture of innovativeness with conformity. The traits are too intimately related to the very processes of conflictive change and masked pursuit of perceived group interests that shape 'development' in the real world to be controlled simply through exposure; in any case, an underground literature of jokes and verses circulating among development practitioners continually does this. Nevertheless, a historical-critical survey of the quest for a unified approach may contribute some useful correctives, particularly because the team undertaking the project struggled against the different forms of evasion and explicitly recognized them.

The publication by the United Nations in 1952 of the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation* is a convenient starting point for a sketch of the pre-history of the unified approach. It goes without saying that such a sketch ignores many parallel or overlapping initiatives within and without the United Nations family of organizations. The United Nations resolutions calling for the preparation of

this report assumed that the "world social situation" was a definable reality that could be studied and reported on like the "world economic situation", already the subject of annual United Nations reports.¹ However, the resolutions left implicit the content and boundaries of the "social situation".

The small Secretariat teams charged with preparation of the report could not start from a unifying concept of its subject: it was confronted with scanty and unreliable information for most of the world relating to an unmanageably wide range of questions that might be considered 'social', political pitfalls deriving from the Cold War and the incipient processes of decolonization, and bureaucratic pitfalls deriving from the compartmentalization of 'social' activities between agencies and between units within agencies that was already a feature of the United Nations system. It therefore sought a manageably modest interpretation of its terms of reference: the report would focus on "existing social conditions", dealing only incidentally with "programmes to improve those conditions". The 'social conditions' with which it would deal were to be practically synonymous with 'standards of living'; it would assess these as far as practicable through quantitative indicators. The subject matter was to be broken down into 'social sectors', or 'components' of the standard of living, delimited in practice by the jurisdictional boundaries of the United Nations agencies dealing with these sectors and generally contributing chapters on them. In order to compensate to some extent for the resulting compartmentalization by sectors and worldwide generalizations by sectors, in which the 'social' unavoidably became divorced from reference to specific societies, the report contained chapters on three of the world regions then beginning to be labelled 'underdeveloped': Latin America, the Middle East, and South and Southeast Asia.

¹Resolutions on social questions have usually originated in the Social Commission (later renamed Commission for Social Development), an advisory body to the Economic and Social Council, and have then been confirmed, with or without modifications, in resolutions of ECOSOC and finally of the United Nations General Assembly.

The United Nations organs that had requested the report received it quite favourably. It dispelled previous doubts whether such a task could be carried to a coherent conclusion, achieved an outside reception unusual among United Nations publications, and originated a series of studies in which successive attempts to go beyond the self-imposed limitations of the Preliminary Report can be traced. These efforts had a good deal to do with the way in which the 'unified approach' was eventually conceived and pursued. They were part of a conflictive evolution of ideas and organizational patterns in the United Nations Secretariat that reflected wider controversies under way in other international agencies, universities, research institutes, and national governments. Personalities, struggles for survival and growth among bureaucratic entities, and stereotypes harboured by each of the parties concerning the others, to be sure, blurred or distorted the reflection, but in very simplified terms, three main positions can be distinguished.

On the one side were the economists who dominated the authorized version of development thinking in the United Nations. They were econometrically trained and wedded to quantifiable laws and models, and some of them saw no reason to take the 'social' into account on any terms. Others saw allocations to consumption and to certain social services as important means of raising the productivity of the labour force. Still others were convinced that human welfare and equity, the values justifying the development effort, required some immediate attention to redistributive measures. However, they could come to terms with the social only through quantification of a kind compatible with their own techniques of drawing up national accounts, constructing models, analysing costs and benefits, calculating production functions, etc. If the proponents of social policies wanted a hearing they must learn the same techniques and provide usable data for them. Their view was that sound development policies, made possible by quantification of all the relevant factors, would eventually benefit everyone; enlightened self-interest would make governments and other societal actors adhere to them.

On the other side were proponents of sec-

toral social activities, dominated in the 1950s by the experience of the United States, then at the height of self-confidence as dispenser of advice and aid to poor or war-devastated countries. The activities in question were directed towards the relief of poverty, the universalization of the basic public social services found in the industrialized countries, the stimulation of community initiative, and the propagation of the norms and techniques of the 'helping professions', in particular social work. The proponents took the position that the forms of social action with which they identified were basic human rights and that the norms and techniques, with secondary adaptations, would be suitable to peoples everywhere. If local resources were insufficient, external aid and training could fill the gap. They were as insensitive as the economists to questions of social structural change and power relationships, but were particularly insensitive to one question central to the latter, that of criteria for the allocation of scarce resources.

The team responsible for the Reports on the World Social Situation found itself in the middle, seeking to understand the preoccupations of the economic quantifiers and the social service specialists and to build bridges between them: increasingly skeptical concerning the pretensions of both, but inhibited in criticism by lack of an alternative frame of reference and by the Secretariat's distaste for internal polemics and 'trouble'.

In their work, the term 'social development' gradually pushed aside 'social situation' with its static connotations, and although it did not receive a more precise definition, it became current as a counterpart to 'economic development'. Its users at this time identified it mainly with measurable improvement in standards or levels of living (the former term referring to norms, the latter to realities) and with government actions directed to this end. Two International Surveys of Programmes of Social Development concentrating on government plans and policies were issued, in 1955 and 1959. Afterwards, successive Reports on the World Social Situation were mandated to include "programmes to improve conditions".

From the beginning the reports encroached on topics to which the economists

could lay a claim, particularly in relation to criteria for the size of allocations to social programmes and the tension between capital accumulation and immediate raising of levels of living. Soon the reports began to discuss the social impact of economic phenomena and vice-versa and the social justifications of economic programmes and vice-versa.

The reports of the 1950s maintained a tone of qualified optimism. The 'social situation' was continually improving according to the statistical indicators, although the improvement was unevenly distributed and "much remains to be done". Governments were continually introducing new and improved social programmes. Practically all governments, by different paths, were advancing towards similar social goals, differentially hampered by misinformation, scanty resources, and the shortcomings of the human agents of their purposes. The interests of 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' countries in a world future of rising levels of living were basically harmonious; aid by the former to the latter was an important reality, however poorly planned and inadequate in extent. The social policies of all countries offered 'lessons' deserving study by their neighbours, although the flow of applicable lessons, and of experts to teach the lessons, might be mainly from the developed to the underdeveloped. The picture was of a predominantly rational and benevolent although highly imperfect world order.

By the early 1960s the reading of the statistical evidence and the evaluation of policies were changing significantly, although the conception of social development remained the same. The 1965 *Report on the World Social Situation* struck a note that was to be repeated with variations up to the present:

"A picture of painfully slow progress in the developing countries emerges at the mid-point of the Development Decade. While some sectors of development (especially education) have continued to fare better than others, and some countries (and parts of countries) have advanced faster than others, it seems clear that, for the most part, the recent effort at development has fallen far short of hopes and expectations. Possibly some of these expectations were unduly optimistic; a more pertinent question is

whether the development efforts, both national and international, have been sufficient - and in the right direction.

"Progress has been limited both by external constraints and by internal political and social realities. Unfavourable trends in trade and problems of external financing have sharply limited the material resources for development in many of the poorer countries, while the implementation of development goals has been hampered in a number of these countries by political instability and dissensions, with frequent overthrow of governments amid charges of corruption; sometimes also by lack of the necessary political will for development; and frequently by persistence of administrative and social structures that fail to provide an organizational basis for change and development or to enlist popular motivation and participation," (p. vii).

In fact, the proponents of social development had begun to envisage development as a complex process of societal change and modernization, in which the 'economic' and the 'social' were separable only artificially and for purposes of analysis. However, their distrust of global theories and models (or their institutional inhibition from choosing any one theory of societal change), together with the kinds of information available to them and the intellectual habits generated by the sectoral organization of the reports and the negotiation of their contents with the bureaucratic guardians of the sectors, continually crowded them back into a narrower vision of social development made up of progress in separate components of levels of living, measurable through inescapably heterogeneous statistical indicators and promotable through equally heterogeneous social and economic programmes. They became sufficiently sensitive to the shakiness of the data base of the elaborate statistical manipulations and models of the economists not to be tempted to follow suit with equally shaky social statistics. They considered but rejected as impracticable the objective of unifying the concept of level of living and measuring 'social development' through a composite statistical indicator comparable to the national income or gross national product. They made some use of the findings of sociological and anthropological field research,

but found in the theories then current in these disciplines no help towards an interpretation of social development matching the imposing structures built around economic development.

Meanwhile, the idea of objective guidelines for allocations of public resources and better mutual support between economic and social programmes attracted the attention of national representatives in the deliberative bodies of the United Nations. During the 1950s various United Nations resolutions called for "balanced economic and social development" and asked the Secretariat for reports pointing the way to such development. The current debate among economists over 'balanced' vs. 'unbalanced' growth strategies contributed to the popularity of the term, although the conceptions of what was to be 'balanced' had little in common. The resolutions conveyed a vision of social and economic 'fields' as distinct realities deserving equal shares of fertilizer.

The interest in 'balance' also had a more concrete motivation. The growth of international technical assistance to 'under-developed' countries was confronting the international agencies with competition for allocations to social and economic programmes comparable to that experienced by the national administrations, and the United Nations deliberative bodies had no generally accepted criteria for bringing order into the competition. International promoters separately urged on the national administrations a bewildering variety of projects and approaches and built up alliances with national sectoral interests. At the same time, many countries were setting up planning agencies, and some of these agencies were receiving formal responsibilities for centralizing technical assistance requests and arbitrating between the different sectoral claims for allocations. It was reasonable to suppose that while useful lessons must be emerging from these efforts, they would also require advances from economic development planning techniques to something more comprehensive. Thus, one of the resolutions called for "...studies of actual government experience in integrating social programmes with each other and with economic programmes and in deciding upon size and

priority of allocations in general development plans".²

The Secretariat team responsible for the Reports on the World Social Situation, after some years of speaking of 'balance' as a desideratum, finally began to tackle the question systematically around 1957 and presented its conclusions in the 1961 report, which began with the statement:

"From a governmental point of view, the question of balanced social and economic development is to an important extent a question of the pattern of public expenditure. There is no over-all conception or theory of balanced development applicable to the expenditure policy of the economically underdeveloped countries at the present time; there are only fragments of a theory and 'common sense'."

The treatment of the question in the 1961 report maintained the cautiously empirical tone of the above quotation, summarizing a wide range of possible interactions between the 'social' and the 'economic' and of theories concerning such interactions, concluding that "while it is theoretically not possible to state what levels of development in the various social components *should* go with given levels of economic development, it is quite possible to state what social levels *do* go with given economic levels", and that "studies of actual patterns of development can assist the practical process of decision-making... by providing evidence of social levels that can demonstrably be achieved at given levels of economic development [and] by providing evidence of imbalances". (p. 39).

Between 1957 and 1964, thirteen "country case studies" were completed and issued as background documents for the 'balanced development' project. Some of these studies were confident of the prospects for the national variant of planning; others exposed consistent failures on the part of political leaders and planners to foresee the resources that could be mobilized to achieve their purposes or the wider consequences of their efforts. The studies did not reveal any readily transferable techniques

²See Introduction to *Planning for Balanced Economic and Social Development: Six Country Case Studies* (United Nations, New York, 1964).

for balancing, and confirmed that juxtaposition of social and economic programmes in a development plan did not insure either their integration or their implementation. A good many of the studies confirmed implicitly that the size of allocations depended on some combination of bureaucratic inertia, the relative strength of organized pressures, the relative persuasiveness of advocates, or the hunches of political leaders, rather than on technical criteria. Moreover, in several of the countries political regimes and plans changed radically even before the Secretariat editors had time to issue the study.

Within the United Nations during the 1960s at least two distinct approaches proceeded, if not hand in hand, in juxtaposition with the attempts to bring the multifarious activities relating to human welfare under a roof of 'social development', measure their progress, and balance them with economic activities. The more influential of the approaches was the elaboration of norms for economic development of the Third World, shaped by the kind of economic thinking described above and symbolized by the first Development Decade. Interest centered on goals for investment, financial and technical flows from 'developed' to 'developing' countries, terms of trade, and, as the expected result, rates of increase in the gross national product. The second and more visionary approach was that of formulation of normative declarations on social and economic rights, and this, undeterred by the chasm between governmental votes for such rights and governmental capacity or will to honour them, reached its culmination in the Declaration on Social Progress and Development approved by the General Assembly in 1969 as resolution 2542 (XXIV).

The approaches of development economists and proponents of social sectoral action evolved during the 1960s, although it is doubtful whether they came to understand each other much better. The economists became more inclined to recognize 'social aspects' and 'social obstacles' to economic development, at least as excuses for frustrated plans and lagging dynamism, and to challenge sociologists for advice on how to insert missing ingredients

and remove obstacles.³ They became more interested in the contributions of education and health services to the upgrading of 'human resources' and tried to devise methods of quantifying such contributions which, it was hoped, would permit their incorporation into models and plans. Moreover, the dominant econometricians had to take into account more fundamental criticisms of the conventional wisdom from within the economic camp, in particular from Gunnar Myrdal in *Asian Drama* (1968).

The social sectoral groups came to look on the economists as powerful but narrow-minded figures who could ensure adequate attention to social concerns by including them in development plans, once the right arguments were found to enlighten them on the importance of these concerns. Thus, somewhat grudgingly, some of them entered into the game of calculating the economic returns on social programmes and arguing their efficacy for removal of 'social obstacles'. They also began to include in their reports and resolutions demands that their specializations should be integrated into planning 'at the highest level'.

