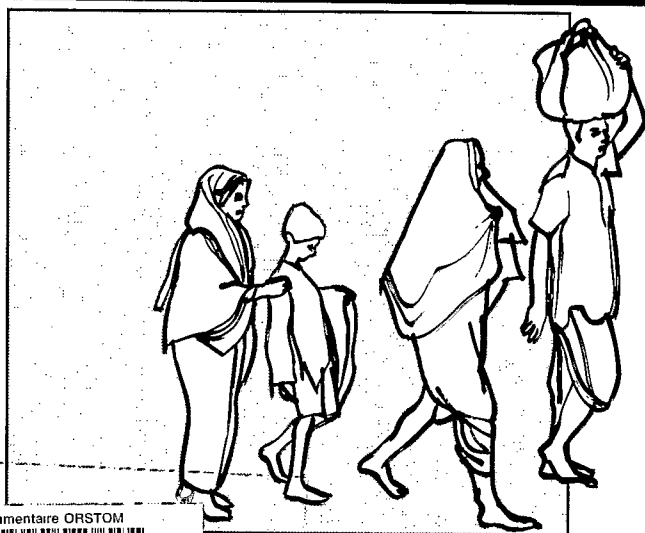




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*Poverty,
Unemployment
and Exclusion
in Countries
of the South*



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The document presented herein is a synthesis of the reports offered by the Royaumont Seminar Workshops. It is followed by a commentary on the draft Declaration of Copenhagen. The authors are Philippe ANTOINE, Jacques CHARMES, Georges COURADE, Jean-Luc DUBOIS, ORSTOM researchers, Alain MARIE, researcher at IEDES and Michel LORIAUX, researcher and professor at the Catholic University of Louvain-La-Neuve.

POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT
AND EXCLUSION
IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH

Reflections from the Royaumont Seminar
as a Contribution to the Work
of the World Summit
on Social Development

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FOREWORD

For nearly 20 years now, countries of the South have been undergoing a crisis of unprecedented intensity and duration that leads to a constant deterioration of living standards. Increase in production rates cannot keep pace with population growth and are very often even negative. Without going so far as to suggest that the remedy of structural adjustment has been worse than the disease, it must at least be said the societies to which it has been administered have suffered constraints and pains of a kind that no region of the world has ever experienced before.

In truth, few countries and societies have been spared today. The preamble to the Copenhagen Declaration reminds us that more than one billion men live in extreme poverty, that half of them suffer from hunger, that more than 120 million are jobless and that even more are underemployed. These figures cast doubts as to whether economic development can ensure a certain degree of social redistribution of wealth. While they raise questions about the validity of a model that is now universally applied, they suggest that social development should be brought back to the core of development strategies. For more than 30 years, researchers at ORSTOM have been studying the micro-societies of the Third World and tracking the changes that these societies have undergone during stages of growth followed by crises and ensuing phases of structural adjustment.

It is therefore particularly appropriate that in 1995, which is the year of the World Summit for Social Development, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should ask ORSTOM to organise a preparatory conference for this summit. At the Royaumont Seminar organized from 9 to 11 January 1995 on the subject «Can development be social?», about 50 social scientists from ORSTOM, CNRS, universities and also UNRISD as well as representatives of NGOs got together to draw up a critical and practical assessment of their work and activities which could contribute to the fight against poverty, unemployment and exclusion.

Jacques Charmes
Head, Department
"Societies, Urbanisation, Development"
ORSTOM, Paris



POVERTY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND EXCLUSION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE SOUTH

The forthcoming World Summit on Social Development will deal with a number of societal issues. The focus will be on promoting social development through institutionalizing societies that are more stable as they are more secure and more equitable. The summit will advocate respect for pluralism and diversity, will recommend the integration of underprivileged and vulnerable groups, and plead in favor of cultural diversity providing it is not based on exclusion or discrimination, but works especially in favor of migrants, and notably workers, as well as in favor of true equality between the genders. It will recommend steps to ensure that fiscal policies are economically efficient while remaining equitable. And it will assert that the family, as a basic social unit, plays a central role in integration.

