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## Social integration: institutions and actors

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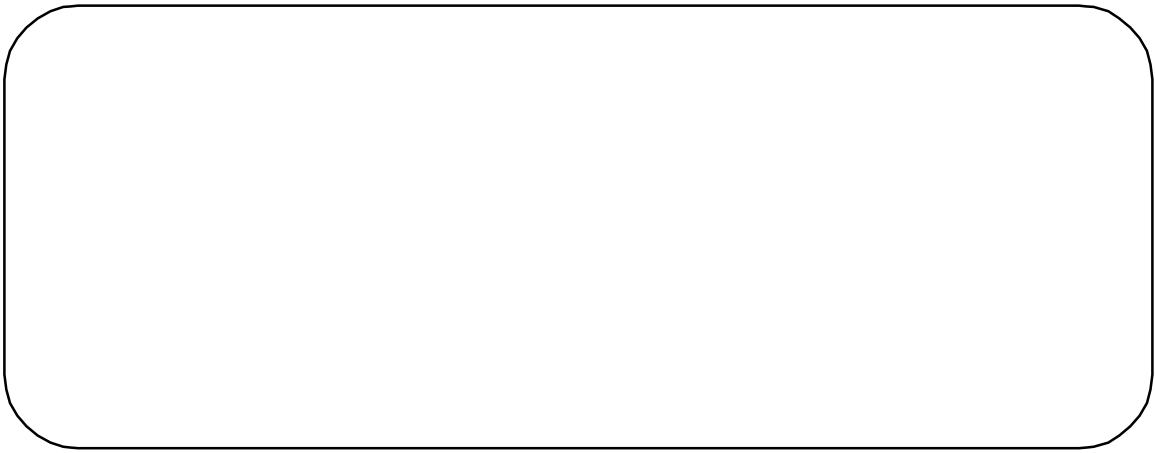
*social integration:  
institutions and actors*

*by marshall wolfe*



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geneva, september 1994



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## preface

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The World Summit for Social Development, to be held in Copenhagen in March 1995, provides an important opportunity for the world community to focus attention on current social problems and to analyse the dimensions, roots and directions of social trends. In particular, the agenda of the Summit specifies three areas of concern: the reduction of poverty, the generation of productive employment, and the enhancement of social integration. UNRISD work in preparation for the Summit focuses on the last of these: as countries confront the seemingly intractable problems of social conflict, institutional breakdown and mass alienation, the topic of **social integration** has assumed increasing importance in public debate.

The UNRISD Occasional Paper series brought out as part of the Social Summit preparatory process takes up a range of issues relating to social integration. This paper examines the processes of social integration and disintegration as they work themselves out through a range of institutions and actors — from intergovernmental organizations and transnational corporations to local communities and grassroots organizations. The acceleration of economic and cultural integration on a world scale, and the associated phenomena of polarization and exclusion, are posing serious challenges to the capacities and legitimacy of many of the institutions considered in this paper.

In the first part, the author makes an assessment of how these institutions have been responding to the multiple challenges facing them. Their responses, it is argued, in turn influence how policy makers, theorists and the general public perceive their legitimacy and future roles. While the responsibilities of intergovernmental institutions continue to broaden and diversify, their capacity to respond to new challenges in a coherent way is hindered by the segmentation of their bureaucratic structures and responsibilities. Also active at the global level are the transnational enterprises, which have extended their reach on a world scale, but are facing increasing pressure to make better sense of the responsibilities that flow from their global penetration. The nation states are suffering from reduced autonomy but without other institutions being able to assume responsibility for some of their roles. The legitimacy of the modern state has suffered from perceived discrepancies between its ideal functioning and commitments, and the behaviour of its political and bureaucratic actors, coming at a time of economic slowdown and insecurity. The shortcomings of past state action in pursuit of “development”, “welfare” or “real socialism” have been used ideologically to discredit the state. Yet, the author concludes, this ideological rejection of the state can hardly triumph over the long term,

although it complicates the urgent task of reassessing essential state responsibilities.

The shrinkage of state resources and discrediting of its services in poorer countries, coupled with mounting poverty and exclusion, have altered the division of responsibilities between the state and the institutions of civil society. Here a prominent trend is the enhanced legitimacy, self-confidence, and wider responsibilities of issue-oriented organizations and NGOs. While there are several reasons for the high profile currently enjoyed by NGOs, their ability to justify the hopes vested in them remains unclear. Another significant trend has been the declining representativeness and influence of long established class and interest-group organizations.

In the second part, the author looks at the responsibilities for social integration, focusing in particular on the role played by nation states and global institutions. The exercise is undertaken with extreme caution, given the changing visibility of “major problems” and the tendency for “integrative solutions” to become problems in their turn. The discussion of state responsibilities is anchored in a careful interpretation of democracy and an appreciation of the extreme diversity in real national situations which renders universalistic norms and utopian blueprints highly infeasible. Some general principles are nevertheless proposed to social actors striving to make these states better perform their roles: subordinating policy to democratic choice and uncertainty of outcome (i.e. there is no “one right way” to achieve social integration or any other goal); avoiding the “organicist” view of the nation state (i.e. accommodating difference rather than imposing stifling conformism); accommodating diverse sources of conflict and the continual emergence of new groups claiming a voice in democratic decision-making; striving for transparency; and, finally, self-limitation of state interventions should not be taken to imply state relinquishment of previous responsibilities for social services and regulation of threats to public welfare.

At the international level, the effort to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights will have to ensure that democracy is not simply equated with cosmetic achievements (e.g. elections). The principles of democracy (noted above) are hard to internalize for power contenders in any society, and self-anointed leaders or dominant minorities will continue to use a range of justifications to camouflage their determination to prevent opposition forces from emerging. By intensifying their interactions with a highly critical and diverse public opinion, international actors can overcome such mystification.

A more dominant set of institutions at the global level has been the array of intergovernmental lending agencies and multinational enterprises. In recent years many of them have been held responsible for mounting poverty and social exclusion; some of them are now striving to work out their own conceptions of social responsibility and to reconcile them with their economic imperatives. If there is to be any hope of coherency in the

formulation of norms for policies on social integration, their participation will be indispensable.