The first Development Decade drew to a close amid disillusionment of several kinds: over the tacit refusal of the 'developed' countries to act on its recommendations and over the consequences for human welfare of the kinds of economic growth and modernization that were taking place. Overall rates of economic growth were not too far from the proclaimed goals and neither were the gains in certain 'social' indicators but, as the 1965 Report on the World Social Situation had indicated, optimistic interpretations of the statistics were decreasingly plausi-

³The Economic Commission for Latin America was probably the first economically-oriented United Nations body to try to incorporate (from the early 1950s) a theoretical sociological approach into its thinking on economic development. This approach, under the intellectual leadership of José Medina Echavarría, gradually escaped from its ancillary role of diagnosing social aspects and obstacles and led to a quite different kind of development dialogue. See, in particular, José Medina Echavarría, *Consideraciones sociológicas sobre el desarrollo económico* (CEPAL, Santiago, Chile, 1963) and *Filosofía, educación y desarrollo* (Textos del ILPES, México City, Siglo XXI, 1967); and Adolfo Gurrieri, "José Medina Echavarría: An intellectual profile", *CEPAL Review*, No. 9, December 1979.

ble. The range of future disbenefits and dangers was only beginning to be visible. If what was happening was 'development' it was not an unmixed blessing, and suspicions that it might never become such a blessing were growing stronger, even among some development economists.

The disappointing results of the first Development Decade gave the proponents of the various social approaches and of radical changes in the economic approaches strong arguments for more adequate attention to their concerns in the Strategy to be prepared for a second Development Decade. Studies and meetings of various kinds began to revolve around this objective.

One manifestation, deriving from the pursuit of 'balanced development' and leading directly to the 'unified approach', was the convening of a Meeting of Experts on Social Policy and Planning in Stockholm in September 1969. This meeting was an attempt by the proponents of a broad but pragmatic conception of social development to strengthen their position by forming a common front with critical economists. More than half of the ten experts, selected by the usual criteria of geographical and political distribution, were economists who had already, in various ways, tried to incorporate non-economic factors into their thinking.

One finds in their report, as in all reports of meetings of this kind, echoes of voices with different preoccupations, theoretical backgrounds and terminologies.⁴ The report pays its respects to the whole range of sectoral social questions by now traditional in the United Nations, in terms differing little from the Reports on the World Social Situation. Whether the experts had anything new to say or not, they could not leave themselves open to the accusation of neglecting the importance of education, health, etc. The more central propositions of the report, however, constitute an interesting demonstration of the ways in which the problem of rethinking development was generally con-

ceived at the time, and shaped the terms of reference of the unified approach project.

"The purpose of the meeting was to clarify further the role of social factors in development with a view to ensuring their adequate inclusion in development plans and programmes." This proposition and the proposition that "the economic approach to development analysis and planning had to be integrated with a social approach that was different in nature and would be more relevant to the problems of developing countries in the coming decade" were juxtaposed with less simple formulas: "it is most necessary to view the development process as a complex whole, comprising economic elements *sensu stricto*, but also other social, as well as political and administrative, elements. Any design for a development strategy, national or international, must cover all the above-mentioned fields if it is to be meaningful, internally consistent and capable of effective implementation." Governmental and United Nations compartmentalization should give way to a "more unified treatment", in which "the idea of a single social system in which development occurs" should be "taken seriously as its starting point".

Misleading dividing lines between economic and social phenomena, and between economic and social development, have been "due in part to the rather narrow approach to the development process characteristic of past thinking in economics, which relied heavily on simplistic econometric models with highly aggregated variables", and in part to governmental and United Nations bureaucratic compartmentalization. An "over-emphasis on economic growth rates of production has been based on the apparent ease of quantification in the concept of the national income or gross national product of developing countries". "The dominance of economists among the social scientists, and the earlier development and easier quantification of their concepts, has meant that certain non-market aspects—those inappropriately labelled 'social'—have been neglected in approaches to development." The experts recommended that those aspects should be dealt with as 'neglected areas' rather than as 'social factors', but did not follow this

⁴The Report of the Meeting of Experts on Social Policy and Planning was published in the *International Social Development Review*, No. 3, United Nations, New York, 1971, pp. 4-14.

recommendation in the remainder of their report.

The report endorsed one version of the 'dualist' label around which a great deal of ideological polemics and semantic confusion had focussed during the 1960s: "...a meaningful approach to development planning must take account of the dualist structure of many developing societies —dualist in terms of the difference between modern and traditional sectors, differences within those sectors and differences between those participating in development and those left behind or on the margin. ...The fact that development either leaves behind, or in some ways even creates, large areas of poverty, stagnation, marginality and actual exclusion from social and economic progress is too obvious and too urgent to be overlooked."

The report came down to earth by singling out one broad problem area as central to an acceptable development strategy: "The major problem for the Second Development Decade is likely to be unemployment and under-employment. ...In the absence of vigorously enforced employment policies, the grim prospect of the Second Development Decade is one of rising unemployment, accompanied by increasing concentration of the worst aspects of poverty in the cities, and growing gaps in the level of welfare among social groups and regions in individual countries, as well as growing gaps among countries. All this can take place with rates of increase in national income in most developing countries as high as or higher than the rates achieved by the technically advanced countries during their periods of industrialization."

The report juxtaposes the technocratic vision of development engineered from the top and the participationist vision of development emerging from popular initiative, but shows more affinity with the former: in the past, the analysis of social development processes and policies has focussed on "social development objectives" and on "social obstacles to development". The processes and policies should be viewed also "in terms of engineered social change... policies could and should be devised so as to activate wider social strata to increase their participation in the development pro-

cess". A major prerequisite for development is "peaceful radical social change, as rapidly as possible". "Peaceful domestic movements committed to rapid change should be permitted to flourish and, whenever possible, should be supported if they would help to promote a sense of participation and social engagement." However, for the social planner, it would be important "to obtain knowledge and guidance as to whether... radical changes [in attitudes] can be more easily made than a succession of small changes".

Finally, "to achieve effective development planning, all planners should think in terms of all goals".

The above quotations, together with other formulations in the report, suggest certain papered-over differences between 'experts' as to the nature of the 'social', but they also indicate a kind of compromise consensus on certain key suppositions that had already come under question during the 1960s. In miniature, they point to a number of conceptual problems that were to plague the later quest for a unified approach:

(i) The report assumes that a common process identifiable as 'development' is under way in the so-called 'developing' countries. This process is almost by definition, good and necessary, although its present shortcomings, from the standpoint of human welfare, may be more easily demonstrable than its goodness. These shortcomings can be attributed in large part to deficiencies in government policies and these in turn to the dominance of economic planners with over-narrow conceptions, using inappropriate tools. While the report voices many of the criticisms of current processes of economic growth and dependent modernization that were to become more insistent during the 1970s, it treats these as remediable defects. It does not entertain the possibility that the defects are inseparable from the functioning of the current international order, or that this order is basically incompatible with enhancement of human welfare over the long term. Still less does it entertain the possibility that 'development' is an inspirational myth, originally used to justify the attempted reproduction throughout the world of certain patterns for the organization of production characteristic of

the recent past of parts of Europe and North America, then overloaded with additional attributes to reinforce its supposed desirability and inevitability.

(ii) The report (probably in part because of the terms of reference of the meeting) places unlimited confidence in the potential capacity of planners to take everything into account in an integrated fashion and reveal to policy makers the one best way to do whatever they want to do. It assumes that development can be largely what planners and policy makers make of it, and that if sufficiently enlightened as to the importance of 'social' or neglected factors they can make of it something much better than heretofore. There is no trace of the various old and new disciplinary and theoretical positions that were questioning human capacity to plan comprehensively so as to reach predetermined ends and were (sometimes) finding reasons for moderate optimism in the market, in the 'hiding hand' stimulating would-be change agents by concealing difficulties from them, in the interplay of democratic political institutions, or in the acceptance and informed manipulation of 'limited rationality' in bureaucratic organizations.

(iii) The report does not entertain the possibility that the international organizations and governments to which it addresses itself, deriving from the power structures responsible for the iniquities to which it points, might be neither able nor willing to undertake radical changes, and that, indeed, they might look on their own requests for such reports as a harmless ritual testifying to their good intentions. The report refers to the inadequacies of governments only in terms of Gunnar Myrdal's concept of the 'soft State' with "insufficient power or will to carry out a number of desirable policies", and implicitly supposes that a 'hard State' could have such power and will. Governments advised by the right kind of planners are supposed to promote rapid and radical but peaceful social change and are entitled to *permit* or *support* social movements according to their informed judgement of the movement's peacefulness and its potential helpfulness in promoting "a sense of participation and wider social engagement". "Participation in the development process" of "wider social strata" is

to be achieved through policies of "engineered social change". From the vantage point of the end of the 1970s this faith in the rational benevolence of hard States engineering peaceful radical social change so as to enable the "wider strata" to participate in a development process, whose adaptability to meeting their needs instead of excluding or exploiting them is taken for granted, seems the most ingenuous aspect of the report. In the context of the end of the 1960s, however, it constituted a cautious recognition, tailored to the intended public of the report, of the revolutionary criticisms of existing social and political structures that were then arising on all sides.

The United Nations Economic and Social Council and General Assembly approved the report of the experts in 1970 and decanted it into resolutions giving instructions to the Secretariat for further work.⁵ These resolutions affirmed "the need for a unified approach to development analysis and planning which would fully integrate the economic and social components in the formulation of policies and programmes at the national and international levels". They laid down specifications, deriving from the report of the experts, for the kind of 'unified approach' wanted, which, they said, must "include components" designed:

"(a) To leave no section of the population outside the scope of change and development,

(b) To effect structural change which favours national development and to activate all sectors of the population to participate in the development process,

(c) To aim at social equity, including the achievement of an equitable distribution of income and wealth in the nation,

(d) To give high priority to the development of the human potentials, including vocational technical training and the provision of employment opportunities and meeting the needs of children."

The above components are to be "borne in mind in development analysis and planning processes, as well as in their implications, according to the particular developmental needs

⁵The *International Social Development Review*, No. 3, 1971, contains the text of these resolutions.

of each country". The Secretary-General is to submit a report on the unified approach at the "earliest possible date". The General Assembly resolution, more specifically, requests him to "evolve methods and techniques for the application of a unified approach to development, to be put at the disposal of Governments at their request".

During the same year, the General Assembly approved an "International Development Strategy" for the Second Development Decade (the 1970s). The Strategy was prepared mainly by the United Nations Committee for Development Planning, a permanent advisory body composed of eminent economists set up in 1966, whose preliminary work for the Strategy had been criticized in the report of the social policy experts as insufficiently human-welfare-oriented. The report of the experts was apparently not brought to the attention of the Committee for Development Planning, for whatever reason. Thus, the 'unified approach' resolution and the Strategy reached and passed through the General Assembly by separate channels. The Strategy, like its predecessor,

devoted most of its content to targets for economic growth, trade and financial transfers. However, the spirit of the times ensured that it would find room not only for a series of conventional and vague social sectoral recommendations ("developing countries will make vigorous efforts to improve..., will adopt suitable national policies..., will take steps to provide...", etc.) but also an affirmation of the need for a unified approach somewhat stronger than that of the resolutions deriving from the experts' report:

"...qualitative and structural changes in the society must go hand in hand with rapid economic growth, and existing disparities—regional, sectoral and social—should be substantially reduced. These objectives are both determining factors and end-results of development; they should therefore be viewed as integrated parts of the same dynamic process, and would require a unified approach."

The 'unified approach' had thus followed 'balanced development' into the international repertoire of aspirations that might mean many things to different men.

II

Methodological and institutional constraints

The preceding pages have suggested certain methodological and institutional constraints in efforts by United Nations bodies to deal with the 'social' or with 'development':

(i) The problem to be studied was normally defined through a resolution deriving partly from past reports presented by the Secretariat and partly from the interest and points of view of the representatives of governments in the policy-making bodies. In practice, governments rarely tried to impose a coherent ideological formulation through their representatives; they were generally content to seek recognition of their own achievements, refute criticisms, and occasionally score off adversaries. In the case of the 'social', which was more or less marginal to the central preoccupations of the governments, the formulation of problems

by the Secretariat, modified by personal interests and opinions of some representatives, usually prevailed, as long as it was clear that such formulations did not commit the governments or the United Nations to additional expenditures.

(ii) Definition of the problem normally preceded a request to the Secretary-General, as the person ultimately responsible for the work of the social units of the Secretariat, to produce a report containing 'practical' recommendations within a fixed period, determined by the calendar of future meetings of the policy-making bodies and by the need to allow ample time for prior translation and distribution of documents. During the 1970s timetables were also increasingly influenced by provisions for periodic review and appraisal of progress

within the Second Development Decade and by the international 'years' focussed on broad social problems. The practical recommendations were to be addressed to governments, on the supposition that they would be willing and able to act on prescriptions couched in very general terms. The conventions of the exercises permitted considerable latitude in criticism of 'some governments', 'many governments', etc. as inefficient, corrupt, short-sighted, or compartmentalized, as long as these traits were treated as shortcomings remediable through good advice and countries were not identified. Hypotheses that the problems addressed were not of a nature to be solved by the planning and actions of governments of whatever kind, or that typical existing governments would be unable to respond appropriately because of the character and the objectives of the forces dominating them were ruled out *a priori*.

(iii) Research techniques, beyond the compilation and synthesis of available published information, followed a limited range of paths, usually specified in the governing resolution:

(a) A questionnaire might be circulated to governments asking for their views on the problem and their methods of dealing with it. This technique has been used in earlier stages of social policy studies, and was resorted to again later in the quest for 'practical applications' of the unified approach, but did not enter into the work deriving immediately from the 1970 resolutions. The use of questionnaires had the advantage of freeing the Secretariat from responsibility for producing solutions to the more controversial questions, but had the disadvantage of eliciting incorrigibly heterogeneous materials, generally from a small minority of member governments, that had somehow to be 'taken into account' in reports.