The action program involves several major dimensions but it appears essentially to concern societies and States that subscribe to the Western model of development even if the document alludes frequently to the specific condition of Africa. According to the report, it is necessary to create a political and legal climate that fosters social development. This means fighting against corruption, eliminating discrimination, decentralising institutions and guaranteeing freedom of association and the right of negotiation. A series of recommendations is aimed at improving systems of social protection.

A reading of the UN document and its list of measures gives the impression that the consequences of the crisis on societies of the South have been underestimated. Action has often been limited to certain specific target groups when it is the general mass of the population that is affected by the disintegration of the social fabric. Poverty in monetary terms is increasing, and the gap between incomes derived from work and from capital is widening. The embryonic social welfare systems developed in specific African countries at the eve of independence such as those relating to retirement, social insurance and housing assistance systems are collapsing.

THE SOCIAL DIMENSION OF POVERTY

Generally, poverty is exclusively considered in its economic aspects (in terms of income or consumption of goods). It is measured by reference to a threshold of absolute poverty (such as a poverty line computed on the basis of caloric intake) or relative poverty (according to income level). Recently, one



has added the consumption of services (such as education and health services) designed to meet basic needs as they are related to the cultural standards of the societies considered. However, because of its link with exclusion, poverty presents in many countries a major social-cultural dimension that may outweigh its economic aspects. For poverty is also the absence of social relationships. Hence, it appears to be necessary to examine the various forms taken by poverty and by the process of pauperisation, to identify the instruments that can be used to grasp its major features and progress, and can contribute to define social policies.

Distinct terms exist to express the forms, the dynamics and the intensity of poverty. Thus, we may speak of destitution, precariousness, vulnerability, exclusion, marginalisation, etc. Each of these concepts facilitates the formulation of a series of qualitative and quantitative indicators that have to be related to one another. In order to measure and, at the same time, compare different forms of poverty and the on-going process of pauperisation, the translation of these indicators into monetary terms is a must, even if it fosters controversies. This translation generates the link between social and economic realms that characterises the multidimensional concept of poverty.

THE NEED FOR A FORM OF SOCIAL ACCOUNTING

Because of its comparability, it is the economic aspect, related to income or consumption of goods and services, that is presently used as a reference. Yet, other dimensions, social, cultural and relational, have to be taken into account. As it is often observed, the awareness of economic poverty often appears only with the introduction of monetary terms and the ensuing depersonalisation of trade. The decline or loss of social relationships, with the exclusion that it entails, is perceived in many societies as a far worse scourge than any loss or drop in income (this is the case in African societies generally).

Indicators on social relationships, their intensity (grasped through the notion of social capital) and their development need to be devised on the basis of the social perception of poverty and by reference to the meaning of former social bonds (involving types of inter-generational solidarity based on a logic of debt, giving and counter-giving). The present notion of poverty line is based on simplistic universal criteria that are far from depicting the situation and its evolution as they are experienced by the populations themselves.

Lack of money and financial precariousness make it also difficult for men to be or remain married. How to consolidate



family unity when it is becoming increasingly difficult to found a family ? In most major cities, age at first marriage is rising, households are getting crowded and autonomous sub-units are becoming enclaved within domestic units. This makes it necessary to raise questions about the intensity of inequalities within domestic units themselves. The lack of monetary income is often compensated for by a swift circulation of money.

POVERTY DOES NOT ALWAYS FOSTER EXCLUSION

The prevailing discourse on poverty and exclusion uses either term without distinction, without spelling these notions, which blurs the variety of the standpoints adopted. Poverty is not the same thing as exclusion or anomie. Anthropological observations have shown that the poor remain incorporated within family and extra-family networks of social protection and mutual assistance and that their strategies are shaped in part by a logic of the maintenance of social capital. This incorporation produces integration and not exclusion. This very anthropology of poverty is actually at the root of the policies contained in social development programs. However, this anthropology sidesteps the fact that these social networks are hierarchically organized and work primarily for the benefit of those who lead them.

The notion of exclusion, therefore, is not only a question of lack of money but it also evokes the difficulty of maintaining one's position in distinct social networks. Either the excluded continue to have a place in these networks at the cost of experiencing a downgraded status that actually turns them into barely-tolerated recipients of long-term assistance. Or, whenever they are completely marginalised, (which is an increasingly common occurrence), they are expelled from every form of normative sociality and thus expelled into the world of homeless and vagrant, but also pushed into delinquency, banditry, drug-taking and counter-societies such as criminal gangs and sects.