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September 1994

Dharam Ghai  
Director

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# part 1: the crises of legitimacy and responsibility

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## introduction

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In policy-oriented discourse, social integration means different things to different participants and cannot simply be regarded as an end to be maximized or prescribed for. The policy-relevant question is not how to increase integration per se, but how to distinguish patterns of integration conducive to more equitable and creative societies. The term “social integration” invites analysis of the concrete networks of relations and institutions that support or undermine the livelihood of people in given times and places.<sup>1</sup>

The processes of social integration, disintegration and reintegration work themselves out through a wide range of organizations and other structured arrangements or “institutions” from the international level to that of the family. These institutions embody traditions, rules and expectations; they can bestow on people complementary or alternative social identities. An equally wide range of social actors try to make use of these institutions for purposes of self-protection and advancement, and for stabilization, reform or transformation of the system.<sup>2</sup>

These institutions and actors are now experiencing major challenges to their legitimacy, representativeness and ability to carry out the tasks that have been traditionally expected of them or that are being thrust upon them in the world today. The symptoms obviously differ according to the type of institution and actor, as well as the country or region. However, globalization of economies and cultures and the associated phenomena of polarization and exclusion affect all of these institutions. This brief overview will summarize these challenges and assess responses. It will be hard not to overemphasize negative trends, since this evidence is more concrete and easier to generalize than information on the more localized, precarious seeds of positive change. Most institutions are however not doomed to disintegration nor actors to impotence: they will continue to adapt in ways that cannot satisfactorily be predicted or prescribed for. Actors will try to strengthen and harmonize the responsibilities of the whole range of institutions, though this effort is bound to combine short-term crisis

management and pursuit of parochial interests with broader visions of social integration.

This paper will focus both on evidence of real changes (innovations, adaptations, failures to adapt, breakdowns) in the institutions considered, and on how these changes are reflected in the ideologies, perceptions and demands upon or alienation from the institutions on the part of policy makers, theorists and the general public. In other words, the paper will consider how far these institutions are legitimate in the minds of the actors.

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## global institutions and actors

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### intergovernmental institutions

Since the creation of the United Nations family of organizations in the 1940s, the formal responsibilities of intergovernmental institutions have become continually broader and more diverse. They have tried to meet these responsibilities in the following ways:

- Setting international standards for human rights, social services and protection for vulnerable groups (especially for children).
- Laying down goals for economic and social development and the duties of states to contribute to globally equitable and sustainable development (e.g. the New International Economic Order).
- Technical co-operation and financial aid to help national societies to develop and to comply with global norms and goals.
- Systems of collecting, reporting and analysing statistical and other information, and evaluation missions focused on measurement of progress and exposure of deficiencies and inequities.
- Proclamation of “years” and “decades” and convening of global conferences designed to focus public attention on major problems and thus stimulate action by governments and other institutions.

In conjunction with many other factors facilitating global interactions, the above efforts have had major cumulative consequences. They have universalized norms and expectations of government responsibilities and created worldwide “communities” of political leaders, theorists, publicists

and experts engaged in discourse or offering advice on different dimensions of “development”. However, these efforts have obviously not led to the global equity and prosperity earlier envisaged. Economic growth, although dynamic according to conventional indicators in most of the world up to the 1970s or 1980s, widened rather than narrowed the gap between rich and poor countries, and between rich and poor within countries. Norms and prescriptions became devalued through their proliferation and detachment from real “development” processes at the national as well as the global level. Formal agreement on such norms and prescriptions produced little effective integration between intergovernmental organizations or even within such organizations. International discourse on development tended to be rhetorical, often avoiding discussion of the major problems. In the early 1970s, global proposals for “alternative development” focusing on democratic participation, self-reliance and satisfaction of basic human needs came to the fore. While these proposals influenced the discourse of the intergovernmental institutions, they had little concrete impact due to a lack of collective actors powerful and motivated enough to apply them.

With the 1980s, these intergovernmental institutions, considered as forces contributing to global social integration, encountered new challenges that have steadily increased in complexity. They have been hindered from responding to these challenges in a coherent way by the segmentation of their bureaucratic structures and formal responsibilities, as well as by the momentum and inertia of their past. At the same time, they are experiencing from governments and public opinion a contradictory combination of delegitimization and grudging material and moral support, on the one hand, and peremptory demands that they resolve major crises, on the other.

The Cold War waned in intensity and then disappeared, but has been replaced by a bewildering variety of struggles over power and identity within nation states, the building blocks of global institutions. It has become evident that a global economic order, and even a cultural order, have been emerging along lines quite different from previous norms and prescriptions for development. The debt crisis of the 1980s threw into relief the central suppositions of this new order concerning the virtues of free markets and the evils of state policy interventions. The responsibility for formulating new policy was placed upon three global institutions that had kept their distance from previous global normative endeavours: the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), along with *ad hoc* groupings of creditor countries and banks, in particular the Paris Club. Through the financial power of these institutions, new policies of stabilization and structural adjustment have been implemented in many countries under severe penalties of exclusion. The norms underlying these policies were at least partially endorsed by most other countries in the course of a worldwide ideological shift.

The new norms directly contradicted the previous conception of development as a process calling for a high degree of state planning, an

extensive public sector, and an array of social services and subsidies intended to promote social integration and equity. For a time, the new global order and the economic ideology that justified it practically ignored the question of social and political consequences or assumed that after a painful transition a healthy and generally accepted social order would follow upon the application of correct market-oriented economic policies. This is no longer true, at least at the level of institutional discourse. Attempted universalization of the new norms has had consequences at least as perverse as the attempted universalization of the previous state-managed development policy model. In many countries that otherwise have little in common, stabilization and structural adjustment policies have brought mass impoverishment and reactions threatening political and social disintegration.

In addition to the intergovernmental institutions discussed above, whose crises of legitimacy and responsibility reflect similar crises in the nation states that are their main interlocutors, several other types of institutions are active at the global level. One type of global institution consists of internationally organized religious movements, whose principles sometimes reinforce, sometimes contradict, the universalized norms advanced by institutions such as the World Bank. Another consists of movements organized around specific themes, such as the environment, gender equality or population control. A third consists of international alliances of political parties, workers' and farmers' unions, and other nationally based organizations linked by ideology or class interests. A fourth consists of international non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that mobilize and distribute financial and technical support for a wide variety of humanitarian and developmental activities. All these institutions, through criticizing and presenting alternatives to the present norms, contribute to the crisis of legitimacy and responsibility of the intergovernmental institutions. The main importance of these various types of organizations, however, is at the national or local level, as will be discussed later.

## transnational enterprises

One additional type of institution is having increasing influence at the global level, however. This is the complex of transnational financial, industrial, commercial and communications enterprises. This "institution" is made up of actors in intense competition with each other, whose positions are always precarious. It restricts the policy options that are accessible to all nation states as well as to the international system of organizations. Its actors engage in complex processes of bargaining and pressure vis-à-vis states and intergovernmental organizations. Through their creative-destructive competition for market shares and power, combined with a common understanding of the economic rules of the game, transnational enterprises are imposing "integration" on a world scale. Thus all peoples are continually impelled to transform their livelihood so as not to be excluded from this new

order. At least until recently, and in contrast to other global institutions and actors, transnational enterprises have demonstrated unlimited confidence in their own legitimacy and are eager to assume wider responsibilities in some areas and completely reject responsibility in others.