(b) 'Country case studies' might be prepared through national institutions, individual consultants, or members of the Secretariat. This technique offered a greater likelihood of obtaining fresh information and ideas in a relatively coherent form. However, the conventions demanded that the countries to be studied be selected for a maximum of geographical and political diversity, and selection depended on too many extraneous factors to permit clear def-

inition of what the 'cases' were supposed to demonstrate. Budgetary limitations and short deadlines (since the case studies were generally supposed to contribute to reports due within less than two years) restricted the selection of those responsible for carrying them out and hampered the consultations and revisions needed for comparability and critical analysis. Typically, the reports made only slight use of the country case studies because they were completed after the deadline, because changes in the circumstances of the country left them quickly out of date, or because they presented an unassimilable mass of detail.

(c) The governing resolution usually envisaged consultations with and contributions from appropriate specialized agencies and other units of the United Nations family having social responsibilities (ILO, FAO, UNESCO, WHO, UNICEF, etc.). The consultations might or might not be perfunctory, but overlapping jurisdictions and sensitivity to criticism of certain dogmas and programmes introduced additional inhibitions into the preparation of broad, ideally 'unified' reports.

(d) At some stage in the response to requests for reports and recommendations, a 'meeting of experts' was practically obligatory. The conventions demanded that the Secretariat select the experts, like the countries for case studies, for maximum diversity, within limits imposed by the Secretariat's contacts and information concerning their qualifications and availability. In relation to broad topics such as social policy, balanced development, or the unified approach, the term 'expert' was stretched far beyond its usual sense. The participants in meetings might be 'experts' in many relevant specializations, but hardly in a field yet to be explored and mapped. As time went on and meetings multiplied, the repeated participation of planners and scholars undoubtedly contributed to a common understanding that has flowered in the formulations of 'another development' during the 1970s. The role of the 'experts' supposed to evaluate and improve ideas presented by the Secretariat, however, was ambiguous. If the experts exercised it vigorously they exposed their own differences of background and viewpoint and complicated the Secretariat's task of producing a coherent

'practical' report. The more deeply an expert was committed to a comprehensive theory or strategy of his own, the less fitted he would be to enter into an unavoidably eclectic exercise.

In combination, the instructions and techniques here outlined seemed to rule out the selection or construction of a single theory of social change on which to base an integrated strategy for social development. The instructions and techniques ensured that heterogeneous, incomplete, and erratically selected information would have to be taken into account; that representatives of different points of view and different terminologies would have to reach a least common denominator, or that their report would have to incorporate all proposals not definitely unacceptable to other participants nor self-evidently incompatible.

Once a grant from the Netherlands (later supplemented by grants from Canada and Sweden) made it possible to undertake such a study outside the routine of periodic world social reports, it was decided in New York to centre the study of a "unified approach to development analysis and planning" in the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), an institution less bound by constraints and conventions than the Secretariat itself, but with a staff and work programme deriving historically from the concepts of level of living, social development and balanced development that had evolved in the Secretariat, and accustomed to similar research methods, in particular the pursuit of information on broad topics through country case studies.

The core of the research team that first met in February 1971 and engaged in discussions of preliminary drafts and conceptual papers during the greater part of that year was made up of the Director of UNRISD, who had taken a leading part in the evolution of United Nations thinking since the *Preliminary Report on the World Social Situation*; the Chief of the Social Development Division of the Economic Commission for Latin America, where more politically-oriented and conflict-oriented lines of thinking had been pursued for some time; an economist with experience in the plan organization of France and in the study of development indicators; a specialist in the study of

decision-making processes; and an economist who had written extensively on development and served as a policy and planning consultant in different parts of the world. Other persons joined the team during the course of the year, contributed conceptual papers, or entered into discussions with the team: directors of national planning agencies, consultants on development planning, members of the United Nations Committee for Development Planning, specialists in regional planning, in human geography, in econometric techniques, etc. Their function was to cover questions outside the competence of the core team but relevant to a 'unified approach'.

Even the core members of the team had other responsibilities in the Secretariat, in other UNRISD research projects, in academic institutions, and as national development planners and consultants. It was evident from the beginning that a team of this kind, with less than two years at its disposal, would not be able to reach a theoretical consensus nor produce a comprehensive set of prescriptions for unified development within that time. Instead, the team entertained the more modest hope of reaching agreement on certain central concepts, clarifying theoretical or disciplinary sources of divergence on others, stimulating new ways of thinking about development, and producing two kinds of report: first, a synthesis of central issues and unifying concepts, along with a few cautiously 'practical' guidelines, and second, a report covering in some detail all the aspects the team considered relevant and important, in chapters to be written by individual team members and consultants, reflecting their different points of view but given a reasonable coherence through discussions with the team as a whole.

The deadline for the first report was October 1972, this date being determined by the need to submit a report of the next session of the Commission for Social Development. The deadline for the second report was relatively elastic, but it was hoped that it would be completed by the end of 1973.

In practice, budgetary limitations and other commitments of the team members made it impossible to continue beyond 1971 the dialogue that had begun, and the texts that

emerged remained too diverse in their 'approaches' as well as their styles to add up to a publishable second consolidated report. In later stages, a series of individuals struggled to impose order on a mounting accumulation of disparate materials.

The team devoted a good deal of attention during 1971 to plans and negotiations for a series of studies of national experience, and eight such studies were eventually completed by national institutions or consultants, although only one of them was ready by the intended deadline of May 1972, so that they could be used only in a very limited way in preparation of the project's first or preliminary report. UNRISD eventually issued five of them in mimeographed texts. The specifications for the studies gave those carrying them out considerable latitude for pursuing aspects they considered nationally important, but sought a measure of uniformity by asking them to discuss the relevance to their national situations of certain preliminary hypotheses of the project, in particular, that of the emergence of a "triple crisis" in development planning: namely, in the basic philosophy or final goals of such planning, in its links with policy formation and decision-taking, and in the adequacy of its techniques, mostly of economic origin. Half the studies were carried out by economists, who were often the only candidates prepared to take a global view of what was happening in their countries in the name of development.

In spite of the small number of studies, the differences in their content and in the approaches of those carrying them out deserve some attention as indications of differences in the real world of national societies to which the quest for a unified approach addressed itself.

Two of the studies dealt with Asian countries (Philippines and Sri Lanka) which had extensive and bureaucratized social programmes, formal planning mechanisms and competitive party politics, with social service, consumption subsidy, job creation, and public works accomplishments and promises critical to party success in periodic elections. These studies were carried out collectively by institutions—a university school of public administration and a private socio-economic research institute staffed largely by persons having

previous experience in the national planning system. They documented in detail the functioning of programmes and the deficiencies of co-ordination and overall policy guidance. Under conditions of political competition for limited objectives, bureaucratic compartmentalization of social and economic activities, and diffuse dissatisfaction at the malfunctioning of the system, but with no immediate prospect of major changes in the distribution of power and the expectations of different interest-groups in the societies, these studies could make various practical suggestions for improvements in policy formation and execution, but offered no hope of a radically different 'unified approach'. Both texts indicated that the contradictions in the functioning of the societies were likely to become more pronounced in the future but that the deterioration probably would not overcome their basic stability for a long time. Meanwhile, planners had to try to understand political realities, adapt their proposals to such realities, and help to educate political leaders and public opinion.

One study dealt with another Asian country, Iran, that was undergoing rapid modernization under autocratic leadership, with resources at its command vastly larger than those of most 'developing' countries, with formal planning machinery, but without open channels for the competition of interest groups and political movements. This study was carried out by a political scientist in contact with the plan organization. Its dominant note was intense frustration of several kinds: first, at the high social costs and inequity of the modernization process; second, at the limited and erratic use made by the 'patrimonial ruler' of the advice of technocrats and planners; third, at the precariousness of societal stability resting on minorities only 'cynically committed' to the system, with the majority excluded and resentful. Here a certain unification of policy was present at the top and bureaucratic, political, and financial constraints were less formidable, but the human welfare objectives of the unified approach did not have first priority, socially-oriented planning could not depend on a hearing, and transmission channels between the leadership and the society functioned poorly.

Two studies were carried out by individual economists on newly independent African countries (Kenya and Togo) with formal planning machinery inherited in part from the colonial past and in process of adaptation to new policy objectives, with political competition open but not intense. Here the note is one of cautious down-to-earth optimism: while policy formation has been erratic and planning has not been very effective owing to poor information, faulty administrative machinery, and scanty resources, nevertheless gradual improvement in planning, adjusted to the capacities of the State offers a good deal of hope as a means of making policy more coherent and more equitable. A radically different and ambitious unified approach, however, is hardly advisable and probably impracticable because of its demands on information and scarce qualified human resources. A study, also carried out by an economist, of Trinidad and Tobago in the Caribbean sub-region likewise focussed on the modest potentialities of planning as a force for rationalization in a very small country emerging from colonialism with an excess of bureaucracy, intense factionalism, and no clear political vision of the national future.

Two studies, carried out by individual political scientists, dealt with Latin American countries (Chile and Peru) that were then experiencing semi-revolutionary changes (since frustrated) within settings of considerable uncertainty concerning the real distribution of power and the capacity of the political regimes to transform the system of production and the distribution of incomes, wealth and consumption while simultaneously presiding over the emergence of new forms of political participation of the 'marginalized' masses. These studies described the national planning mechanisms and the current social and economic programmes, but their attention lay elsewhere. Unlike the other studies mentioned above they could not treat the political and economic systems and the distribution of power as constant constraints on policy and planning, for better or worse. In Chile and Peru initiatives were under way (under the quite different auspices of a mainly Marxist-Socialist coalition of political parties and of a nationalist military govern-

ment) to transform the systems and structures, against the opposition of other combinations of forces. Under these conditions, the problems of planners seeking to improve their methodologies and exert more influence over political leaders and sectoral bureaucracies receded into the background, although both regimes were favourably disposed toward planning. The questions in the foreground were the character, degree of coherence and relative strength of the forces supporting and opposing structural changes in the control of land, industry and mineral resources; their tactics and ability to mobilize major sectors of the population for or against these changes; their ability to carry out the changes with a minimum of efficiency under unavoidably conflictive circumstances; the possibilities for compromises or shifts in political alliances; the compatibility of the changes with open political processes and the observance of laws generally weighted against them; the alternatives for future political regimes and forms of popular participation if the changes accomplished their immediate purpose; and the finding of ways to enlist international support and neutralize the opposition of certain governments and transnational enterprises.

In these studies the differing preoccupations of the executing institutions and individuals seem to have coincided with real differences in the national situations confronted. If the project team had not dispersed by the time they were completed, their comparative examination could have provided a valuable corrective to the normative, universalistic and technocratic bias given to the project by its terms of reference. They suggested that possibilities for human-welfare-oriented rationalization of policy were real but limited; for all their differences none of the studies could envisage short-term removal of the stumbling blocks to a unified approach: more likely, the problems would evolve through the interaction of political and economic factors into other problems, not necessarily less formidable. Would-be agents of human-welfare-oriented development had to seek opportunities within these processes, rather than devise ideal prescriptions.

III

Differing approaches to a unified approach

Two documents set forth the elements of consensus reached in the 'unified approach' project while it retained a measure of interdisciplinary teamwork: (i) *Report on a Unified Approach to Development Analysis and Planning: Preliminary Report of the Secretary-General* (E/CN.5/447), 25 October 1972; this report was prepared by one member of the team and amplified and revised on the basis of comments from other team members, and (ii) *Report of the Secretary-General on the Expert Group Meeting on a Unified Approach to Development Analysis and Planning* held at Stockholm from 5 to 10 November 1972. The majority of the team members participated in this meeting, along with a small number of other economists, sociologists, planners and representatives of United Nations agencies. Both documents were presented to a session of the Commission for Social Development in February 1973. Because of the Commission's deadline the *Preliminary Report* could not be further revised to take into account the comments of the 1972 Expert Group.

A 'unified approach', according to the *Preliminary Report* "needs to make use of two complementary ways of looking at development: (i) development as a perceived advance toward specified ends based on societal values; (ii) development as the system of interrelated societal changes that underlies and conditions the feasibility of the advance".

"The first sense assumes human capability of shaping the future for human ends. It also implies that the existing society has the right and the ability through general consensus or through agents claiming to represent the best interest of the society, to make choices and enforce sacrifices in the name of development.

...The second sense assumes that development is an intelligible phenomenon susceptible to diagnosis and to objective propositions concerning the inter-relations of factors and the probable wider consequences of change in or action on key components of the 'system'."

"From the standpoint adopted here development is not a single uniform process or dimension of change and it cannot be assumed that 'development' means the transformation of the countries now labelled 'developing' into replicas of countries now labelled 'developed'. All national societies will be developing or trying to, during the foreseeable future, and at the same time will be trying to cope with the contradictions and disbenefits that arise from their development processes. There is no reason to expect their efforts to lead to uniform futures, or to final resolution of their struggles in a blessed state of 'being developed'."

The *Preliminary Report* went on to assert that "realistic discussion of the possibilities of more rational and effective action by human agents requires recognition of the existence and unavoidability of different *styles*, that is, different combinations of ends and means applied to different real patterns of growth and change. It also requires the taking into account of two different kinds of limitations on styles of development—limitations in terms of internal coherence and feasibility, and limitations in terms of compatibility with human welfare and equity values."

The *Preliminary Report* distinguished between the "real style of development" ("what is actually happening in a given national society") and the "preferred style of development" ("what the national political leadership, the planning agency, or some other significant political actor wants or expects to happen"). It rejected the possibility of a "detailed universal set of specifications for development or particularized 'definition'", but proposed a "minimum criterion" for assessment of styles of development: "the extent to which a style of development enables a society to function over the long term for the wellbeing of all its members". Assessed by this criterion, certain styles might be viable but not acceptable and others acceptable, but not viable.