The choice of qualitative and quantitative indicators depends on the underlying assumptions, the goals pursued and the standards of value, whether universal or local, that are adopted at the societal level. The advantage of quantitative indicators is that they determine simple thresholds, are easy to use, and give credibility to the results obtained. Yet, qualitative indicators take far greater account of the complexity of local situations. In fact, a large number of qualitative indicators (for example indicators of social destructuring such as suicide, theft, delinquency, etc.) may be presented quantitatively. Furthermore, any work relying on quantitative indicators needs



to be illuminated by qualitative analyses that reflect the complexity of the situations examined.

Social indicators have to be formulated at distinct scales reflecting accurately social organization and economic structuring. These indicators will be macro-economic and macro-social, meso-economic relating to communities (obtained through community inquiries) and social groups (notably the target groups of social policy), and micro-economic (relating to households and individuals). We have to go beyond external descriptive indicators (such as school enrolment rates) and incorporate indicators that measure mechanisms such as those by which skills are transmitted. The definition of target groups needs to be refined since each category covers a wide range of concrete situations requiring responses that are tailor suited to each case. Policies of integration involve families, but the observation of such a unit is a particularly sensitive task. Family cycles need to be observed, for domestic situations are particularly complex in conditions of precariousness.

A distinction needs to be made between the use of synthetic indicators such as the HDI (Human Development Index, calculated by the UNDP) and the use of a variety of simple indicators. Synthetic indicators, because of the weighting operations required as far each simple component is concerned, are theoretically unstable. Indeed, any change in the weighting system alters the value of the indicator concerned and softens its contributions to multidimensionality. Besides, the number of simple indicators may soon become too great for being of any use in decision making. It is therefore necessary to establish a hierarchy of indicators and define priorities in terms of the goals pursued.

In order to prepare the indicators required, it is therefore necessary to identify explicitly objectives by considering the various aspects of poverty in its spatial/temporal dimension as a function of the fields of study and sectors that are deemed to be social or to have a high social impact. Insofar as indicators are useful instruments for keeping track of social life, they need to be elaborated and, simultaneously, integrated into a methodological framework that endows them with maximal coherence. In this context, social accounting should become the counterpart of economic accounting and facilitate a comprehensive follow up of the situation.

Today, there are many appropriate tools such as indicators, social accounting matrices, computable models of general equilibrium, observatories, poverty profiles, etc. Far too little effort is made to disseminate these tools, to improve them and use them in an all-encompassing and coherent approach.



Each tool has its own specific character aimed at meeting particular goals. Hence, the search for one single instrument is a challenge to research.

It is necessary to promote further research in order to analyse forms of poverty and exclusion, their origins and the dynamics of pauperisation, or to assess social policies. The indicators chosen should correspond to both local priorities and international goals. All this can be implemented only within institutions, or networks that bring together the efforts of already existing teams, with an international institution taking responsibility for overall leadership.

A LABOUR MARKET IN THE THROES OF CHANGE

Employment and the relationship of the individual to work are at the heart of social development since they are the factors that enable poverty and exclusion to be prevented or attenuated. Understanding social development in a context of free trade and of a globalisation of the economy requires knowing more about the mechanisms by which economies and societies work. This calls for an historical perspective and a theoretical framework linking phenomena to one another. Standard criteriological approaches fail to provide this framework.

Attitudes and policies toward unemployment and the informal sector have to be profoundly modified and adapted in view of the convergence of studies and observations that highlight the following points:

- the explosive growth of open unemployment in economies where it was hitherto limited,
- the regression of wage-earning employment and the parallel high increase in informal employment,
- the rise of female activity rates, and of multiple activities, especially domestic multiple activity.
- the drop of salaries in real terms.