At present, however, these transnational enterprises may be entering their own crises of legitimacy and responsibility. First, the destructive element is beginning to predominate over the creative in their competition for market shares. An increasing number of the most prominent actors are experiencing financial difficulties and having to face the formidable imperatives for transformation, downsizing or merger.<sup>3</sup> Even the most successful national economies on which these enterprises are based — Germany and Japan — are in trouble. Second, public revelations of illegal or irresponsible tactics, corruption of state functionaries and politicians, and environmental damage, have brought into question the ways in which the enterprises have followed their own free-market rules of the game. Their present difficulties involve them in continual contradictions between their allegiance to free markets and their need for state backing to gain or preserve advantages. Third, there is a tendency to pursue higher productivity and lower costs by shifting production from country to country, and to develop technological and managerial innovations that result in fewer jobs. These changes can produce social and political resistance that may limit the enterprises' freedom of manoeuvre in unpredictable ways. Fourth, the legitimacy of one of the enterprises' major sources of profit, armaments, has been threatened through the ending of the Cold War.

Yet another dimension of crisis, for global as well as national and local institutions, has become the focus of public attention: the international "institutionalization" of criminal activities and of activities falling into the grey areas of the continually changing global economy. Previously nationally organized criminal networks or "mafias" have formed international links and diversified their activities by devising new trade routes for drugs, arms and other sources of gain. They have made use of new information and other technologies. They have taken advantage of deregulation and lowering of national barriers, and the competition of national financial institutions to attract funds; they have also used the numerous loopholes in international codes and national legislation to their advantage. In situations of national upheaval, in the former Soviet Union as well as in many poor countries, organized criminal networks with international ties have penetrated deeply into political and economic life. More broadly, they are affecting public perceptions of the legitimacy of the globalized economic order and how far free-market suppositions correspond to reality.

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## the nation state, nationalism and democracy

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In the modern world, the nation state has become the ultimate source of legitimacy both for intergovernmental institutions and for those within state boundaries. The present difficulties of many nation states particularly affect the legitimacy of intergovernmental institutions and exacerbate the “irresponsible” dimensions of globalization. These difficulties also limit the state’s capacity to act as arbiter between internal forces, and to apply generally accepted rules of the game weighted toward social integration and equity. The sources of state weakness are diverse, and naturally interact differently within individual states. Some of them go back to the origin of the modern system of states. Others involve quite recent and continually changing difficulties in coping with globalization.

The identification of “state” and “nation” has generated contradictions that have been noted since the nineteenth century when the great empires began to disintegrate. Doctrines arguing for “national communities” defined by common culture and historical traditions clashed with doctrines arguing for equal citizenship rights for all residents of a territorially defined state. These contradictions have grown in complexity with the increase in the number of cases in which statehood has preceded a sense of common identity and with the worldwide diffusion of ethnic self-assertiveness. The responsibilities of the modern state have widened, generating possibilities for discriminating between groups in the distribution of services, and access to public and private employment and political power. Policies aimed at cultural integration or obligatory use of a “national” language, whether through deliberate imposition by a dominant group or more indirectly through the universalized character of the welfare state, have often had consequences very different from their intentions, particularly in the education sector. Reactions have ranged from intransigent ethnic separatism to multiculturalism aiming at complete equality and mutual appreciation of cultural differences among all groups.

Pluralist democracy has become the main internationally recognized source of legitimacy of the state. While many national régimes function in flat contradiction to this norm, in recent years more than ever before it has come to correspond to reality, at least in the form of open political competition and contested elections. The universalization of norms for such democracy, including periodic elections and competing political parties, has obvious discrepancies with the weakness or absence in many countries of supportive institutions of civil society and with differing national traditions and expectations regarding political power. Even more important, however, the

extension of democratic choice has coincided with a shrinkage in the capacity of the state to respond to popular demands, most striking in the countries subject to structural adjustment policies, but evident almost everywhere.

While nation states, through intergovernmental organizations, have formally endorsed a very wide range of responsibilities beginning with the United Nations Charter, they have coupled this endorsement with rejection of any “interference in their internal affairs”. In other words, they have claimed to be the sole legitimate judges as to how and whether they are meeting their responsibilities. But this insistence on sovereignty has been breaking down in several ways, without any general clarification of a new division of responsibilities. First, regional pacts, especially the European Union, have specified more concrete joint responsibilities with common oversight and sanctions for violations. Second, in at least a few cases, sub-national units have entered into pacts across national frontiers, assuming common responsibilities not necessarily shared or endorsed by the states to which they belong. Third, policies of decentralization and privatization, associated with the crises of the welfare state and the developmental state, have meant that responsibilities are being transferred to sub-national units and to civil society. Some ethnic minorities, such as the native American peoples of the United States, have also assumed wide responsibilities for self-government and for preservation of their own culture and legal systems. While previously such transfers of responsibilities generally constituted forms of “indirect rule” that could be manipulated or revoked by the state, now in some cases it would be difficult for the state to reverse local or ethnic autonomy. Fourth, a good many states are losing a large measure of control over their internal affairs through political disintegration leading to the interposition of peace-keeping forces or through economic breakdown leading to a greater role being played by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Up to the 1980s, the welfare state, which was intended to provide comprehensive social services and protection to practically the whole population within national boundaries, was advancing in most of the richer capitalist countries. Elsewhere, the “real socialist” state or the developmentalist state promised to transform productive structures and raise income levels through planning, investment in the public sector, and services and subsidies for groups considered indispensable to the development effort. Since then, the welfare state and the developmentalist state have both run into multiple difficulties. The “real socialist” state too has been eclipsed both as a real phenomenon and as an inspiring conception of an alternative, more equitable system for the management of human affairs. In all types of state, while the need for a clear vision of what is happening and what the state can do about it is as compelling as ever, the relevance of state planning for the long term has become problematic. According to one formulation, it is an indispensable premise of democracy at the level of the nation state “that there is no final truth about what is good for society, belonging to the

domain of revelation or special knowledge, and that the only criterion for the public good is what the people, freely organized, will choose, not what some expert or prophet decrees on the basis of superior knowledge".<sup>4</sup> Even if one leaves aside this proposition, experience has shown that authoritarian régimes are no better at controlling the future than democracies.

The legitimacy of the modern state has suffered from perceived discrepancies between its ideal functioning and commitment to social integration, and the real behaviour of political and bureaucratic actors. The modern state has generally kept these discrepancies under control by enforcing norms for bureaucratic behaviour, although it has seldom been able to eliminate popular distrust of political opportunism and corruption, or bureaucratic rigidity and self-serving behaviour. Recent revelations of enormously expensive errors of governmental economic and environmental oversight and of institutionalized corruption, coming at a time of economic slowdown and insecurity, have threatened the legitimacy of political systems of many countries that seemed to have achieved a high degree of social integration and have strengthened the propensity of the majority to deny resources to the state. Here, however, the capacity for reform backed by democratic pressures is also substantial.