The criterion implies choices, explicit or

implicit, with regard to: "(i) the extent and nature of national *autonomy*; (ii) the extent and nature of popular *participation*; (iii) the emphasis given to *production* in general, to specific lines and techniques of production, incentives, and forms of control over the means of production; (iv) the *distribution* of the fruits of development and mechanisms for redistribution; (v) the encouragement or discouragement of specific forms of individual or collective *consumption* of goods and services; (vi) the extent and nature of protection of the human environment, and (vii) the extent and nature of protection of human relationships contributing to solidarity, security, self-realization and freedom. These choices are complexly interdependent. If they are mutually contradictory beyond a certain point, the style will not be viable. If the choices are made in isolation from one another the probability is that they will be mutually contradictory to a dangerous degree."

After elaborating on the implications of these areas of choice, the *Preliminary Report* proceeded to sketch a typology of real national styles of development, then to propose certain strategic orientations for policy and certain approaches to developmental decision-making and diagnosis.

The differing approaches that we shall now discuss emerged not only during the period of team activity but also in subsequent attempts to synthesize the materials into a 'unified' final report and in debate outside the confines of the project. One might conclude that each member of the team began and ended with his own 'unified approach', more or less compatible with the positions summarized above and more or less modified by exposure to other positions, but retaining its premises deriving from the participant's ideology, discipline, and previous experience. Meanwhile, the international scene continually threw up additional major problems, approaches and slogans. The 1970s saw, instead of progress toward consensus on a 'unified approach', a continual diversification of interpretations of development, continually more ambitious international declarations aspiring to reconcile them, and also mounting criticism of 'development', from several quite different viewpoints, as an outworn and misleading myth.

The following pages do not try to reproduce the positions of participants in the unified approach project. Rather, the intention is to use these positions as a springboard towards a discussion of the different approaches that have continually confronted one another and entered into compromises in the international debate, whether as part of the project or not. Some of these positions were more strongly and typically represented in the project than others; a few of them were formulated more explicitly than before during the course of the project; some are more ambitious and exclusive in their explanatory and operational claims than others; some are simplified versions of positions that the same person might emphasize at different times without any necessary inconsistency. Some of the participants whose contributions were most important to the measure of consensus achieved in the *Preliminary Report* cannot be identified with any of the 'approaches'. All of them are, in one way or another, interventionist, the only influential approach to development not represented was *laissez-faire* or reliance on market forces.

1. *Development economics re-examined and broadened*

This approach assumed the centrality and at the same time the insufficiency of economic development theories and tools for diagnosis and planning applied to market or mixed economies. Economics offered the closest approximation to a coherent view of development, but it had not yet 'taken into account' all the relevant factors. The approach also assumed the centrality of economists as advisers to governments. The 'unified approach' must therefore be presented to economists in terms they could accept, incorporate into their methodologies, and communicate to political leaders having their own preoccupations and limitations of vision.

The approach had several main components:

(i) An interest in sociological and psychological diagnoses of 'social obstacles to development' or 'social preconditions for development'. The supposition was that 'traditional'

values, attitudes toward work and saving, class or caste barriers to mobility, child-rearing practices, extended family ties, etc. stood in the way of a development process requiring accelerated capital accumulation and investment, continual technological innovation, formation of a disciplined and qualified labour force, and predictable responsiveness of the population to market incentives. This development process could progress faster and more smoothly once the social experts diagnosed the obstacles and prescribed ways of removing them.

(ii) An interest in educational, health, social security and other social sectoral programmes, because of their claims on public resources and their contribution to economic development through the improvement of 'human resources'. Quantification of this impact and calculation of the ideal size of allocations to social programmes were considered key desiderata in a unified approach, although difficult and perhaps impossible to achieve.

(iii) A preoccupation with the measurable aspects of social justice and improved levels of living as the legitimate ends of development. The economists in question had already abandoned the expectation still current among many of their colleagues that these ends would eventually and more or less automatically derive from the maximization of investment and rates of increase in the national product. The most obvious disbenefits of economic growth in developing countries were increasing disparities in levels of income and consumption; new patterns of impoverishment and insecurity; and the incapacity of the economies to offer productive employment to a large part of the labour force. Therefore, the approach affirmed employment policies, income redistribution policies, and agrarian reform policies to be essential components of a unified approach.

(iv) A preoccupation with the improvement of quantitative methods for reconciling multiple objectives and guiding the selection of development projects. The proponents of the approach felt most at home with quantitative methods, and such methods responded to the political as well as planning demands made on them, but they could not help being aware of the fragile factual basis of their calculations. Thus they hesitated between the pursuit, on

the one hand, of continually more elaborate and data-demanding techniques for the construction of composite development indicators (preferably convertible into monetary terms) for complementing the gross national product; quantifying improvement in levels and distribution of welfare; calculating 'returns' on social investments, etc.; and, on the other hand, techniques, such as shadow-pricing, which permit an ordering and rational choice between alternative allocations with a minimum of data. In the last analysis, quantification might function, and be necessary, more as a heuristic device or a means of convincing the laity than as a reliable reflection of reality.

During the 1950s and 1960s variants on this approach had evolved from a more exclusively econometric position through continual discussions in the international agencies and elsewhere, as was pointed out above in relation to the prehistory of the unified approach. In particular, this trend had inspired a series of intergovernmental conferences on education and development, co-sponsored by UNESCO and the regional economic commissions, in which national educational authorities and authorities for economic planning and budget preparation were brought together with the aim of convincing them mutually that education should be planned so, as to qualify 'human resources' for economic development and that education should receive a larger share of public expenditures.

It was an approach that came naturally to economists deriving mixed sentiments of achievement and frustration from their experiences as development planners and consultants. It was also congenial to many social sectoral specialists, in spite of their uneasiness at submitting to the predominance of economic justifications for social programmes. It gave them a means that they lacked of ordering coherently what they were doing and also a more sympathetic hearing from circles believed to have a decisive influence over the allocation of resources.

2. *Development planning rehabilitated and perfected*

This approach derived from the preoccupa-

tions of planning practitioners in various 'developed' countries with market or mixed economies and in a much larger number of developing countries. During the 1950s and early 1960s the number of countries possessing planning agencies and preparing fixed-term plans has increased manifold. Even governments having no interest in such planning for themselves began to favour it for the 'developing' countries, if only as a means towards more effective use of their 'aid' to such countries: the support by the United States of ten-year economic and social development plans as a condition for aid under the Alliance for Progress is the most conspicuous example. The colonial powers had also left a heritage of 'development plans' and some rudimentary planning machinery in many of the newly independent countries. Courses training 'planners' to fill the posts opened in the new planning agencies proliferated, and a body of professional planners with a vested interest in the success of planning came into being. In the training of these planners economic theories and techniques predominated, but it also included other kinds of planning with their own history, in particular physical planning associated with the disciplines of architecture and engineering. Educational and health planning began to develop as distinct specializations, and in the other sectors of social action the acquisition of planning techniques and staff of their own began to figure at least as aspirations.

While the preoccupations of the planners coincided to a large extent with those of the development economists described above, they were more concerned with the legitimacy of their own function, their ties with politics, and the nature and effectiveness of the transmission between planning and application. By 1970, experience had caused a large measure of frustration and insecurity to mingle with the earlier claims for planning. The relevance of formal development plans was beginning to seem rather doubtful. The planners could not help seeing that their prescriptions were being followed only sporadically, and that the results of such partial planning deviated widely and unpredictably from their objectives and their projections. Planners and economic theorists had much less influence on the allocation of

public resources than did alliances of industrial and construction enterprises, engineers, and politicians, all of them (for differing reasons) wedded to large, capital-intensive highly visible, technologically advanced projects, however disruptive these might be to the environment and the livelihood of the people they were supposed to benefit. Moreover, in the context of radical challenges to power structures at the end of the 1960s, a good many planners could no longer accept the role of neutral technicians at the service of the State behind which they had sheltered themselves when planning first began to be institutionalized. Should they not serve the people rather than the State? But if so, how, since the State was their employer?

One reaction was to propose broader and more ambitious roles for planning. This approach dominated Part III of the *Preliminary Report*, which posed the following conditions for effective planning:

(i) "... planning should be a continuous activity, that is, an effort at rationality applied to various phases of the one process comprising the preparation of decision-making, its implementation, the control over action taken and the eventual revision of the orientations taken." Planning should not "be confused with the periodical elaboration of a document called the 'plan'".

(ii) "The second condition of effective planning is the diffusion of planning activities in the whole of society.

... First, planning activities should be extended to all central government departments instead of being confined to a 'Ministry of Planning' or 'Office of Planning'. ... Second, planning activities should be diffused to other administrative levels besides to central government." Third, the private sector should be drawn actively into planning, with "a reciprocal flow of techniques" between private enterprise and public sector planning.

(iii) Planning should be a "diversified but coherent activity" involving the co-ordinated utilization of financial planning, allocative planning, physical or spatial planning and institutional planning.

(iv) Planning should function as "part of the real decision-making process", and thus

should be recognized as a political activity. The idea that planning is a neutral technical exercise is a myth, although it may be a useful myth for planners under some conditions. "Plans always express choices, models make assumptions about what are to be accepted as constants (constraints) in the socio-political environment, values intrude into the choice of means as well as ends, techniques such as cost-benefit analysis rely on value judgements, and indicators, whether 'economic' or 'social', express ... some theory or interpretation of the functioning of a society." Ideally, there should be a "bringing-together or fusion of training and interests" of decision-maker, administrator and planner.

Effective planning supposes "the diffusion of an attitude or approach of rationality or efficiency at all levels of decision-making". It supposes a "strategic approach", in which key issues are selected for an "intensified planning effort", and an "innovative approach" "in the definition and organization of resources, the kinds of objectives and means chosen and their interrelations, in the manner of evaluation and execution of programmes and projects and in the general orientation of planning offices and administrators".

In fact, this approach seems to envisage a future social order in which planning becomes an activity and source of guidance as pervasive as religion in some other social orders, with professional planners functioning as teachers and prophets, but with the laity as well continually learning and applying more comprehensive planning techniques and resolving their unavoidable conflicts of interests and values by integrating their plans.

The next two approaches to be discussed implicitly negate this vision of planning societies, although the vision itself might incorporate them as legitimate facets of the all-encompassing activity of planning.

3. *Pragmatic social and economic ameliorism*

This approach gave priority to the identification of policies and measures that have worked (in the sense of demonstrably enhancing human welfare); to the consideration of how they might be made to work better; and to pragmatic

criteria for their combination into mutually supportive packages. It derived naturally from the 'programmes of social development' side of the *Reports on the World Social Situation*, which, in principle, identified programmes that were working in the expectation that they would provide 'lessons' for the governments of other countries confronting similar problems (in practice, the information available to the compilers of the Reports had been too scanty and the political constraints too confining for them to state with any confidence whether programmes they described, mainly summarizing official documents, really worked or not). The same approach dominated United Nations technical assistance in social questions, in which 'experts' set forth to apply methods learned in their home countries, on the supposition that they would be able to adapt such methods to the political and social setting of the country to be advised (in practice, as often as not, the experts really set forth to advocate methods that they had never been able to apply in their home countries).

The approach of pragmatic social and economic ameliorism had met with harsh and obvious criticisms over the years, but its proponents had plausible arguments on their side. After all, throughout the world human-welfare-oriented and human resource-oriented programmes of many kinds were continuing to appear and expand. By now they accounted for sizeable shares of public expenditures and of the national product in most countries, irrespective of their structure and level of production, their political system, or their distribution of power. Presumably some of them worked better than others, and comparative study could throw light on the reasons for this and on ways of raising the general level of effectiveness. Presumably some rough criteria could be established for the *kinds* as well as the *amounts* of social sector activities appropriate to countries at different levels or stages of development. Arguments to the effect that such improvements could be no more than palliatives in the absence of a unified theory of development, or profound structural changes, or a transformation of values, or truly comprehensive planning, or social revolution, might be excuses of intellectuals for not undertaking the

painstaking and unglamorous but necessary activities that were within their reach. Great care should be taken not to encourage the impermissible conclusion that "nothing can be done". Wide improvements in education, health and other services for the poor majority would not only respond to basic needs and rights but also make it more feasible for this majority to take part in structural or revolutionary change.

It followed that the 'unified approach' project, whatever else it might include, should aim at a set of practical down-to-earth recommendations that could be applied by the kinds of governments present in the real world. It should describe the more promising development activities and methods of integrating them that could be found. It should not formulate over-demanding preconditions and methodologies, and it should not pursue very far lines of thinking about human societies that might cast doubt on 'development' as an objective or on the practicability of a unified approach to it. As will be noted below, the approach of pragmatic ameliorism was one of the two that persisted in later demands made by United Nations policy-making bodies for pursuit of a unified approach.

4. *Capacitation of national societies*

This approach emphasized social structural change; institutional build-up for diagnosis and problem-solving; participatory mechanisms; and educational programmes enabling societies to function better through the informed and co-operative action of their members. It did not figure in the initial research outline of the project. An UNRISD study of decision-making processes that entered into the scheme could have led to it,⁶ but the methodology of this study had a self-contained logic that hindered assimilation. Capacitation emerged in the later stages as an alternative to comprehensive planning of a society's future and as a complement to pragmatic social ameliorism. It was first given a name in a 1974 report prepared by UNRISD.⁷

According to this report, "development planning first arose in connexion with material production ... In the last few decades, planning has spread to more and more fields of development activity, including social fields, but in this process, objectives have become less amenable to direct measurement, causal relations have become more complex and obscure, and control of the future has taken on a different complexion". Moreover, "conventional planning tends to lead to an over-emphasis on capital investment in physical structures and equipment, especially in social fields, since these objectives are easier to handle under the methodology of planning (and are likely to be more in demand politically) than are various other kinds of activity that may be equally or more desirable for development and possibly also much cheaper".

Another kind of rational approach to societal change and development is therefore needed. "The doctor or the teacher does not make plans or blueprints of the future like the architect but is equally rational. Similarly, at the societal level, it is desirable to think in terms of a 'capacitating' operation which does not try so much to define or control the future as to establish present conditions or capacities which will permit a given society to meet its problems in the future. The emphasis in such an approach is not on setting future output targets but on diagnosing current weaknesses and potentials, finding appropriate policies, and constantly monitoring the course of development." "An example of such a capacitation activity would be the undertaking of structural or institutional change, which conventional planning does not readily deal with through its technical methods."