Even if not everybody does agree that the informal sector may be a viable long-term alternative, it is accepted that, at least on a transitional basis, the development of this sector needs to be assisted so that it does not reach saturation prematurely. Probably due to contrasts in national, economic and social conditions, there are divergent views on the impact of the decreasing purchasing power of wage-earners during a period of structural adjustment: i.e. whether the effect will be recessive as a result of the drop in total demand or whether its impact will be conversely limited or even positive because of possible substitutes to existing imports.

From this viewpoint, steps are needed to foster productive



activities in the informal sector and not allow such activities to be gradually choked by the rise (which needs not be inexorable) of trading. Indeed, trading, whenever it is related to speculative and/or cross-national, may have extremely negative effects.

PUBLIC INTERVENTIONS IN THE LABOUR MARKET

Apart from implementing macro-economic policies to protect production in the informal sector and stimulate the production of substitute goods, a revived State controlled by citizens' initiatives and by social partners needs to be initially focused on the reform of training and educational systems and additionally, on the opening of public markets to the small firms of the informal sector.

What has to be done first of all is to find a better fit between the educational system and the employment situation as well as the real conditions of production : the open unemployment that is currently observed is primarily a form of unemployment related to the dissatisfaction of young people whose prospects and aspirations are limited to wage-earning jobs and who are little inclined, except by necessity, to get involved in private initiatives. In this respect, the content of education needs to be thoroughly reevaluated. At the same time, while on-the-job training in the informal sector needs to be complemented and consolidated by the formal training system, it also needs to be recognized and validated by the State.

As far access to the public-sector market is concerned, the promising experiments recently carried out in the sector of construction and public works and more generally of large community projects ought to be extended to other economic sectors after taking into account the earlier failures observed in the regrouping of purchases and sales. Here is a realm where citizens' action and community-based action may find tasks that correspond to their capacities. Similarly it is necessary to ensure a sufficient fluidity of the market in order to build a true internal market through large-scale infrastructural works that generate many jobs.

WAGE-EARNING JOBS DECLINE, SO DOES SOCIAL PROTECTION

Labour and social protection laws were framed in relation to the predominant model of the wage-earning sector. Now, not only does the wage-earning sector still absorb a minority of individuals in every developing country, but it is also declining under the effect of increasing unemployment and the growth



of the informal sector on the fringes of the State. Even in the NICs (New Industrial Countries), the spread of forms of sub-contracting and of outwork slow down the growth of the wage-earning sector. It is therefore necessary to think about new forms of social protection for non-wage-earners and notably to adapt labour laws to new forms of employment.

However, the adaptation of social protection systems to new forms of employment outside modern firms excludes from their field of application, a major part of the population which continues to be non-wage-earning in agricultural and informal sectors, and even excludes almost the entire active population of the less advanced countries which have not begun their transition to wage-earning forms of labour.

THE NEED FOR A MORE THOROUGH DEBATE ON THE SOCIAL CLAUSE

The notion of social clause refers to an argument according to which the internationally established social standards concerning the right of association, the right to collective bargaining and the prohibition of child labour and forced labour are not only basic principles but must be complied with and applied as prerequisites to international trade.

The underlying debate has tended to take a polemical twist pitting the North against the South. It is stated in the following terms : for the countries of the North, that have invoked the social clause (speaking on behalf of their workers who are hit by very high unemployment rates), the opening of borders and the globalisation of the economy have introduced competition from countries that do not have comparative wage levels. Not only are the NICs reservoirs of cheap labour but they are now competing, through their own firms, with the goods produced by the countries of the North. These NICs (speaking on behalf of their entrepreneurs), retort that the countries of the North, forgetting their own past, are on flimsy grounds when they criticize them for seeking a speedy economic development based on poverty, exploitation and the non-protection of their work force. The countries of the North, they claim, have themselves long preached the virtues of industrialisation but are now seeking to block the process when it is about to succeed. Is it not indeed industrialisation that would make it possible to combat poverty ? Would the reproach be about but new forms of protectionism ?

These opposite points of view provide a clear illustration of the debate on social development. Economic development and the maintenance of high investment rates are believed to require the temporary neglect of social development which is



considered to be merely a form of consumption and hence, an obstacle to economic growth. This dilemma could only be resolved at a more advanced stage of development. Although the argument has not been presented in such crude terms, it has been dominant for a long time among the economists of development.