In much of the world, bureaucratic institutionalization and acceptance of democratic rules of the game are more precarious. There are several reasons for this. In some countries, rapid economic growth has been accompanied by globalization, so that the prizes to be obtained through alliances between powerful actors in the public and private spheres are particularly attractive and scruples few. In a large number of countries still struggling with debt and structural adjustment, political leaders and higher functionaries may be disillusioned or demoralized, aware that they have lost control over policy. Petty functionaries whose jobs are in danger and whose salaries have fallen below subsistence level may be desperate. In either case, for the majority of the people, even in countries that are formally democratic, their experience of contact with the state is likely to be one of bureaucratic unresponsiveness and arrogance at best, and of arbitrary extortion and intimidation at worst. This is nothing new, but fragmentary evidence in many countries suggests decreasing resignation and rising resentment among the powerless, associated with deepening impoverishment, exclusion from sources of livelihood, and deterioration or disappearance of the public services that previously helped to offset the negative aspects of contacts with the state. This resentment may be channelled into structured violent political struggle — as recently among the peasants of Chiapas, Mexico — but it may also find outlets in criminality or violence. State legitimacy then comes to depend on the channels through which the majority can achieve — and perceive — a real voice to defend their interests and personal security.

A monopoly on the legitimate use of violence has been one of the central attributes of the state. This monopoly is exercised through armed forces and police who have their own institutionalized conceptions of national security

and social integration. Their propensity to impose these conceptions on the state and civil society, or to advance their material interests under cover of these conceptions, is well known. Even in states in which the principle of civilian control is well established, the military, in alliance with arms suppliers and certain sectors of public opinion, generally constitute a powerful interest group. They are not easily assimilated into other sectors of state policy-making, nor are they subject to the usual criteria for allocation of resources. Elsewhere, if the legitimacy and representativeness of the state have been weak and contested by ideological, ethnic or religious sectarian forces, the role of the military has been much wider, ranging from veto power over governmental policy-making to assertion of a “right to rescue the nation from the politicians” through coups. In modern times, allegiance to one or the other camp in the Cold War or efforts to remain non-aligned and independent of these camps have shaped military conceptions of responsibilities. However, military régimes have also justified themselves as reformers purging corrupt and ineffective political systems, or as the only forces able to carry through determined development policies, ranging from the socialist to the neo-liberal.

Now the crises of legitimacy and responsibility of the nation state interact with crises particular to the armed forces and the police. The relatively clear-cut objectives and functions associated with the Cold War have disappeared. Military claims to a right to take over the state in the name of security, honesty and efficiency have not disappeared, but they have lost plausibility. Repeated demonstrations have shown that military régimes in general are no more capable of managing coherent development policies nor are they more free from corruption than civilian governments. The military almost everywhere faces popularly supported efforts by governments to reduce its size and allocation of resources. While these efforts have been orderly and cautious in many cases, in the former Soviet Union and some other areas, they have amounted to a collapse in the state’s ability to finance the military establishment. This has led to partial disintegration of the military and uncertainty concerning its future role. Military domination of states today usually signifies opportunistic defence of special privileges, or defence of a precarious *status quo* threatened by separatism or popular resistance to impoverishment.

In many of the states in which pluralist democracy has reasserted itself, the armed forces and particularly the police co-exist uneasily with civilian régimes. Public opinion may resent the way in which they used their monopoly on violence in the past and their links with certain ideologies and interests in internal struggles. Moreover, when military forces are reduced or purged without satisfactory alternatives for ex-soldiers, the result may be a dangerous augmentation of armed factions, private security guards, or bandits.

At the same time, the armed forces generally retain the capacity to serve as symbols of national integration and as channels for socialization of recruits

from different origins. They are beginning to enter into new kinds of global ties through participation in multinational peace-keeping forces. Their future will depend largely on whether democratic states can recuperate sufficient legitimacy and popular confidence to subordinate permanently the temptation of the military to substitute their own order for the apparent disorder of democracy.

To conclude, states throughout the world faced a rapid expansion of their responsibilities between the 1940s and the 1970s. This was matched by confidence, on the part of the political forces directing them, that they could meet these responsibilities through planning and through international financial and technical co-operation. To a large extent, these responsibilities were thrust upon states whose legitimacy and institutional development were weak and in which contending political forces had practically no experience. These states also had misleading ideological guides — populist, Marxist-Leninist or technocratic-developmental — through which to assess the requisites for effective policy-making and the limitations on action by even the best-organized state. International institutions themselves contributed as much to illusions and frustrations as to aid and guidance. More recently, the shortcomings of past state actions in pursuit of welfare and development have been used ideologically to discredit the state. The state has thus been made responsible for all that has gone wrong, and future initiatives toward regulation, planning and responsibility for social integration have been delegitimized in favour of exclusive reliance on private initiative and market forces.

This ideological rejection of the state can hardly triumph over the long term. However, ideological delegitimization, combined with popular disillusion, complicates the task of reassessing the essential state responsibilities. The emphasis needs to be on real national potential, policy-making and administrative capacities, and popular needs and aspirations, rather than on establishing global norms or dividing responsibilities with other institutions under conditions of simultaneous globalization and parochialization.<sup>5</sup>

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## political parties and movements

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Within pluralist democratic systems of government, political parties ideally contribute to social integration through competition, by structuring conflicts between classes, interest groups, internal regions and ideologies, so as to make demands negotiable. Parties present intelligible choices to the electorate, and universalize a sentiment of responsibility for the policies that are finally adopted. Obviously, parties in many national settings have had more ambitious or more parochial views of their functions. At the one extreme, parties based on mobilizing ideologies, claiming to be exclusive representatives of a vanguard class or of the national interest, have aspired to monopolize power by delegitimizing and suppressing political competition. Alternatively, as in Mexico, political leaders have tried to mediate between groups within single parties, thus achieving flexibility and broad representativeness while avoiding the divisiveness of party competition. At the other extreme, many parties have been little more than opportunistic alliances of local power holders for the division of public jobs and whatever other benefits could be obtained from the state's functions of regulation and distribution of services.

From the 1960s, many types of political parties declined as effective participants in political decision-making, with some exceptions that cannot be discussed here. The trend seemed to be towards "non-political" technocratic decision-making, often guided by the military or an "infallible" leader. Since then, the renewed advance of pluralist democracy has once again turned political parties into key institutions and actors. Their present roles in the crises of legitimacy and responsibility can be summed up as follows:

- One of their main difficulties is intrinsically linked to the shrinkage of resources and prestige of the state and the diffusion of state responsibilities to global and sub-national levels, to transnational private entities as well as to institutions of civil society. The state has been the main interlocutor of the parties. If it cannot allocate resources and regulate social relationships on the basis of negotiations and tests of strength between political parties, the parties will lose capacity to mobilize broad-based support and to discipline their elected representatives.
- The eclipse of the great exclusivist ideologies, in particular Marxism and Fascism, has made communication and negotiation between parties more feasible, including the parties that formerly adhered to exclusivist doctrines. Governing alliances have been formed that would have been unthinkable a few years ago. In many settings,

however, this means a drift toward the political centre, a common reluctance to take positions that might question the conventional economic wisdom and alarm investors or the military. The questions most likely to be evaded, then, are those central to the democratic representativeness of the parties: questions of impoverishment, social exclusion, withdrawal of state services from those most needing them, and the endlessly deferred question of agrarian reform.