The implications of a 'capacitation approach' were not further pursued within the project, and in its bare bones this approach suggests a faith in the existence of some rational and benevolent entity qualified or qualified to direct the capacitation. However, it also suggests a conception of development po-

⁶See J.M. Collette, *Etude sur les systèmes de décision* (UNRISD report No. 70.11/1, Geneva, 1970).

⁷Report on a Unified Approach to Development Anal-

ysis and Planning: Note by the Secretary General (E/CN.5/519, 5 December 1974). This report will be discussed later in this article.

policy-making as an educational experience, in which societal actors learn to cope by struggling with problems under conditions of limited rationality (an approach applicable to local groups and organizations as well as to national societies), and this relates it to the position of such economists as Albert O. Hirschman and such political scientists as Warren F. Ilchman, Norman Thomas Uphoff, Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedburg.⁸ This could have been one of the most promising paths for exploration by the project, if the project had been able to count on a longer time span to take advantage of dialectical reactions to the approaches initially presenting themselves.

5. Informational enlightenment

Lines of thinking present in the *Reports on the World Social Situation* since the 1950s and in the UNRISD programme envisaged a transformation of the conditions for public action through improved methods of obtaining, disseminating, interpreting and integrating accurate and relevant information for diagnosis of social problems and evaluation of progress. The proponents of social development wanted to free their uses of data from domination by economic methodologies and construct methodologies better suited to their own purposes. They questioned the adequacy of income distribution studies to throw light on levels of living as well as the meaning of national aggregate indicators such as the GNP.

Several complementary suppositions backed up their emphasis on improvement of information: first, that one important reason why 'development' was so little oriented to human welfare was that policy-makers were poorly informed of needs; second, that informational exposure of shortcomings could generate pressures forcing governments to act - or make way for other regimes that would act. At a more

modest level of expectation, timely information would strengthen the hand of forces within national governments (as well as international organizations) disposed to tackle social problems. These suppositions were clearly legitimate, although they could be qualified by various observations: that governments often did nothing about problems that had become internationally notorious; that governments were often overwhelmed by informational exposure of problems demanding immediate solutions, rather than short of information; and that governments could use information as an aid to repression or a technique for evading action as easily as they could use it to promote the general welfare. In any case, informational enlightenment was the sphere of action most accessible to the international proponents of social development. It would become an 'approach' on the level of those discussed above only if it were considered a master key to development policy.

Part IV of the *Preliminary Report*, in dealing with diagnosis, information and indicators, for the most part takes too cautious a line to justify such a label. It subordinates information to the propositions advanced earlier in the Report: "Ideally there should be a continual interplay between diagnosis, redefinition of preferred styles, and strategic orientations. ...In practice, the mutually stimulating relationship is less often found than a kind of vicious circle; the types of information sought and their uses in diagnosis are governed by borrowed, inadequate conceptions of style and strategy, while conceptions of style and strategy are cramped by the types of information used for diagnosis....If development is to be understood as an interdependent system of changes rather than the expression of a single quantity, then methods of measurement and quantitative analysis appropriate to this conception need to be built up."

At the same time, the treatment of information retained certain propositions common to the *Reports on the World Social Situation* that made the possibility of unified policy depend on the correct manipulation of information and the rejection of certain informational fallacies:

(i) Development had to be measured in a disaggregative way before being 'unified' in

⁸Albert O. Hirschman, *Journeys toward Progress: Studies of Economic Policy-Making in Latin America* (1963), *Development Projects Observed* (1967) and *A Bias for Hope: Essays on Development and Latin America* (1971); Warren F. Ilchman and Norman Thomas Uphoff, *The Political Economy of Change* (1969); Michel Crozier and Erhard Friedburg, *L'acteur et le système* (1977).

policy. "Diagnosis for unified development involves first an attempt to see if the different factors of development are properly covered in proper proportions – that some are not neglected, causing a general drag on the system, while others are so advanced that their output cannot be absorbed." ('Factors' are stated to include the conventional components – education, health, nutrition, housing, industry, conditions of work and employment, etc. – and subcomponents – higher education, secondary education, etc. – around which the *Reports on the World Social Situation* had been ordered.). While it is impossible to specify simple quantitative requirements of one factor for growth in other factors, "through comparative international analysis, normal 'correspondences' among social and economic factors at a given level of development can be determined. ... Where a country shows marked abnormalities ... questions may be raised about its real style of development". Since "development is not a unidimensional phenomenon", what is needed is not a single indicator but a "pattern or profile of indicators for each country".

(ii) "Systems for collecting and analysing information should be designed as far as possible to facilitate understanding of relationships between different phenomena. This cannot be done through aggregates referring to the national population as a whole or to large groups. Interrelationships can be traced more readily at the local or operational level. ... one difficulty with most indicators is that they are used as national aggregates or averages and fail to reflect distribution. Another difficulty is that the indicators that seem to make sense at the national level may not make much sense when examined at the local level." "... to understand and diagnose the causal relationships between different developmental factors it is usually necessary to go to the level where the interactions actually take place rather than deal with abstractions at the national level."

Under informational analysis, development thus becomes a multidimensional jigsaw puzzle, its large pieces divisible into small pieces fitting into each other vertically as well as horizontally. A unified approach must aim at techniques expressing the full complexity of their relationships, but they remain pieces with

distinct contours susceptible to meaningful quantitative description, one sufficiently disaggregated, and combinable by the well-informed governmental player into a coherent whole at the 'national level'.

6. *Institutionalized Marxist socialism and far-reaching structural change*

This is the first in the series of approaches under discussion that questioned the possibility of development responding to the minimum criterion of acceptability and viability within the framework of market or mixed economies. It did so, however, in a peculiarly ambiguous and stereotyped fashion that derived from the role of the socialist bloc in the United Nations and the ways in which policy-making bodies and the Secretariat simultaneously paid respect to and evaded its ideological position. The representatives of the national societies identifying themselves as socialist, in which the State controlled the means of production and the sources of investment and exercised power in the name of the working class, asserted that these societies could offer lessons in a functioning 'unified approach' to the rest of the world. The fruits of this unified approach were guaranteed full employment, relatively even income distribution, and universalization of social security and access to the major social services. The preconditions for these achievements could be labelled 'far-reaching structural changes', a formula covering many kinds of change, such as agrarian reform or popular participation in developmental decision-making, to which most governments had committed themselves through their votes in the United Nations. It had to be assumed that governments could carry out such structural changes if they wanted to, and that they had recognized the duty of doing so. The question whether abolition of private ownership of the means of production was not the key structural change could be left unanswered. The traditional Marxist-Leninist hypothesis on the necessity of destruction of the bourgeois State and seizure of power by the proletariat as a precondition for such structural change remained in the shade.

Its terms of reference and international setting inhibited the unified approach project

from trying to decide whether socialism (under whatever definition) or any other comprehensive system of political and economic organization was a necessary condition for a unified approach. In any case, most members of the team saw no need to do so: they considered their various approaches applicable to socialist as well as market or mixed systems. The affirmation of the legitimacy of different styles of development within a minimum criterion of acceptability and viability implicitly denied the necessity of socialist revolution without ruling it out as an option. In any case, the State remained in the centre of attention as executor of whatever structural changes were feasible within the style of development.

7. *Neo-Marxist, participationist, self-reliant socialism*

This approach, for which it is particularly hard to find an adequate label, entered the unified approach debate at a late stage, introducing a combination of propositions deriving from dependency theory. Maoism and other recent currents in Marxism, 'conscientization' doctrines, etc., that had become current during the 1960s, mainly outside the inter-governmental framework of debate over development. The approach accepted the areas of choice deriving from the 'minimum criterion' set forth in the *Preliminary Report*, but it brushed aside the legitimacy of different styles of development. An attempt to reformulate the unified approach in these terms introduced a flavour of uncompromising and exclusive theoretical and valorative positions in place of the earnest endeavour to find something good in all positions which lingered even in the reception of the 'far-reaching structural change' approach discussed above. It also transformed the framework of internationally-aided *national* development more or less accepted by the other approaches.

According to a supporter of this approach, "Third World countries are faced with an alternative. Either they accept their dependence or they pursue the path of their own self-reliant autonomous development. In the first case, they are bound to increased polarization, inequality and mass poverty. They continue to

accept the mobilization of their resources primarily in function of foreign requirements. The mobilization of the immense reservoir of dormant productive and creative potentialities of the mass of their people will remain unutilized or underutilized. ... It is proposed that the countries of the Third World can only overcome their poverty and stagnation if and when they decide to pursue a new alternative and original road to development which qualitatively differs from that followed by the industrially advanced countries".⁹

Since the dominant forces of the 'industrially advanced' countries are responsible for the 'under-development' of the rest of the world and depend on its exploitation, the latter cannot look to them for 'aid' and still less take them as models for development. In fact, their style of development is morally indefensible and will become practically untenable once the Third World has taken another path; their real need for transformation is just as urgent and ineluctable as that of the Third World.

Market incentives cannot guide the transformation, nor can bureaucratic centrally-planned versions of socialism, in which objectives decided from above seek to speed up capital accumulation by depressing levels of popular consumption and wringing a surplus from the peasantry. The arousing of the creativity and active participation of the masses of the people is both a central end and a central means of a unified approach to development. The aim must be a "new man in a new society", with egalitarian values, frugal consumption aspirations and cooperative social relationships very different from the present. Policies and mechanisms for production, distribution, and the provision of social services, in particular education, must be shaped so as to contribute to this central aim.

⁹Joost B.W. Kuitenbrouwer, *Towards Self-reliant Integrated Urban-rural Development* (The I.C.S.W. Regional Conference for Asia and Western Pacific, Hong Kong, September 1975). This attitude to the unified approach is also presented in some detail in Kuitenbrouwer, *Premises and Implications of a Unified Approach to Development Analysis and Planning* (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok, 1975), a text originally submitted to the project after dispersal of the initial team.

In the version that entered into the unified approach debates, this position—in spite of its radical challenge to more accommodating approaches—retained an ambiguity that was practically a condition for its entering at all. According to its premises, existing governments and the world system of States reflect relationships of domination and exploitation. For authentic development, the liberation of popular creativity must sweep away these relationships. Yet it suggests that 'countries' represented by their governments can 'choose' to do this and that the offering to them of detailed advice on how to do this is a legitimate activity. The nature of the catalytic force enabling the masses to change from objects of exploitation, cowed by repression and blinded by the lures of the consumer society, into creative participants in control of their own destiny remains obscure.

This ambiguity, however, which persists in later versions of 'another development', did not stem simply from the effort to adapt a revolutionary position to the international organizations' inescapable task of "advice to governments". It corresponded to an ambiguity in the self-perceived role of the State in Third World countries that was to become increasingly evident during the 1970s. Some national political leaderships and some groups within national public administrations and even planning agencies did identify themselves with a Neo-Marxist, participationist, self-reliant approach or parts of it. The countries in which such an approach exerted an appreciable influence within the State were generally outside the sphere of domination of any one central power; their domestic interest-groups identified with market-oriented economic growth were incipient or weak; and the political leadership and the bureaucracy thus had an apparently wide range of autonomy in choosing a style of development. Under such conditions, however, their capacity to inspire a predominantly rural population to become creative participants could be expected to be minimal and voluntaristic mobilization could easily slip into bureaucratic compulsion.

8. Ecodevelopment

This approach centered attention on the objec-

tives of bringing production, consumption and human settlement patterns into harmony with the carrying capacity of the earth and of reconciling this with an equitable distribution of resources among the world's peoples, implying a drastic lowering of the consumption levels of the richer countries. It had a relatively long history as an organized source of criticisms of policies oriented exclusively to economic growth, parallel to but interacting very little with the criticisms and prescriptions made in the name of social development.

The initiation of the unified approach project coincided with the posing by the Meadows Report to the Club of Rome of the problem of 'limits to growth' and with the rapid intensification of international concern over the environmental disbenefits of technological innovations in production and of artificially stimulated consumption. The project initially tried to pay its respects to these concerns without admitting them to a central position. Thus, the consensus set forth in the *Preliminary Report* included "protection of the human environment" among its areas of policy choice, but discussed it rather perfunctorily. The *Preliminary Report* included a qualified affirmation of the necessity and feasibility of production increases; such affirmations were becoming obligatory disclaimers, in texts that mentioned the disbenefits of economic growth, of any affinity with "zero growth" positions that would congeal the advantages of the rich countries and the poverty of the rest of the world:

"It is premature to go to the other extreme of advocacy of zero growth rates. Levels of production in most of the world are much too low to be reconcilable with any acceptable style of societal development, and production objectives will unavoidably preoccupy many national societies for the foreseeable future. Acceptable and viable styles of development demand of these societies that they should direct their production much more systematically to basic human needs, and that they should seek productive techniques that minimize environmental involvement of their human potential. ... In the longer term, the poorer national societies should raise their per capita production by several fold. ... However, raising them by the multiple required to 'close the gap' with the

present high-income societies is not necessarily relevant to the achievement of acceptable styles of development..."