However, the logic and the dynamics of the globalisation of the economy tend to reduce systems of social protection to the conditions that characterize labor in the least-privileged countries. The bottom level of the minimum salary is subject to heavy pressure or to avoidance strategies used by countries of the North. Relocation of work sites, extension of work by remote communications means and outside the firm are being used to break into systems of social protection. While it is unrealistic to imagine that it is possible to dismantle corporate strategies, these strategies should at least be curbed. And if we do not fall prey to the petitio principii fallacy, it would be appropriate to assess the issue and seriously explore the possibility of :

- defending the social clause principle,
- extending the conditionality from trade to investment (credit), namely holding the future World Trade Organization (WTO) as well as the IMF and the World Bank responsible for its application,
- spelling procedures of application and opportunities of modulating the field of action,
- organising a right of appeal to institutions such as the ILO,
- creating observatories to study labour conditions, as an obligation binding on all States.

The application of the clause should enable wage-earners in developing countries to be in a better position to obtain a redistribution of productivity gains as well as an improved social protection, the economic and social history of which shows that it has never been either automatic or spontaneous. Since this means acknowledging that the protection of social development concerns all the main interested parties, it follows they should have the right of association. And if, in the short term, firms suffer, growth will be nevertheless stimulated through an extension of the domestic market and the use of more efficient technologies. Economic globalisation would not be only about maximizing corporate profits but it could also become a social strategy for redistributing the fruits of growth. This could happen providing that the social clause be applied not only to the formal sector but also to the precarious forms of labour that these firms are developing on their fringes (such as sub-contracting and outwork).



MIGRATION : A RESPONSE TO POVERTY OR A FACTOR OF EXCLUSION ?

Thus, while one pleads in favour of the free flow of capital and goods at the international level, one seeks to restrict the flow of human beings. The condition of migrants is paradoxical : on the one hand, with the rise of nationalism and xenophobia, they risk being marginalized and excluded in the host countries, on the other hand, in their own place of origin, they constitute a safety valve to the crisis by virtue of the fact that they repatriate funds. Uprootedness is experienced as a form of exclusion whose intensity varies as a function of the links that continue to be maintained with the original home. The loss of the link with the homeland is an essential cause of insecurity and instability. However one may wonder whether the institutionalisation of a system of solidarity based on migration is possible in due time. Migration also affects the distribution of roles within families as it enables women to become autonomous. Migrants are at the core of networks of complex relationships, and the process of integration often stretches over two generations.

INNOVATIONS AND SOCIAL AGENTS

In the context of crises and structural adjustment, social groups and institutions of every kind adopt new perceptions and forms of behaviour. Survival tactics have to be distinguished from long-term strategies of adaptation in order to find out whether an innovator is an entrepreneur or an «enterprising individual». One might therefore ask whether the many innovations that are being observed constitute contingent responses or alternatives to the present crisis.

The term «social innovation» refers initially to the appropriation by a social group of any technological or economic innovation ; secondly, the term evokes the adoption of new forms of behaviour or their revival that facilitate the use of more efficient strategies ; thirdly, the term evokes the formation and mobilization of new networks or organisations that facilitate an improved redistribution of the by product of growth.

Thus may be considered to be social innovations : the women's contribution to the Abidjan supply of processed cassava, the development of mutual guarantee systems within the framework of tontine pacts in order to cope with cases of defaulting on payment, the creation of unions and producers' groups taking responsibility for their members' interests.

However, the question is whether the survival tactics that can be currently observed (such as those related to photocopying



activities in Yaounde or collective cooking-pots in Lima) can be regarded as examples of middle range enterprises that rely on lasting investments to cope with their respective risks or as examples of seized opportunities or incomes that are destined to be short-lived.

History shows that the social is never granted or won automatically. It is therefore necessary to have both agents who demand and defend their social rights and an environment that facilitates their implementation.

PRIVATE INITIATIVE CANNOT REPLACE THE STATE

With regard to the role of the State and of public policies designed to alleviate poverty and limit the deterioration of living conditions, it is necessary to stress how dangerous it is to invoke the fight against corruption and rentier-type reasoning, for substituting private organisations (local authorities, informal firms, NGOs, community initiative, associations, as well as large private groups) to State institutions. The crisis generates a common belief in the capacities of the civil society. Correspondingly this «view of things» proposes to relocate to NGOs and local institutions a part of the resources initially assigned to «development».