- When parties are inhibited from promising major economic, social and political reforms to benefit the majority, or when their past promises are discredited by their actions once in office, the most promising issues for party mobilization become regionalist, ethnic, xenophobic or religious-sectarian. These issues tend to contribute to social disintegration more than the previous contests over prescriptions for development and distribution.
- Like the state, the parties are targeted by two lines of delegitimizing criticism: first, when it is argued that there is only one path to development, whether through free markets or through technocratic central planning, political choice becomes a dangerous illusion. Second, when it is argued that only the triumph of spontaneous and localized social movements can rescue humanity from a bankrupt delusion of “development”, national political parties must be dismissed as fostering false hopes about state capacity to provide solutions.

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trade unions,  
farmers' unions,  
co-operatives  
and other class or  
interest-group  
organizations

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In modern times in most countries, a wide range of national organizations have been brought into being to meet the needs of relatively large groups which are conscious of their common interests as wage-earners, producers, consumers or potential beneficiaries of state services. These people are confident that organization can help them defend their interests vis-à-vis identifiable adversaries, exploiters and allies. The strivings of such organizations are central to the patterns of conflict and consensus that

constitute social integration at the national level. Their effectiveness depends largely on a minimum of stability and predictability in sources of livelihood and in the political environment, and in recent years these factors have in general deteriorated, in both rich and poor countries. Deregulation of capital movements, along with globalization of production and marketing, make organization members subject more to remote and inexorable forces than to identifiable employers, landowners, money-lenders and bureaucrats. Productivity-enhancing technological changes in industry and agriculture, while challenging how innovative and adaptable part of the labour force can be, erode job security for all and expel increasing numbers from any prospect of steady employment. The labour force becomes increasingly informalized and geographically mobile, meaning many more people are beyond the reach of traditional large-scale organizations. With the retreat of the welfare state and developmental state, these organizations are no longer central to pressuring the state to regulate working conditions, promoting job creation, subsidizing consumer prices and insuring against unemployment and other contingencies. Their financial resources from membership dues shrink as members lose qualifying employment status or become alienated by the organizations' ineffectiveness in defending their interests. This leads to an inhibiting quest for funds from sympathetic organizations in the richer countries or other sources.

Under these circumstances, the organizations' crisis of responsibility pushes them in two incompatible directions: towards a socially integrating defence of broad popular interests and towards a socially divisive defence of acquired group status. They can seek, on the one hand, to cope with globalization by forming closer ties with counterparts across national boundaries, to intervene more broadly in national politics questioning the style of development; to defend the broader interests of the unorganized; and to find means of mobilizing the excluded and precariously employed. On the other hand, they can engage in rearguard actions to block economic and social changes that affect the immediate interests of their members. Like the political parties that are among their main interlocutors in advancing social demands, they are unable to formulate a convincing vision of the future to replace ideologies now in eclipse.

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## issue-oriented organizations

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While the long-established class and interest-group organizations have, for the most part, declined in representativeness and influence in recent years, national organizations and movements concentrating on specific social and political issues have gained, both in size and in the range of issues addressed. Here affiliation depends on values and convictions concerning threats to society, rather than on defence of the livelihood of members or elaborating prescriptions for social and economic development. These issue-oriented organizations have transformed political discourse, particularly in the industrial or post-industrial countries and to an increasing extent throughout the world.

Many of these organizations focus on issues stemming from shortcomings of the dominant style of development — as in the cases of environmental degradation and poverty, or on issues of domination and discrimination, in particular, gender and ethnic inequalities. Here the significant organizations, although differing in strategy and competing for membership and funds, are positioned on one side of the issue. Their opposition is powerful, but hidden and evasive, fuelled by economic incentives, societal apathy, or reluctance to pay for the reforms called for, or generally unavowed prejudices. The organizations thus find acceptance for their arguments and are able to introduce their concerns into political party programmes, laws and state budgetary allocations.

Other issues confront two equally convinced organized adversaries whose positions have moral or ideological roots that admit no compromise. The most conflictive issue in many countries centres on the legalization of abortion. Elsewhere, the conflict is between organized supporters of secular concepts of human rights and freedoms, on the one side, and believers in state enforcement of religious or ideological conformity, on the other. Throughout the foreseeable future, struggles of this kind are bound to put pressure on the capacity of the states and legal systems to arbitrate.

In relation to the more general case of the organizations described above, their share in the crisis of legitimacy and responsibility involves the following dimensions:

- Overloading the state and civil society with urgent problems competing for attention threatens the already precarious capacity to choose and act.
- The universalization of diagnoses and prescriptions for questions that require more localized information and action.

- The propensity of political and economic systems to absorb or pervert innovations forces on the issue-oriented organizations an endless task of mobilization and pressure to keep achievements from slipping away. In the necessary process of building coalitions, the original issue orientation is likely to become diluted or be subordinated to other preoccupations of partners. The organization may be co-opted by political parties, or itself evolve into a political party, as in the case of the Greens.
- The precarious representativeness of the organizations, which generally consist of a small core of professionals, a larger circle of active members, and a much wider but less committed following that may fluctuate or turn its attention to different issues, depending on their response to sensational events or their fatigue. With organizational growth come the problems of bureaucratization and divergent interests between the core and the wider following. In principle, the issue-oriented organizations try to enlist the support of all strata of societies. In practice, their followings generally come from groups sufficiently above the struggle for subsistence to be able to devote time and resources to issues not impinging directly on their livelihood. While many of the organizations focus on the problems of poverty and social exclusion, few of them have leaders and activists emerging from among the disadvantaged, and their distrust of the ideologies of social transformation rules out the utopian visions that previously mobilized wide support from these social strata.

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## religious movements

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Not long ago, the crises of legitimacy and responsibility of religious movements seemed to derive mainly from the long-term trend of secularization of states and civil societies. Religious movements first lost the support of the state in enforcing their own conceptions of social integration, then lost the ability to control their congregations. In many cases, aggressively secular states went a long way to control and delegitimize the activities of religious bodies, believing them incompatible with their own ideologies of national integration. More recently, the trend toward secularization seems to have reversed itself in contradictory ways, with associated strains in relations between religious movements, the state and civil society. The resurgence of religion as a source of group identity and a means of making sense of disintegrative social change is taking many forms with quite different implications for future patterns of social integration:

- The trend that has attracted the most attention and generated the most uneasiness has been summed up in the term “fundamentalism”. It has manifested itself in all the major world religions, but with particular force in Christianity and Islam. Naturally, sects within these faiths differ as to what is “fundamental”. The key characteristic is insistence on conformity to a given orthodox doctrine, with precise implications for personal lifestyles. If adherents to the religion in question are a majority, they believe that the state and legal system have a duty to enforce orthodoxy. If they are a minority, the state and legal system are believed to have a duty to refrain from any interference in orthodox practices or controls over the congregation. In some cases, the fundamentalist movement is aggressively proselytizing and intolerant of the presence of other faiths. Fundamentalism can obviously be a force for social integration if the overwhelming majority of a national population assents and finds it a refuge from insecurity, but it can become a force for disintegration if its demands are resisted by rival faiths or by a secular state. It has also been argued that Islamic fundamentalism is, in fact, “a form of populist mobilization ... against foreign influence and a failed political establishment”, taking a religious form partly “because the failed régimes have been trying to modernize under **secular**, nationalist ideologies”.<sup>6</sup> Aggressive fundamentalism, under this interpretation, arises from the institutional crises of legitimacy and responsibility.
- The diametrically opposite trend among the major religions is toward ecumenicism, multiculturalism and openness regarding the whole range of issues mentioned in the preceding pages. Here the crises involve struggles within religious hierarchies over how receptive they are to modernization, the difficulties in securing congregational consensus on reforms, uneasiness in coping with the assault of fundamentalism, and problems in exercising a “preferential option for the poor”.
- Important movements within the major religions have gone further in affirming the need for revolutionary social transformations in favour of the poor and excluded, through “liberation theology”, “consciousness raising” and organization of Christian base communities. These movements have probably lost some dynamism in very recent years through disapprobation from hierarchies, the general eclipse of revolutionary utopias, and sometimes because of repression by the state. Nevertheless, they continue to be significant actors, challenging the dominant patterns of modernization as radically as do fundamentalists.
- Among social groups suffering most from the excluding traits of the dominant style of development, strictly “otherworldly” religious movements seem to have rising appeal. Such movements reject

political action and have little to do with the fundamentalist insistence on orthodox belief and behaviour, or “liberationist” insistence on participatory struggle towards a just social order. They range from large international sects under charismatic leadership to tiny localized congregations, seeking direct relationships with the divine. Various observers have pointed to how their political conformism and resignation to poverty are important sources of stability in otherwise conflictive societies.

- Lastly, an even more heterogeneous category of faiths must be mentioned, to some extent corresponding to the label “New Age”. Doctrines from many sources, ancient and very modern, are combined as reactions to the general ferment in societies and as sources of faith. Some movements in this category are diversely linked to discourse on multiculturalism, challenges to the hegemony of “Western” culture, feminism, etc. Minorities among highly educated youth are attracted to some, while minorities among socially excluded and marginal groups are drawn to others.

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## educational institutions

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During the past half-century, the continual expansion of formal education has been one of the most important dimensions of social change throughout the world. Governments and peoples have seen education as a key means to social integration, modernization and mobility. Education has served these purposes but at the same time has remained a powerful instrument for discrimination and exclusion. At present, education faces a combination of old and new challenges and unsolved problems that place it at the forefront of the crises of legitimacy and responsibility.

Education has come to absorb a high proportion of most states’ budgets and has developed complex bureaucratic structures, norms and social expectations that are resistant to change, particularly when consensus on priorities is lacking. Since the 1980s, public educational institutions have faced the reluctance or inability of state or local authorities to meet rising demands or even, particularly in the case of countries subject to structural adjustment policies, to maintain previous levels of support. The impacts of these policy shifts have varied according to the level of education concerned. Primary schooling had come closer to universalization, at least in quantitative terms of enrolment, than any other public social service. Now quality if not coverage has fallen. Poorly paid teachers have deserted the profession in thousands, or have devoted most of their time to pursuing other

sources of income. School supplies are even scantier than before. These shortcomings have generally affected rural schools, already poorly supported, more than urban. Meanwhile, children's performance has been affected by poverty and family breakdown, and the schools are less able than before to offer services, such as school meals, that might help. In the richer countries, educational deterioration has not been so widespread or dramatic, but even in many of these the ability of the public schools to accomplish their minimum traditional tasks of imparting literacy and numeracy is declining at the same time that threats to social integration have meant that many schools have taken on responsibilities in the social as well as the educational sphere.

Due to social pressure, higher education has expanded even more dynamically and made larger claims on public resources than elementary and intermediate education. In many countries, higher education was offered free of fees even before the achievement of universal elementary education. For a time, this trend supported the rapid growth of the salaried middle strata. However, the poor quality of mass higher education and its divorce from "developmental" employment opportunities generally placed heavy pressures on the public sector as last resort employers of the university graduates. It also made the student population a particularly volatile group in politics, through their radical challenges to the power structure and interest-group demands for easier access to education and jobs. More recently, economic downturns and shrinking of state responsibilities have impacted on the already precarious systems of higher education in several ways. Allocations to public universities have declined, mainly through inflation, with obvious implications for staff salaries and equipment. Universities have therefore come under heavy pressure to charge fees and be more selective over enrolment. At the same time, students from working class or lower-middle class homes are less able to meet their subsistence costs while studying. Public sector and other white-collar jobs, previously the justification for public university studies, have also become less available and attractive.

Meanwhile, fee-charging private higher institutions have expanded rapidly in numbers and enrolment to meet the demand of groups able to pay for their education (although these private institutions commonly enjoy some degree of public subsidy). While these institutions differ widely in quality and clientele, some of them are able to supply most of the market for the newer technological professional and managerial specializations. Fee-charging secondary schools, whether public or private, act as a mechanism by which educational opportunities are disproportionately distributed to the upper classes. With the increasing importance of fee-charging higher institutions, this stratifying characteristic of the educational system has become more pronounced.

In general, the contribution of educational systems to social integration during the years of rapid expansion was uneven and contradictory. However

these systems did generate considerable mobility and probably a sense of potential, even among groups whose real possibilities of betterment through the education offered were small. At present, access has become more visibly discriminatory, and the relevance of much of the education offered, either to social integration or to individual livelihood, has become problematic. While new demands are being made on educational systems, the latter also seem to be losing ground in carrying out their traditional functions. Some of the new demands require more public resources, in the face of public resistance to higher taxes in some countries and the absolute inability of the state to mobilize more resources in others. Some demands centre on questions involving deeply rooted disagreements that are present within societies:

- Policies of decentralization and diversification of education, creating wider scope for private and community educational initiatives, are justifiable and unavoidable within broader shifts in responsibilities between the state and the civil society. Such changes, however, do not obviate the need for maintaining international as well as national standards and for subsidies to equalize educational quality between the better-off and poorer communities. In many countries, the gap between opportunities for educational advancement among youth from different social strata has widened dangerously. Efforts to reverse this trend risk falling back into underfinanced and mass higher education followed by “spurious” employment — the pattern marking past educational expansion.
- Schools in the more prosperous countries have for some time been expected to substitute for disintegrating families in the socialization of youth, including norms for sexual behaviour. The socialization of violence-prone and sexually active teenagers in the cities has become an intractable problem. They have become increasingly marginalized from gainful employment except for activities such as drug trafficking and prostitution. Policies up to the present seem to have been relatively ineffective in contending with peer group standards and other influences and have aroused bitter controversy. Schools in the poorer countries, while facing equivalent behaviour problems, have rarely tried to deal with them systematically.
- Migrations, increased ethnic self-assertiveness and religious fundamentalism have presented school systems with several irreconcilable demands: that they impose a uniform national cultural identity and penalize deviance from it, that they permit minority cultural or religious identities to keep themselves separate, or that they promote maximum mutual understanding and interaction between cultures on a basis of equality. All the possible solutions of compulsory integration, the right to self-exclusion, and multiculturalism have strong supporters on both sides. The task of

formulating educational policy is thus likely to be complicated by these opposing views throughout the foreseeable future.