In the later stages of the project, theories of 'ecodevelopment' were considered more positively for introduction as a 'missing ingredient'. Such theories, identified in particular with the work of Ignacy Sachs at the *Centre International de Recherche sur l'Environnement et le Développement* in Paris, emphasized planning for the management of the natural and social resources of specific 'eco-regions', seeking technologies, settlement patterns, systems of production and distribution adapted to each 'eco-region' and substituting as far as possible the use and husbanding of local renewable resources for non-renewable resources. Such a localized approach to development, implying the building up of self-contained systems capable of renewing themselves and gradually enhancing the welfare of the local population, presented interesting possibilities for cross-fertilization with several of the other approaches described above—capacitation, informational enlightenment, participationist development and self-reliant development—and also a challenge to the universalist bias of the project's terms of reference. Unfortunately, by the time ecodevelopment began to attract attention as a distinct alternative the opportunity for this kind of cross-fertilization had passed.¹⁰

9. Analysis of political choices and development styles

The preceding pages have indicated implicitly the author's preference for an approach different from any of the above, although not radically incompatible with most of them. Such an approach tries to identify and explain political and other factors that condition the character and limits of public intervention in societal

change, the circumstances under which development policies approximating to the minimum criterion of acceptability and viability might emerge, and the identity of potential social agents for interventions furthering such 'unified approaches'. It rejects the eclectic supposition that national societies can pick and choose among 'lessons' from abroad and put the fragments together as they please, as well as the supposition that there is only One Right Way to develop which national societies must find and adopt under penalty of catastrophe. Each national society faces a certain limited range of choices, depending on its historically conditioned political, social and economic structures; its productive capacity; its natural and human resources; its dominant values; and its place in the international order. These factors imply differing advantages, degrees of equity or inequity, costs and dangers. Certain choices are either permanently outside the society's reach or feasible only through a revolutionary transformation that cannot be willed deliberately by a regime shaped by existing values and power relationships. In the terms adopted by the *Preliminary Report*, different real and preferred styles of development can be assessed against a double criterion of viability and acceptability. Such an approach cannot evade search for a theoretical framework or set of hypotheses to order its analyses of national societies, but does not expect this quest ever to be more than partially and provisionally successful. In the version here described, the approach recognizes a permanent danger of becoming ridden by theory, selecting or interpreting facts to fit the theory, and universalizing phenomena that may be conjunctural or local. It finds conspicuous examples of this danger in many attempts to use Marxism as a framework for analysis and action.

The organizers of the 'unified approach' project incorporated political and social structural analysis from the beginning as a corrective to the normative, technical and institutional approaches whose integration they envisaged. The proponents of the latter approaches could not help being aware of the political and social stumbling blocks, which most of them had encountered directly, as development planners and consultants. How-

¹⁰See Ignacy Sachs, "Population, Technology, Natural Resources and the Environment: Eco-development: a Contribution to the Definition of Development Styles for Latin America", CEPAL, *Economic Bulletin for Latin America*, Vol. XVIII, Nos. 1 and 2, 1973. This approach obviously links with the quest for 'appropriate technologies' and similar initiatives that have flourished during the 1970s.

ever, they naturally wanted not a panoramic view of all the stumbling blocks in the way of their vision of the Good Society but ideas on how to remove them so that their preferred strategies could advance.

The approach was open to the criticism that it led to the demoralizing conclusion that 'nothing could be done'. While the version that entered into the project affirmed that many things could and should be done by many kinds of social agents, it remained frankly skeptical about the unified approach conceived as a set of universally applicable prescriptions —whether prescriptions for the allocation of resources, for techniques of diagnosis and planning, or for transformation of societal structures and values. Human institutions, from the international order to the local group, were engaged in games so complex and for such varied prizes that attempts to make sense of them and influence them in the name of development called for an exceptional combination of audacity and humility. The unified approach project might contribute something along these lines if it remained iconoclastic, aware of the ritualistic side of the activity in which it was engaged and the ambivalences in all human endeavours. It could not take for granted either that national societies were potentially perfectable, once their shortcomings were diagnosed correctly, nor that their irrationalities and inequities called for root-and-branch destruction and transformation.

Several alternative criteria for classifying 'approaches' bring out other tensions and ambiguities in the quest for unified development prescriptions. In terms of polar positions one can distinguish:

Technocratic vs. participationist approaches. The former supposes that properly qualified specialists can find the one correct or optimal solution to each problem, adding up to the optimal style of development. Development policy can be unified to the extent to which such specialists can seek and apply the solutions without compromises to meet incompatible demands and resistances. Ideally, then, 'participation' should mean indoctrination in the nature of the optimal solution and corresponding behaviour. The latter approach supposes either that the optimal solution can

emerge only from the creativity of the people, in control of its own destiny, or that there is no one optimal solution but that various satisfactory solutions can emerge from democratic political competition. Technocratic imposition, or reliance on policies that do not require popular understanding, is inherently sterile.

Centrality of economic or sociological laws vs. human-welfare-oriented voluntarism. The laws looked to by the former approach might be those of the market, or of the psychological conditions for planned modification of human behaviour, or of the socio-economic conditions for transition to socialism. The supposition is that unified development depends on correct understanding of the laws and some combination of submission to and manipulation of the preconditions they impose. The latter position denies either the bindingness of the laws or the possibility of their infallible interpretation. Social agents should therefore guide their efforts primarily by their values. The extent to which these values can be realized and human welfare enhanced will be revealed only in the course of struggle and innovation. While the former of these positions seems to have more affinity with the technocratic approach and the latter with the participationist, either can co-exist with a predominantly technocratic or participationist outlook.

Reliance on theoretical or methodological frames of reference vs. pragmatic acceptance of whatever works. This contrast resembles the preceding, but with both polar positions more modest. The frame of reference does not pretend to explain the laws of development or societal change, but those of planning under specified conditions and with specified tools. The pragmatism applies itself to the amplification and adaptation of social and economic techniques that seem to have proved their usefulness, without aspiring to a voluntarist 'big push' towards the Good Society.

Universalist vs. particularist approaches. The former position supposes that development must mean approximately the same thing for all national societies, whatever that meaning may be: all societies must become predominantly industrialized, urban and market-oriented; or all societies must become democratically egalitarian; or all societies must become

collectivist and frugal in their life styles and use of resources. Universalism often combines with catastrophist all-or-nothing positions: unless mankind as a whole rapidly achieves certain objectives of productive capacity, technological restraint, social justice, disarmament, freedom, consumption austerity, or population limitation, mankind as a whole, or the 'world', or 'civilization' is doomed. The universalist approaches also sometimes carry the connotation that 'development' should mean a transition from a static 'bad' situation to a static 'good' situation: once mankind as a whole has overcome poverty, injustice, violence and waste it had better remain in harmony or balance with its environment.

The variants of the particularist position suppose that national societies, or whatever forms of social organization replace them, will continue to develop along many different lines, some more 'acceptable' for their values and some more 'viable' for their internal coherence

and efficiency than others. None of them is likely to reach a harmonious and static perfection, and some of them can be expected to degenerate or even perish, because of their mistakes or because of an insuperable combination of disadvantages. There may or may not be an objectively definable optimal style of development for each society but, except in terms too general to be useful, there can be no universally optimal style. This inevitable diversity has its dangers, particularly of conflicts between national societies and exploitation of the weak by the strong, but also its advantages: the homogenization of mankind is neither possible nor desirable; the wider the range of styles of development, the greater the likelihood that a positive cross-fertilization will take place in the future. The particularist as well as the universalist position can, of course, combine with a technocratic or a participationist bias, with a belief in iron laws of development or in voluntarism.

IV

The changing international market for propositions on development during and since the unified approach project

The unified approach project, as already noted, was one manifestation—and a relatively modest one—of the divergence in interpretations of development and the multiplication of attributes of development that had gained momentum during the 1960s and that was to become more pronounced and complex at the beginning of the 1970s. 'Development' must stand for something worth striving for, and the idea of increasing productive capacity—particularly industrial capacity—through capital accumulation, investment and technological innovation was still at the core of this something at the beginning of the 1970s. Experience was making it harder to believe, however, that growth in production by itself, whether guided by the market or by central planning, would bring about equitably distributed gains in human welfare, or that sufficient growth to permit ac-

complishment of this end was within the reach of the poorer countries without major changes in their internal policies and their place in the world system. Advocates of a very wide range of objectives and policies were arguing not only that their concerns constituted essential attributes of authentic development, but also that in order to achieve the other objectives of development, priority must be given to these concerns. The unified approach project was instructed in its terms of reference to find out how to unify what was unifiable in these different positions from the standpoint of one of them: the composite of human welfare objectives and social sectoral programmes that had come to be labelled 'social development'. Before it could accomplish this, however, the range of positions to be unified had widened considerably.

For the present, it will be enough to sum-

marize certain features of the changing international market for propositions on development inside and outside the intergovernmental organizations.

Within the latter the main framework for debate was the Second United Nations Development Decade, to be governed by an International Development Strategy approved by the United Nations General Assembly in October 1970. The Strategy provided for procedures of periodic 'review and appraisal' of progress by the various United Nations organs, and these generated a formidable volume of reports. As long as the Strategy seemed to have some potential relevance to government policies the proponents of different approaches and priorities presented their proposals as amplifications of points in the Strategy, or changes of emphasis, or means of implementing the Strategy. One justification for the initiation of the 'unified approach' project had indeed been the enrichment of the Strategy's social content.

The Strategy juxtaposed two main kinds of propositions, some clinging to the expectations of the first Development Decade, others responding to the criticisms of its excessive focus on economic growth. During the Decade new proposals superseded both kinds:

(i) *Propositions on international economic relations and on the duty of the richer countries to aid the development of the rest of the world through allocation of a minimum percentage of their national income and through fairer trade policies.* The Strategy presented propositions of this kind in considerable detail but in compromise formulations that emerged from bargaining between representatives of governments that wanted binding commitments and representatives of governments that wanted to ward off such commitments without a flat rejection. As the decade progressed the struggle for and against commitments was repeated in forum after forum. By 1974, the compromises reached in the Strategy were obviously inoperative and the Third World governments turned their attention to a Declaration and Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order (NIEO), for which most of the First World governments, now constituting a small minority in the United Nations, assumed no concrete re-

sponsibility. The debates over international economic relations fall outside the scope of the present chapter, but it is worth emphasizing that for the representatives of the majority of Third World governments the question of international economic relations remained central and the hope of obtaining firm commitments remained alive; many of these representatives looked on the questions to be discussed below either as harmless expressions of good intentions or as dangerous distractions from their central demands. They also continued to assume that development could mean for their countries what it had meant for the countries now industrialized, and that international interdependence through trade and financial flows could persist indefinitely, reformed but not transformed.

(ii) *Propositions on the content of development at the national level.* The Strategy's appeal for a unified approach has already been cited, along with its treatment of sectoral social objectives. During the 1970s the sessions of some regional United Nations organs approved more elaborate and somewhat bolder formulas on integrated development and the social meaning of development through their appraisals of progress under the strategy, but otherwise the social propositions attracted little attention. By the mid-1970s a series of detailed proposals for development approaches focussing on 'redistribution with growth', elimination of extreme poverty and priority to satisfaction of basic needs, emanating mainly from the World Bank and the International Labour Organisation were disputing the world stage with the New International Economic Order, replacing the innocuous juxtaposition of economic and social objectives by a new version of the old controversy over priorities. The 'basic needs' and related approaches treated policies for production, technological innovation, distribution and employment as central but subordinated their content to immediate human welfare ends. A good many proponents of the NIEO interpreted this as a tactic of the central capitalist countries, intended to justify failure to attend to trade and aid demands and restriction of the Third World to a form of second-rate semi-development through labour-intensive technologies. In fact, the new approaches had

several variants, some of them envisaging modest reallocations of resources to the poor and gains through aided self-help, others calling for the transformation of structures of production and distribution and an end to the affluence of minorities. Non-governmental institutions were able to carry these ideas farther toward the construction of coherent alternatives for the human future, the most ambitious of these attempts being the proposal of the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation for 'another development', published in 1975.

An equally striking feature of the international treatment of development during the 1970s however, was the successive bringing into the foreground of a series of 'major problems' treated with what became a stereotyped ritual.

Population, the human environment, the status of women, habitat, employment and hunger were taken up in this way. In each case the problem was real enough and had long been the overriding concern of some institutions and sectors of opinion, mainly in the First World countries. The persistence of the concerned parties and usually some evident intensification of the problem brought it into the forefront of attention.

When this happened, the United Nations General Assembly might then proclaim an International Year to recognize the importance of the problem. A World Conference would be convened, preceded by regional conferences and meetings of 'experts' on the relation of the problem to other problems, the World Conference would approve a Plan of Action, and more regional conferences and specialized meetings would be convened to discuss application of this Plan. A temporary or permanent international secretariat would come into being and a fund to finance practical measures to deal with the problem would be set up.

Recognition of the problem would go through several phases. Simple cause-and-effect interpretations of the problem and direct remedies would be intensively publicized and then subjected to criticism from many directions. Representatives of the Third World would indicate their suspicions of the origins of initial interpretations of the problem and their disposition to recognize the need for action

only to the extent that this would not divert attention from economic development and from the duty of the rich countries to help such development. In any case, it could be demonstrated that the problem was complexly related to all other major problems; it could be solved only in the context of development. Thus, all roads led back to the unified approach.

But who was to do the unifying? Conceivably, any of the major problems might provide the starting point toward a comprehensive conception and strategy of development, around which the other problems and desiderata might be grouped, but they could not all occupy the centre at once. The gap between the capacity of governments and other human institutions in the real world to diagnose, choose and set priorities, and the demands that they advance toward multiple objectives in a unified way was wide enough already, and each 'major problem' threatened to widen it further. At the same time, it could be argued that, overwhelmed as they were, governments would not act on the major problems unless these were brought to their attention insistently, backed by organized popular pressures and warnings as to the indispensability of quick solutions to ward off catastrophe.

Meanwhile, outside the international bureaucratic and academic circles where it was more or less obligatory to profess faith in the benevolence and rationality of governments, several kinds of challenge to the whole structure of international development strategies, new international economic orders and plans of action became more insistent. Each of these challenges included variants ranging from wholesale negation to qualified criticisms of the conventional wisdom:

(i) 'Economic development' was reduced to the status of a mobilizing myth even by some economists prominent in development policy-making, most eloquently by Celso Furtado: "Myths function as lamps that illuminate the field of perception of the social scientist, allowing him to have a clear vision of certain problems and to see nothing of others at the same time as they give him spiritual tranquillity since the value judgements that he makes appear to his spirit as a reflection of objective reality."