Thus, in terms of social development, emphasis has been placed on the efficiency, of private dynamics, and of forms of community action that expect nothing from the State. It would be necessary, however, to assess how private dynamics operate when they replace public institutions and take over functions that have been traditionally assigned to the State. Certain innovations that appear to be positive remain nevertheless limited to one single group as long as the environment does not facilitate their dissemination. The context becomes favorable whenever :

- 1- there is no political or social control that stifles spontaneous initiative,
- 2- there is a social demand that can be perceived by the actors and
- 3- structured networks render sustainable an innovation that was initially fragile.

Public authorities play an essential role in forging a favorable environment (as in Singapore and Burkina-Faso), by refraining from interfering with local initiatives and by creating a climate of trust in the future among basic agents, which prevents any speculation-related or survival-related forms of behaviour. This attitude is also desirable as far as the large intermediary bodies (such as churches, trades unions, pressure groups, criminal organisations, etc.) are concerned.



Yet, neither popular initiatives nor the role of associations nor the efficiency of privatisation should be excessively idealised. Quite often, private initiatives are far from being as spontaneous as might be imagined. Furthermore, they dissolve once their goals are achieved. Associations often conceal strategies for cornering international aid : we have seen how clever certain «agents of development» might be into turning the implementation of projects into major tools of self-aggrandisement and self-promotion. As for privatisation, it is by definition little concerned with the general interest and it satisfies only solvent demand.

Furthermore, it is often very difficult to identify, in any relevant way, the places and the groups that could take the leadership in the actions against extreme poverty and exclusion. From this viewpoint, it would be appropriate to carry out methodical, comparative observations between the formulation, implementation and consequences of public policy on the one hand, and private or associative actions on the other. These comparisons would facilitate the empirical evaluation of the «replicability» of the approaches adopted to deal with target groups neglected by the State. The ensuing analysis requires a link between alternative strategies and public strategies. The State has duties and must be capable of fulfilling them, with the public authorities retaining the role of the main regulatory institution especially to deal with the questions of poverty and exclusion.

... AND SOLIDARITY GROUPS ARE NOT THE PANACEA

The notion of solidarity is of an essentially moral and ideological nature. It covers a wide range of practices such as mutual assistance among neighbours or relatives, tontine pacts, specific financial aid, support in schooling, sheltering, etc. However, the common motive to these distinct forms of solidarity is derived from a utilitarian form of reasoning: the pooling of resources in order to set up a pressure group, or a social investment and the ensuing dependance of debtors. Today, this logic is challenged as individuals can no longer make the contributions that feed mutual insurance and assistance networks and are consequently excluded from them. However, as such processes of individualisation enhance the critical awareness of these forms of solidarity, they also facilitate the emergence of new social links based on individual membership and on political or religious commitments. The emergence of these new social relationships requires a preliminary questioning of older forms of solidarity.

Furthermore, as a result of pauperisation and the increasing



precariousness of occupational roles, the modes of solidarity based on direct redistribution through middle classes are on the decline and will not smoothe much longer the consequences of the crisis. There is an empirical trend towards a retreat into the nuclear family unit at the expense of extended kin-ties. In these environments, there is indeed a collapse of the belief in wage-earning as a mode of upward mobility, and a systematic search for additional sources of income. The increasingly sharp awareness of this growing precariousness renders intermediate social categories reticent about redistributing and about social contributions. It even increases the mistrust of the poor towards the excluded.

REGULATION BY THE STATE

By lack of resources, the public authorities no longer perform the tasks entrusted to them, that cannot be performed by anyone else: these are regal tasks (guaranteeing the security of goods, persons and territory, justice), regulatory functions in the political field (for example the protection of minorities), social functions (equity, integration, etc.) and economic functions (development of the productive machine, currency, etc.). Often enough, the State is no longer capable of legitimizing its agents who, in certain cases, have de facto privatized certain of their functions. In this respect, it should be noted that the draft of Copenhagen Charter does not mention those institutions of the State apparatus, (namely the police and the justice system), that most immediately encounter excluded social categories. As the poor and the excluded remain seen as a threat to established society, reliance on the police is unfortunately one of the principal «means of fighting against exclusion». Training programs and awareness enhancing session with regard to diversity and social integration must be started in these State bodies.