- The emergence of a global “information economy” has created the need for greater scientific and technological content in education, preparing youth to cope with accelerating changes in all aspects of livelihood and social intercourse, and teaching through advanced information technologies such as computers. The information revolution is already transforming some educational systems. Elsewhere the gap between demands and actualities is so wide that it is hard to see how the schools can cope. The only solution would be to restrict the new techniques to minorities, thus intensifying social exclusion and eroding the legitimacy of the system for the majorities excluded. Discussions of the information economy commonly assume a future of intense competition for access between countries and between groups within countries; failure to respond to the challenge implies backwardness.<sup>7</sup>

The rapidity of change magnifies the problem for educational systems. A very large investment in the latest techniques would be outmoded within a few years, and future demands for specialization cannot be confidently predicted. At the same time, the rapidity of changes introduces important advantages for appropriately educated youth over their elders in the labour force. This could place another future strain upon social integration.

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## information systems and media

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Humanity is entering into an “information economy” or an “information age” according to various recent diagnoses. One salient aspect of this information age is “the ever-growing role played by the manipulation of symbols in the organization of production and in the enhancement of productivity”.<sup>8</sup> The implication for educational systems has been mentioned above. More broadly, this transformation goes hand in hand with economic globalization, since the “manipulation of symbols” is not restricted by the location of natural resources or material infrastructure. Unprecedented and continually changing relationships are introduced between systems of production, distribution and consumption, on the one hand, and requirements for human labour, on the other. If institutions are sets of rules that structure interactions among actors who share knowledge of these rules,<sup>9</sup> it is evident that in information systems, even more than in other areas, change is

outrunning institutionalization. States or enterprises now have to cope with the problem of large numbers of people or even whole countries that are excluded from the information economy.

Other dimensions of the information age are equally important from this standpoint. People throughout the world have access to more varied information (and misinformation) than ever before. Meanwhile, the requisites for keeping up with the information revolution become more formidable, both because of the dizzying rapidity of changes in media — from printed press to radio to television to videotapes to computer networks to super highways — and because of the diversity of messages. People from all classes and backgrounds are in a sense unable to grasp the implications of the scientific, technological, economic, political, cultural, demographic and environmental transformations of the world today. This is despite being continually bombarded by presentations, interpretations and warnings about these changes, accompanied by stimuli to consume. While the distribution of sources of information is highly uneven, some modern media penetrate even remote and “traditional” rural communities.

The information age means very different things to different groups of people. For some people, the information age means an unprecedentedly wide range of choices in lifestyles, gender and age-group identifications; an equally wide range of causes can be fought for, so as to achieve a sense of influencing change and warding off specific menaces. For other people, it has brought an unprecedented range of possible survival strategies, all of them subject to unforeseeable risks. It offers vicarious satisfaction in the form of exhaustive information on sports events or the private lives of celebrities. Particularly among disadvantaged urban youth, it may bring frustration and resort to xenophobic protests against exclusion. Contradictory reactions to the flood of unsettling information — some time ago labelled “future shock” — obviously impinge on the legitimacy and responsibility of all the institutions discussed here.<sup>10</sup>

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## non- governmental organizations

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This category of organizations, generally referred to by the acronym NGO, overlaps with the interest-group organizations, issue-oriented organizations and religious movements. Any of these may act as NGOs in the sense intended here, or may create NGOs of their own. NGOs are distinguished by their purposes of funding, stimulating, advising and administering economic and social activities focusing on the disadvantaged. The target groups may be rural communities, the urban poor, refugees, migrants, women, or children and youths. While the major NGOs are organized internationally or nationally, with the latter acting as conduits for funds and technical services from the former, their activities are localized and call for interaction with “grassroots organizations”. These organizations are either spontaneous and pre-existing or brought into being by the specific activity.

In recent years, NGOs have achieved enhanced legitimacy, self-confidence and wider responsibilities for several reasons. The worsening of the problems of poverty, exclusion and uprooting of populations has brought them increased funding, including funding from governments of the more prosperous countries, intergovernmental lending agencies and even multinational corporations.<sup>11</sup> The shrinkage of state resources and discrediting of bureaucratized state services in the poorer countries has in some cases meant that NGOs are the last option for meeting the needs previously considered the responsibility of the state. Their claims of flexibility, innovativeness and, above all, ability to enlist popular participation through grassroots organizations, have strengthened hopes for their evolution into a major force for social development and integration.<sup>12</sup>

Thus, the main question concerning NGOs’ relation to the broader crises of legitimacy and responsibility is their ability to justify the hopes vested in them. The organizations and situations to which they address themselves are too diverse for confident generalizations. However, a number of problems are evident and are now under discussion within as well as outside the NGOs:

- With rapid growth and the need to organize increasing numbers of projects to justify funding, NGOs become as susceptible as other organizations to bureaucratization, self-aggrandizement and imposition of standardized solutions. The claim that NGO projects are more innovative and staff more dedicated and responsive to local circumstances then becomes less likely to be true.

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- As NGOs become more prominent, they encounter stronger pressures towards co-optation by states or by sources of funds, on the one side, and temptations towards overambitious visions of their own potential, on the other. However, the hopes vested in NGOs seem to derive as much from the ideological discrediting of state capacities as from their own achievements. There is no plausible alternative to the state having a leading role in mobilizing resources and setting standards for the major social service and developmental programmes, whatever the degree of decentralization and reliance on local initiative.
  - The key terms used by NGOs to sum up their distinctive approaches, while attractive as slogans, are used in ways that do not contribute to clear thinking on what is really being done and what can be done.<sup>13</sup>
  - The NGO emphasis on interactions with “grassroots organizations” may mean very different things according to the setting. In some countries and regions, grassroots organizations are vigorous and quite prepared to engage NGOs on equal terms, while also frequently involving them in conflicts with authorities or with other organized groups in local power structures. In other countries, population disruption or repression hinders the formation of authentic grassroots organizations. Elsewhere grassroots organizations are precarious creations of NGOs or come into being simply to take advantage of NGO aid.

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local  
communities,  
grassroots  
organizations  
and social  
movements

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As the capacity of broader organizations and institutions to respond to present challenges comes into question, the actual and potential roles of communities and other groupings receive increased attention. At this level, the expectations of political leaders, administrators, theorists and activists derive from diverse conceptions of development and social integration, as well as from opportunistic expedients to evade or put off the crisis of responsibility.