"Today we know irrefutably that the economies of the periphery will never be developed in the sense of becoming similar to the economies that form the present centre of the capitalist system. But how can one deny that this idea has been very useful, to mobilize the peoples of the periphery and induce them to accept enormous sacrifices, to legitimate the destruction of archaic forms of culture, to explain and make them understand the necessity of destroying their physical environment, to justify forms of dependency that reinforce the predatory character of the productive system?"

"It can thus be affirmed that the idea of economic development is simply a myth. Thanks to this it has been possible to divert attention from the basic tasks of identifying the fundamental needs of the collectivity and the possibilities that the progress of science opens to humanity, so as to concentrate attention on abstract objectives such as investment, exports and growth".¹¹

Such a challenge knocked one leg out from under the declarations of meeting after meeting that wedded the 'abstract objectives' of economic development to basic needs or 'major problems'.

(ii) Faith in the market as arbiter of developmental choices, in the inexhaustibility of natural resources, and in the ability of human ingenuity, spurred by market incentives, to solve problems as they arose, persisted and became more aggressive during the 1970s as the shortcomings of governmental and inter-governmental interventionism became more glaring. According to the proponents of variants of this position, from Daniel Moynihan to Herman Kahn and Milton Friedman, the main danger for the human future lay in the zeal to bind it by regulations, and the main stumbling block in the way of the development of poor countries lay in their hankering after welfare state policies and socialist planning. The dominant forces in a good many Third World countries had clung to such views even during the years of rising prestige for planning and 'social development' measures. During the 1970s the

influence of neo-liberalism on government policies became more open and even doctrinaire, particularly in certain 'semi-developed' countries of Latin America and Southeast Asia. While the governments of these countries participated in Third World solidarity as regards demands for changes in international economic relations, that is, for better access to markets and credits, they remained aloof from the accompanying formulas on socially-oriented or unified development, and actively opposed some of the more specific commitments for action on 'major problems'.

(iii) The penetration of transnational enterprises in the economies of the Third World, the emergence of 'transnational elites' identified with these enterprises, and the mutation of national cultures and consumption patterns brought about by transnationally-manipulated mass communication media and advertising made the vision of autonomous and self-sustaining national development seem obsolescent. The relevant development strategies for the future might be those of the transnationals rather than those of the governments.

(iv) Two kinds of challenges emerged from alarm over the prospects for resource exhaustion, environmental contamination, the potential destructiveness of new technologies, and over-population. The more direct challenge denied the possibility or desirability of anything identifiable with previous conceptions of development. Some variants of this position derived from it conclusions on the duty of the rich national societies to limit their consumption and assist the poorer countries in an equitable transition to 'zero population growth' and 'zero economic growth', thus approximating to one of the approaches to a unified approach described above. Other variants concluded that the rich societies should set their own houses in order and help other societies only if the latter showed promise of viability. Still others concluded that the momentum of current trends and the limited capacity for foresight and rational action made the avoidance of catastrophe unlikely either for humanity as a whole or for the better-off societies. Small groups and families might be able to shield themselves by preparing in advance for austere and self-reliant life styles and by

¹¹Celso Furtado, *El desarrollo económico: Un mito* (Siglo XXI Editores, Mexico City, 1975).

withdrawing from the urban-industrial centres where catastrophe would be most sweeping. In the international discussions of development and of such 'major problems' as population, environment, and food supply the variants of this challenge figured prominently as heresies to be renounced.

Variants on the other challenge emerging from this diagnosis admitted the possibility of solutions to the resource, environmental and population problems, but insisted that these solutions would have to be comprehensive and 'counter-intuitive'. Piecemeal 'practical' responses to problems as they arose would only make matters worse through their impact on other systematically related areas. One variant then questioned the capacity of human institutions to devise and manage such comprehensive solutions: social and political limits would cripple development before the environmental and resource limits were reached. Another variant reasoned that solutions guaranteeing human survival would require a high degree of regimentation and suppression of dissent, and under these conditions the values of human welfare, equity and creativity, along with freedom, would go by the board.

(v) Diagnoses of the inherently exploitative character of the international capitalist order and of the structures of class and power in national States led to many variants of the conclusion that both must be destroyed as a precondition for the Good Society. These positions, through their links with the dominant forces in certain Third World countries, with organized terrorist movements and with international political struggles on the one hand, and with participationist and 'another development' visions on the other, had complex and

ambiguous relationships to the international discussions of prescriptions for development, but logically negated their relevance. The dominant forces in the central capitalist countries could not be committed to end their exploitation of the rest of the world, even if the governments they controlled entered into agreements to do so. The most that could be expected was an unacceptable 'renegotiation of the terms of dependence', benefitting only the exploiting minorities in the dependent countries.

The only solution for the latter, once their own people gained control of them, would be to cut all economic and political ties and accept the consequences in terms of austerity and of the liquidation of the minorities identified, through their economic roles and their consumption patterns, with the previous ties of dependency. Relations could then be reopened selectively, mainly with national societies having similar genuinely revolutionary regimes.

The same revolutionary positions denied that existing national governments, whatever the intentions of individuals within them, had any ability to achieve an acceptable social and economic order. Even those labelling themselves 'socialist' were really 'bureaucratic capitalist'. The weakness of their political leaders and bureaucracies in the face of the international order and the transnational enterprises, their inability to identify themselves with the people, and their consumerist aspirations ruled them out. A profound and creatively destructive uprising of the masses was called for, and the will of these masses rather than international prescriptions would govern the longer-term future.

V

The place of the unified approach project in the international rethinking of development

The term 'unified approach to development' has retained a certain currency in international circles during the 1970s, and a good many of the

ideas put forward under this label in meetings or by development advisers can be traced to the project here discussed. Variants of these ideas

would have circulated in any case, but the main feature that distinguished the partial consensus reached in the project has barely received a hearing.

The *Preliminary Report*, as already noted, did not pretend to offer either an original theory of development or a comprehensive set of practical prescriptions. Despite some internal inconsistencies, it tried to propose a flexible way of thinking about development and of confronting its minimum criterion of acceptability and viability with national situations and an international order in which nothing could be taken for granted, in which planning and formulation of norms tended to become ritual activities compensating for inability to influence real trends within the constraints under which social agents, inside and outside national governments, acted. A study under intergovernmental auspices could not honestly do much more than say: if your society has such-and-such characteristics and the institutions or groups you represent want to achieve such-and-such objectives, you should take into account certain factors, and you may find certain methods more helpful than others. These bare bones of a proposition, of course, might be given life through intensive studies of national experiences, but the limited material ability of the project to do this had been exhausted at an early stage.

The Commission for Social Development and the Economic and Social Council, to which the *Preliminary Report* was presented, naturally wanted more than this, and requested that a final report "be prepared in such a way as to be of the greatest possible practical use to planners, decision-makers, and administrators". Since the project team had already dispersed and its budget was exhausted, preparation of a final report on the scale originally envisaged was no longer practicable. UNRISD responded to the request with a brief "final report" submitted to the 1975 session of the Commission for Social Development. This report spelled out in more detail some of the proposals on development analysis and planning contained in the *Preliminary Report* and introduced the idea of 'capacitation', but also reiterated that: "It is a conclusion of the study that action for unified development should depend on diag-

nosis of particular circumstances. Practicality, therefore, must lie largely in general principles of approach and suggestions of ways of going about reaching concrete solutions, rather than in a universal action model of unified development presumed suitable for all types of developing countries. Even so, suggestions in a report of this kind on such a vast subject must be put forward with considerable modesty".¹²

The United Nations policy-making bodies did not allow this answer to be final. They next requested the Secretary-General to "prepare a report on the application by Governments of a unified approach to development analysis and planning", and also to prepare proposals for 'pilot projects' demonstrating the practical application of a unified approach.

These requests, in fact, juxtaposed two very different visions of the unified approach that were advanced by representatives of different governments. The first derived from the thesis that "far-reaching structural changes" within national societies were the essential precondition for a unified approach. Certain governments felt they possessed the correct specifications for such changes; while they could not expect to obtain inter-governmental consensus on them, they could use the unified approach to keep them in the forefront of attention and demonstrate their own achievements.

The second derived from the conception of the unified approach as mainly a question of integrating social and economic programmes, and also from a supposition going back to the beginning of United Nations social activities that the concentration of advanced methods and integrated services on a local population would provide lessons and achievements that could then be duplicated on a wider scale. Although this expectation had rarely if ever been fulfilled, the perpetuation of small-scale social technical assistance projects, the obvious virtues of integration of services, and the political, informational and bureaucratic difficulties in the way of such integration at the national level had continually revived it. The unified approach project had harboured hopes of this

¹²*Report on a Unified Approach to Development Analysis and Planning* (E/CN.5/519, 5 December 1974).

kind, particularly in relation to the importance of localized information, but its main emphasis had been on the national level. A unified approach focussing on pilot projects might be expected to appeal to governments that had no intention of sponsoring far-reaching structural changes and preferred to direct attention to the potential of modest but better-administered incremental changes.

By this time, while UNRISD continued to struggle to bring the research aspects of the unified approach to a coherent conclusion, the responsibility for acting on the new request had fallen mainly to the Secretariat Centre for Development Planning, Projections and Policies, an economically-oriented body that had in the past been decidedly cool towards the unified approach. Since the Secretariat was not in a position to decide which governments, if any, were applying a unified approach, however defined, or to evaluate their efforts, it fell back on its traditional method of dealing with controversial mandates. It circulated a request for information to governments, as it had also done recently in response to another resolution requesting information on the introduction of far-reaching social and economic changes. It sorted out the twenty countries that responded into "countries with centrally planned economies", "countries with developed market economies" and "countries with developing market economies" and summarized the information they provided (mainly on their planning systems), concluding that "while many countries have introduced an integrated or unified approach to development planning, clearly there is no unique approach that can be considered applicable to all countries".¹³ Some members of the bodies to which the report was presented expressed disappointment at the inconclusiveness of this conclusion, but in view of the small number of governments that had troubled to reply to the request, it was evident that this method of pursuing the unified approach could not yield much more.

The Secretariat also prepared proposals for pilot projects, but in spite of their cautious for-

mulation these encountered resistance in the Economic and Social Council: "Several representatives expressed the view that the projects on the unified approach must take fully into consideration the imperatives of the sovereignty of Member States. They emphasized that full account must first be taken of the development goals set by each country for itself. Since each country had its own conception of the appropriate economic, social and political systems, development plans and policy measures adopted by Governments could be formulated and implemented only in the context of the actual conditions prevailing in individual countries. A project on integrated development planning should therefore neither seek a universal applicability of its findings nor be used to monitor and pass judgement, based on a single set of criteria, on the development objectives and performance of developing countries".¹⁴

The Economic and Social Council requested reformulation of the proposals, but by this time the unified approach as a distinct line of inquiry had reached an impasse. Moreover, its consideration in the United Nations policy-making bodies was being submerged in that of several other kinds of normative approach: first, the reformulations of international development policy, in particular the Programme of Action on the Establishment of a New International Economic Order, the Charter of Economic Rights and Duties of States, and General Assembly resolution 3362 (S-VII) of 16 September 1975 on "Development and International Economic Co-operation"; second, the various crusades for attention to 'major problems', and third, the proposals emanating from the International Labour Organisation and the World Bank for development policies focussed on satisfaction of basic needs or elimination of extreme poverty. These last approaches were sometimes identified with the unified approach, and had, in fact, inherited some of the project's central propositions on policy choices.

The reformulated pilot project proposals of

¹³*Application by Governments of a Unified Approach to Development Analysis and Planning, Report of the Secretary-General (E/CN.540, 22 September 1976).*

¹⁴*Projects on the Practical Application of a Unified Approach to Development Analysis and Planning, Report of the Secretary-General (E/5974, 4 May 1977).*

the Secretariat were limited to studies of changing priorities revealed by the national plans of developing countries, studies of national experiences in the implementation of plans, and training for officials of developing countries on the "main aspects of integrated development planning". The skeptical and radically revisionist attitude toward plans and planning that had been prominent in the unified approach project seemed to have faded away.¹⁵

The unified approach project exerted some influence in the regional commissions of the United Nations and was influenced by currents of thinking already present in them, but the elements interchanged differed, partly because of the nature of the contacts between the project and these bodies, and partly because of the differing national situations and policy preoccupations faced by the commissions. The project's studies of national experiences had already suggested the latter differences.

In Latin America, a region that was beginning to be labelled 'semi-developed', questions of viable choices between styles of development and the relation of such choices to ideologies and to the distribution of political power were in the forefront of attention. Did the capitalist 'development' or modernization of peripheral countries such as those of Latin America unavoidably generate increasing dependence on the world centres, increasing inequalities in the distribution of consumption and wealth, increasing insecurity and relative if not absolute poverty for large parts of the population, and increasing repression of protests? How could the evident gains in productive capacity, economic and social infrastructure, qualifications of the labour force and governmental administrative resources be converted into gains in human welfare, and who would be the societal agents of such a conversion? The experience of different countries of the region suggested that policies concentrat-

ing on rapid economic growth through governmental stimulation of market forces, or on structural transformation and social equality, could be successful on their own terms, at differing high costs, and if backed by sufficient power, but that the prospects for policies trying to reconcile multiple objectives of growth and welfare under conditions of open political competition were rather poor. Styles of development meeting the minimum criterion of the unified approach seemed to call for a transformation of values and expectations as well as power structures, but the circumstances of semi-development, in particular the penetration of transnational enterprises and the consumption aspirations of the 'modern' sectors of the population, made the way to such a transformation hard to envisage.