To create an environment that fosters social development and innovation, actors expect the State to arbitrate among the divergent interests of groups and individuals and to restore the primary goals of public service. The State alone has the fiscal instruments available to organize transfers of resources and protect sectors exposed to international competition. It also has access to the instruments of monetary policy necessary for ensuring the development of productive activities. In countries where agriculture is still predominant and will continue to be predominant, setting the value of remunerative farm prices, adopting preferential policies with regard to a certain number of consumer goods produced by the informal sector, and maintaining public education and health services at a



level compatible with the needs of the least privileged groups should provide the non-wage-earning population, which continues to form the majority, with the minimum remuneration for its economic activity and with the minimum social protection to which it is entitled.

Making public authorities more operational means bringing them closer to the populations that are better placed to control it. Given the limits of individual initiatives and the bankruptcy of the Welfare State, it is necessary, therefore, to identify the levels (national, regional and local) and the type of agents that will facilitate the optimal implementation of efficient and transparent action (this is the principle of subsidiarity).

To recover the legitimacy needed for managing the long term, the State must provide for the security of all the actors by adequately resolving the numerous economic and social conflicts besetting societies currently under stress. This quest for legitimacy may be facilitated by both forms of democratic control and a type of economic management that is both rigorous and transparent.

Contradictions between economic and social realms (between income redistribution and job creation) are more manageable whenever the State implements a credible social policy. The majesty of the State will be asserted all the more effectively when its agents regain a sense of social utility that will be confirmed by their status and their condition. What is needed is not more of the State but a better State, a goal that is attained by rethinking its functions, re-establishing its legitimacy and giving it the means for its actions.

DEMOCRATISATION AND CITIZENS' ACTION

Informal links of solidarity therefore constitute «social safety nets» that are becoming increasingly loose and fragile as criminal or fundamentalist brands of solidarity tend to replace them as socialization agencies for the excluded. Thus the intervention of State authority has become more necessary than ever before. However, the underlying achievement is contingent on several conditions : first of all, the State must fulfil a function of equitable redistribution and therefore break away from the patron-client, rentier and repressive modes of regulation that are still widely prevailing. The bankruptcy of the State is not only a by-product of its appropriation by patron-client networks and of its use for tributary ends. It is also related to a change in objective conditions, to the impossibility of coping with the particular effects of demographic growth and of the globalisation of the economy. Citizens' action, village associations, neighborhood associations and professional associa-



tions should contribute to forge the new role of the State, this role reflecting new requirements in terms of competence, of rationalisation and of the control to be exerted on the use of public services on a patron-client basis. NGOs have a major role to play in this change. However, their action needs to be co-ordinated and regulated at a central level. In short, what needs to be done is to revive the functions of a regulating State that stimulates economic activities in order to serve all the social sectors and to be controlled by them. Democratisation and citizens' integration have therefore become the prerequisites to societal integration. These two processes must be supported in priority if one wants really to promote a form of social development that is not limited to mere words.



COMMENTS ON THE DRAFT OF THE COPENHAGEN DECLARATION

The participants in the Royaumont Seminar (9-11 January 1995) have read the Draft Declaration and Action Program proposed by the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, March 1995).

The examination of these documents stirs mixed feelings among most participants.

First of all, there is an initial reaction of admiration toward the abundance of good intentions and programs, both generous and humanitarian. Participants acknowledge that, beyond statements of general principles, the documents express an effort of analysis turned concrete actions and toward better policy proposals that are sometimes even quite bold (for example the proposal to wipe out the bilateral debt of certain developing countries).

However, participants cannot help being simultaneously surprised, by the ambitious scale of the objectives chosen (often enough, the issue is not to reduce but rather to eliminate poverty, exclusion, and illiteracy, etc). The ambition is such that one cannot but point out that the objectives do not concern the next decade but at best the next century.