The Economic Commission for Latin America (CEPAL) had raised problems of this kind in several studies¹⁶ and had contributed to the project the approach labelled above "analysis of political choices". The ideas generated in the project in turn influenced further studies and polemics in the CEPAL Secretariat on styles of development.¹⁷

Moreover, the ideas entered into a series of normative declarations approved by the CEPAL member governments at the Commission's 1973, 1975 and 1977 sessions, within the context of their periodic appraisals of progress under the Second Development Decade.¹⁸ The propositions on 'integrated development' in these declarations, while actively supported by a minority of governments, show a surprising degree of acquiescence by the majority in what amounted to a condemnation of what was visibly happening in the name of development

¹⁵The 5-page report cited in the preceding footnote seems to be the most recent manifestation of the unified approach as a separate topic in United Nations deliberations, other than a supplement to the document on "Application by Governments", containing summaries of five additional replies received up to 31 October 1978.

¹⁶See, in particular, Raúl Prebisch, *Towards a Dynamic Development Policy for Latin America* (United Nations, New York, 1963); *Transformation and Development: The Great Task of Latin America* (report presented to the Inter-American Development Bank by Raúl Prebisch, 1970); and *Social Change and Social Development Policy in Latin America* (United Nations, New York, 1970).

¹⁷See, in particular, the papers by Raúl Prebisch, Aníbal Pinto, Jorge Graciarena and Marshall Wolfe in *CEPAL Review*, No. 1, first half of 1976.

¹⁸Regional Appraisals of the International Development Strategy: Quito, 1973 and Chaguaramas, 1975 (in "Cuadernos de la CEPAL", No. 2), and Guatemala, 1977 (in "Cuadernos de la CEPAL", No. 17).

and an affirmation that "the objective of development in Latin America must be the creation of a new society and a new type of man". The 1975 appraisal placed this aspiration in a more sober perspective: "In spite of the professed aims and of the greater material capacity to eliminate poverty which ought to be implicit in the favourable economic growth rates of several countries, it is... not surprising that the rate of progress toward the attainment of social development goals is extremely slow. It is now more important than ever that the governments of Latin America should not—either through excessive optimism regarding the spontaneous results of accelerated economic growth or through pessimism regarding the possibility of looking into the future and influencing the processes of social change in such a complex and changing situation—lose sight of the fact that, in order to achieve equitable and integrated development, greater efforts are needed together with a thorough, realistic knowledge and appreciation of what is happening".

Finally, an exhaustive study of development theories and their application in Latin America carried out by the Latin American Institute for Economic and Social Planning (ILPES) associated with CEPAL dismissed the unified approach and the intergovernmental normative declarations associated with it in the following terms:

"The unified approach is not only the clear expression of a technocratic utopia but also, in spite of its name, it is a utopia made by aggregation of objectives, whose validity by themselves hardly anyone can deny, accompanied by continual reserves to the effect that the particular situation can legitimate their not being achieved and even their being set aside for an indeterminate and interminable future. A unified approach to development worthy of the name supposes a unified social science, which does not exist at present and which could only be constructed on certain philosophical postulates, derived from a general theory, which in turn could not count on general support for a long time to come. At the same time, an international declaration of objectives can be possible only through evading philosophical-political differences, so that the only possible base of a unified approach, a common

philosophy, is ruled out from the beginning. When such a declaration purports to be a unified approach, the only way to do it that is apparently legitimate is through the aggregation of objectives".¹⁹

In the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) the reception of the unified approach was at first conditioned by the relatively complex social services and planning-administrative machinery of the larger countries and by periodic meetings of an ESCAP committee on social development. The unified approach was seen mainly as a new attempt to tackle the previous concerns of the committee: better integration of government social and economic programmes, higher priority to the 'social', and more adequate statistical indicators for the social objectives of development. However, the increasingly ominous incapacity of urban-industrially biased economic growth and social programmes to cope with mass poverty in mainly rural populations, together with the presence of China as a demonstration of the possibility of a radically different style, brought about an openness, in ESCAP papers and in advisory missions, to the participationist self-reliant approach described above, in a variant deriving directly from the later stages of the unified approach project.²⁰

In Africa, the unified approach entered into discussion mainly through a joint Economic Commission for Africa (ECA)/UNRISD study presented to the Sixth Session of the Conference of African Planners in October 1976,²¹ and through visits of ECA/UNRISD teams to seven African countries. The study analysed all available African development plans currently in force in order to determine the degree to which the plan documents represent a systematic attempt to deal with the problem of uneven development, insofar as this

¹⁹ Aldo E. Solari, Rolando Franco, Joel Jutkowitz, *Teoría, acción social y desarrollo en América Latina*, Textos del ILPES, Mexico City, Siglo XXI Editores S.A., 1976, p. 621.

²⁰ See Joost B.W. Kuitenbrouwer, *op. cit.*, and also reports of advisory missions to the Philippines, Pakistan and Papua-New Guinea.

²¹ *Application of a Unified Approach to Development Analysis and Planning under African Conditions* (E/CN.14/CAP.6/4).

could be ascertained from the range and specification of plan objectives, from the type of planning information and procedures used, and from planned policies and projects relating to the provision of essential services, the composition of production, research and technology, institutional change, and external economic relations. The visits to countries similarly concentrated on planning objectives and techniques. The study and visits found, not unexpectedly, a certain correspondence between the objectives stated in the preambles to plans and the human-welfare-oriented terms of reference of the unified approach project, but also, very nebulous relationships between these objectives and the projects and techniques contained in the body of the plans. Several reasons were given to explain these divergences—lack of manpower and finance, inadequate political commitment, unavailability of relevant data, deliberate distortions by executing agencies. Another argument sometimes given was that projects on behalf of the 'little man' are extremely difficult to organize and manage, while big projects involving intensive capital investment can be set up and run much more effectively.

The African study thus started by accepting provisionally the plans as valid expressions of national policy and the planners—the main interlocutors of the study team—as key social agents. By pointing to gaps and shortcomings the study then tried to suggest modest and incremental improvements rather than radically different styles and strategies. How could planners make better diagnoses and influence policy more effectively towards human welfare objectives under conditions of rudimentary information, political instability, and very limited resources susceptible to allocation by the State? At the same time, the United Nations African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) was diagnosing the existing styles of development of the African coun-

tries as neither acceptable nor viable and proposing variants of the self-reliant participationist approach; however, the contacts between this line of thinking within Africa and the unified approach project were slight.

The terms of reference of the unified approach project had focussed on the needs of the 'developing' or 'poor' countries. Its potential relevance to the countries that defined themselves as 'developed' was never clearly specified. According to some of the approaches that entered into the project, these countries figured mainly as sources of aid and of useful lessons for the 'developing' countries: since they were 'developed', it could be assumed that they already had a unified approach or did not need one. According to other approaches to a unified approach, the 'developed' countries were part of the problem, not part of the solution. Their people needed transformations in their style of development just as much as did the rest of the world, and might find such transformations even harder to achieve, in view of their material and psychological investments in existing patterns of production and consumption. The people of the rest of the world needed to free themselves from their economic, political, and cultural domination, and from the disastrous example of their patterns of artificially stimulated consumption, technological recklessness, and environmental devastation.

The contacts of the project with the Economic Commission for Europe, however, hardly touched on such questions. The facet of the unified approach of most interest here was that of informational enlightenment: the devising of development indicators and 'social accounting' to supplement the partially discredited GNP and national accounts, in national situations in which statistics were abundant, relatively reliable, and capable of providing answers to new questions which presumably included that of the relation between economic growth and human welfare.

VI

The dilemmas of international policy-oriented research and lessons for the future

The preceding pages have focussed on a few manifestations of the international aspiration to shape the future that, over the past three decades, has generated hundreds of meetings and hundreds of thousands of pages of documentation. On the margins of the ceaseless activity generated by the cycles of meetings of the international agencies one finds an even more diverse and complex ferment of theorizing, empirical research, polemics and ideological proselytizing whose practitioners interact with and contribute to the international normative-prescriptive efforts but scorn their ritualism, utopianism, evasiveness and lack of scientific rigour.

If the project did not manage to prescribe a "unified approach to development analysis and planning", and in fact concluded that this, taken literally, was not a meaningful objective, it did make more explicit than heretofore certain dilemmas that any international policy-oriented research project would have to face. It also suggested that such dilemmas could not be avoided within the context of such a project. If policy-oriented research were to make any contribution to human welfare it would have to recognize a permanent tension and ambiguity in the demands made on it, and maintain a critical attitude towards its own terms of reference and the suppositions underlying them.

A mandate to reconcile the irreconcilable has at least the virtue of reproducing conditions somewhat similar to those of policy-making in real national societies. The most likely outcome may be evasion, but this is not the only possible result. Presumably such an outcome can be guarded against by bringing contradictions out into the open and incorporating them into the hypotheses of the research: a course that should present fewer drawbacks and dangers for a team pursuing policy questions at the international level than for advisers to national political regimes.

What are the dilemmas and tensions that international policy-oriented research must learn to live with?

First, there is the tension between the ideal of explicit definition of basic concepts, hypotheses and value premises and the pressures towards a combined eclecticism and consensualism that the heterogeneity of the situations confronted seems to legitimate. It cannot be accidental that the interminable discussions of development have left intact the confusion between development conceived as empirically observable processes of change and growth within social systems and development as progress toward the observer's version of the Good Society. In the first sense development can be evaluated positively or negatively or judged inherently ambiguous in its implications for the human future. In the second sense development is by definition desirable. Nor have the discussions overcome the confusion between development conceived as a process subject to uniform laws and development conceived as a wide range of possible real patterns and possible aspirations. Can the term 'development' in the last analysis be anything more than a symbolic stamp of approval for changes that the user of the term considers unavoidable or desirable?

The unified approach project tried to delimit what was to be approached through the legitimation of different styles of development responding to a minimum criterion of acceptability and viability, but this left room for argument that practically any combination of policies that any regime cared to defend would eventually meet the criterion. It would be as easy to defend a strategy of immediate structural transformation, egalitarian distribution and self-reliance, at the short-term expense of levels of investment, production and consumption, as it would be to defend a strategy of maximization of investment and growth in pro-

duction, at the short-term expense of highly inequitable distribution, dependence on foreign capital, and repression of protests.

International policy-oriented research will have to continue to struggle to define development, along with other concepts, more clearly in terms of its own needs, but in full awareness that no definition will satisfy all users or prevent overloading of the term as a simultaneous expression of the real and of the desirable.

Second, there is the related tension between the ideal of arriving at a comprehensive and coherent theory explaining the phenomena the research confronts and aspires to change, and the pressures toward incongruous marriages of the pragmatic and the universal. Theories of development and social change have proliferated in recent years, but the explanatory power and prestige of all of them has waned. The unified approach project was able neither to make a reasoned choice among the theories already current nor to construct an original theory. It confronted—in addition to the obvious hindrances of inadequate time and disciplinary and other divergences in the team—an inhibiting prejudice against theorizing in the institutional sponsors of the project. Theoretical argument is divisive, and moreover, according to oft-repeated views in United Nations policy-making bodies, it is a luxury that cannot be afforded in view of the urgency of the problems demanding solution. Theoretical explanations are already available or can be dispensed with. The recurrent superficiality or evasiveness of the generalizations in United Nations documents, seeking to stay within the limits of the permissible, confirms this evaluation. The policy-making bodies thus call for the 'concrete' and the 'practical', but with the implicit or explicit proviso that the concrete and practical prescriptions must refrain from judging specific national situations and policies. Thus the compilers of reports must aim at prescriptions that appear concrete but are general enough to be applicable by any government that chooses to listen. The result has been a long series of Secretariat responses to demands for 'practical' solutions to urgent problems that were forgotten as soon as presented. This was true of the 'practical application' proposals deriving from the unified ap-

proach project. However, as was noted above, the project resisted advancing very far along this path.

The well-worn retort that nothing is more practical than a good theory comes to mind, but does not take one far towards resolution of the tension. Probably international policy-oriented research will continue to be more a consumer than a producer of theories, and will have to open itself to the possible validity, under defined conditions, of a wide range of theoretical challenges to the relevance of the 'practical'.

Third, there is the tension between the ideal of searching criticism of the conventional wisdom on development and the insertion of the research into a complicated array of institutions and expectations deriving from this wisdom, at a time when the wisdom itself has practically lost whatever coherence it once had. Policy-oriented research is expected to come up with something new and to criticize the old. There would be no occasion for it if its sponsors thought that existing diagnoses and policies were satisfactory. The very urgency with which 'practical' prescriptions are demanded indicates a pervasive sentiment of crisis.

Criticism must thus apply itself to a contradictory mixture of conventional suppositions (particularly on the role of the State), of sweeping, and apparently radical 'new' objectives—popular participation, elimination of poverty, satisfaction of basic needs, etc. and of terminological innovations giving an air of novelty to policies that have long been current. The 'unified approach' itself began mainly as a terminological innovation for a desideratum previously labelled 'balanced social and economic development'.

The most useful corrective will probably be the cultivation of historical awareness. The history of development as a mobilizing myth is short, but long enough for the observation that "those who forget history are condemned to repeat it" to have become very pertinent.

The quest for a unified approach to development in terms of norms and prescriptions has been carried as far as it profitably can be, if not farther. The most hopeful direction for the next

stages of policy-oriented research lies at levels between the comprehensive theoretical or ideological explanations for societal change, and the local manifestations of change and policies designed to influence change. Comparative studies with a historical perspective focussed on the ways in which different social agents of change perceive their roles and act, and the confrontation between their perceptions and the specific settings on which they are trying to act, are still few. Presumably research in this direction will leave something intact in the aspiration for rationally planned

action to bring social change and economic growth into closer correspondence with certain generally accepted values of human welfare, equity, and freedom. In all probability, however, it will replace the image of the State as a rational, coherent, and benevolent entity—capable of choosing and entitled to choose a style of development; so powerful but so unimaginative that it seeks generalized advice and then acts on it—by a more realistic frame of reference for policy-oriented interpretation of what the State does or evades doing, why, and how.