It is also noted that the draft contains little or no analysis of problems, even if these problems («untold destitution», «abject poverty», «increased gap between the rich and the poor») have been identified and highlighted. This lack of analysis is particularly marked with regard to the identification of the historic mechanisms and the social and cultural dynamic processes that have induced the creation, expansion and perpetuation of these problems despite an admittedly unprecedented economic growth.

Nowhere is there any sign of a discussion of the contradictions between objectives or a discussion of the conflicts of interest among social groups or nations and of the priorities to be adopted in the face of so many commitments. The whole document reflects a faith in one single model of development, in the universality of values and intentions even though what is most needed in order to be efficient and operational is not only to acknowledge the diversity and specificity of different regions but also to bring to the fore the distinct types of contradictions. This step is indeed a precondition that dictates compromise and arbitration. For, without compromise or arbitration, one can fear that the Summit will remain a fairly comprehensive bundle of good intentions and pious wishes.

Similarly, nowhere is there any precise statement as to why «the expansion of prosperity goes hand in hand with the expansion of poverty». Yet, some feel that this contradiction exists only in the absence of any critique of the predominant model of the liberal market economy which leads to the accumulation of wealth but which requires, for its continued existence or expansion, to a large extent, the perpetuation or the accentuation of certain inequalities.

Now, the document often gives the impression of recommending a mere fine tuning of the model. In contrast, some feel that it needs to be completely overhauled through devising new forms of trade, production, and social



as well as political structures, with more stringent institutional controls and with the subordination of criteria of economic efficiency and productivity to. Nowhere is this debate entered into or even mentioned. At best, there is a reference to the need for «properly understood economic development», unfortunately without any precise details as to the full content of the term «properly understood», even if one adds that development should be not only «lasting and sustainable» but also «sustained», another contradiction that is little elucidated.

Similarly one can underline that certain often used concepts are not unequivocal (for example one pleads in favor of social integration which assumes homogenisation and stability while elsewhere it is respect for diversity that is recommended whereas social change necessarily implies transformation and, ultimately, even revolution).

Finally, the entire report is dominated by a framework of analysis that uses over simplistic and also debatable approaches, while many feel that it would be more legitimate to adopt a more comprehensive or more systemic vision that sees societal changes as interdependent and difficult to reverse without adopting a wide range of coherent steps and measures.

Finally, all these gaps and reservations lead to the conviction that the a document cannot be amended, at least in its present form, as its methods and modes of preparation hardly lend themselves to a partial rewriting. Nevertheless, it is felt that this very same document could, to a certain extent, become an efficient political weapon if its commitments and recommendations are not excessively watered down in Copenhagen. Indeed, if many Heads of State and government sign this document, then they will be making commitments, in front of the world public opinion, which will make it subsequently very difficult for them to ignore in the policies that they will defend at different levels, (whether international, national or regional), commitments they will be constantly reminded of by all those who hold other points of view such as the NGOs and the associations, the trade unions, etc. Either they will gain prestige, by recovering a degree of credibility that is presently shaken or they will lose credibility and even their legitimacy.

However, to make the game equitable, these major international conferences should not only be places for just making generous and humanitarian declarations but they should also be forums for assessing the actions undertaken and the progress attained so that constructive debates can be organized throughout the world on the major issues at stake for mankind.

At present, the prevailing view is that the big international conferences (Rio, Cairo, Copenhagen, Beijing) serve exclusively to issue statements concerning major principles and to make commitments without being concerned by the means necessary to implement them. Similarly, no real effort is made to integrate sometimes divergent viewpoints, nor above all to prepare genuine evaluations in order to obtain a historical vision of the concrete achievements and changes brought about by the actions undertaken. Furthermore, such assessments are made difficult by the adoption of new concepts (for example the replacement of the concept of economic development by that of human development or of sustainable development) since the new terms have an increased ideological content and suffer from a lack of precision in the underlying definitions and measurements, which raises the risk that past failures may be concealed or real progress masked through a simple shifting of objectives.

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ORSTOM
213 rue La Fayette
75480 - Paris cedex 10
France

tél : 33 (1) 48 03 77 77
fax : 33 (1) 48 03 08 29
telex ORSTOM 214627 F