Communities and the other groupings in question differ widely from one another just as widely within specific social settings and most of them are now undergoing traumatic changes in representativeness and functions. They include elected local administrations and sometimes traditional “tribal” authority systems that are gaining wider formal responsibilities. They also include many kinds of localized associations — some of long standing, others very recent and possibly ephemeral — based on neighbourhoods, livelihoods, gender, religion, sports and other sources of self-identification. All of them are struggling with their own urgent need to adapt or perish. All of them are confronting interlocutors, middlemen, would-be allies as well as would-be exploiters, that are striving to invest them with new responsibilities, introduce them to new ways of life, and make use of them for purposes that may or may not coincide with their own perceived needs. While there have been numerous investigations into these groups’ struggles and contradictory relations with allies and exploiters, this is an insecure basis for generalization on the kaleidoscopic global scene.

For present purposes, one can distinguish three general approaches to local communities, grassroots organizations and social movements among the interlocutors described above. All of these approaches have a number of variants:

- First, intergovernmental organizations, national governments and some NGOs that accept the desirability or inevitability of globalized capitalist development and structural adjustment see decentralization and privatization as means of transferring to local administrations and organizations of the civil society responsibilities that the state cannot afford or handle efficiently. The devolution of unfunded responsibilities can be labelled rather euphemistically “empowerment”. Local groups can also help to transfer aid and advice leading to active participation in the market economy. This approach commonly identifies the target groups as “communities”.
- Second, some other intergovernmental organizations, departments of national governments, and issue-oriented organizations see local associations as a means for reforming the dominant style of development by helping the disadvantaged to defend themselves against its excesses, bringing basic health and education services into closer correspondence with real needs and wants, combating abuses such as ethnic and gender discrimination and, above all, mobilizing popular understanding and action concerning threats to the environment. This approach is linked particularly to conceptions of grassroots organizations. It assumes that such organizations — with aspirations compatible with those of the interlocutors — are emerging spontaneously but that external help and advice can widen their scope, defend them against their enemies and enable them to accomplish much more than if left to themselves.

- Third, several schools of theorists and activists, some building on religious doctrines, others seeking to fill the gap left by the mobilizing myths of the recent past, see mounting human suffering, alienation, and future catastrophe in the trends and policies of globalized “development”. They pin their hopes on the emergence of a new social order from the various survival strategies, networks of reciprocity in production and services, collective defences of cultural identity, and other forms of resistance among the groups exploited by or excluded from the dominant style of “development”. The proponents of this approach generally prefer the term “social movements”, insisting on the spontaneity of these movements and the futility of devising blueprints for the social order that will emerge from their struggles. They also commonly deny any constructive role to interlocutors and allies of the movements. However, the definition of “social movement” may become so inclusive that some movements (e.g. of women or environmental activists) come into being precisely to help more disadvantaged and localized groups to become movements.<sup>14</sup>

The interactions between the supposedly participatory arrangements labelled “communities”, “grassroots organizations”, “support networks”, “social movements”, etc., on the one hand, and their very different kinds of interlocutors, on the other, will no doubt continue to have contradictory and precarious outcomes. As long as the global order continues to generate exclusion as well as new patterns of integration, and as long as broader institutions, in particular the nation state, do not achieve a more adequate consensus on their responsibilities, these groupings will have great difficulties in demonstrating effectiveness to their members as well as to their interlocutors. This is the case despite the fact that they may be the only alternatives to despair or complete individualism. One alternative, evident in many parts of the world, is to change the subject from livelihood and mutual aid to ethnic exclusivism, xenophobia and fundamentalist or otherworldly religious preoccupation.

Finally, some differences in the kinds of groupings considered here deserve mention:

## communities

Governments began to assign economic and social responsibilities to “communities” in the community development programmes that flourished during the 1950s. From that time on, simplistic suppositions that communities are cohesive units that can readily be mobilized to meet these responsibilities have persisted, despite much field research and many programme evaluations demonstrating that reality is more complex. Membership in the more stable communities, unlike membership in most

other local groupings, is not voluntary but depends on birth or marriage into the community. Communities are made up of people who perpetually negotiate ways of living together. They are rarely egalitarian or given to unlimited reciprocity. Decision-making is more often than not in the hands of a minority able to control key resources, such as land, and which monopolizes the use of violence, usually in alliance with local functionaries of the state. Social peace typically depends on acceptance of the traditional distribution of power and avoidance of issues that might bring conflict out into the open. Both the changing economic and political environment and the assignment of new responsibilities and resources by state agencies and NGOs help to disintegrate the pre-existing cohesion. This disintegration may well be a precondition for a different pattern of integration. Either the community leaders monopolize the resources, to the resentment of the majority, or new forms of voluntary “grassroots” association emerge to compete for resources.

Stable local communities in which a contest over power and resources can work itself out in this way are now exceptional, even in remote rural areas. One pattern of change, studied in an area of India, could be duplicated in many parts of the world. Here, the landowning élite has practically divorced itself from community participation and joined the global society. Its members travel abroad, watch United States television programmes and send their children to city universities. The middle strata also look outside, relying more on contract work in the Gulf states than on local sources of income. The village poor, unable to subsist by agricultural work alone, are mobile too, moving to and from the cities in search of casual wage labour. They are increasingly aware and resentful of their impoverishment and exclusion. In such settings, the possibility of community responsibility has nearly disappeared. Grassroots organization of the poor for self-help and reciprocity is not much more practicable, in view of their complete exclusion from land or other resources and their need to keep moving in search of subsistence (the researcher labelled them “wage hunter-gatherers”).<sup>15</sup> Massive social movements rejecting the existing order, along the lines envisaged in the third approach summarized above, are more conceivable but likely to focus on symbolic targets of frustration and to end in renewed exclusion.

A study of a town in north-east Brazil, on the other side of the world, gives a similar picture: of a “modern” upper class operating in a “world of commercial ventures, finance, interest, travel, newspapers, documents, legality, bureaucracy, rationality”; of an aggressive and insecure middle class continually “scrambling” to achieve symbols of affluence; and of a remainder that is seen from above as an undifferentiated mass of “the poor”. They are barely surviving through casual labour, illiterate, with survival tactics including “individually negotiated relations of dependency on myriad political and personal bosses in town”, but inhibited from collective action by many years of helplessness in the face of arbitrary repression.<sup>16</sup>

Other patterns of change, of course, are less bleak, but most of them point to de-localization of participatory ties and “de-responsibilization”<sup>17</sup> for local collective needs through migration, urbanization and universal exposure to the global consumer culture in the mass media. Meanwhile, bases for new and broader networks of participatory solidarity are still embryonic. The information age is bound to offer unprecedented opportunities for global interchanges and mobilizations but the forms these opportunities will take and the outcomes of their clashes with other demobilizing and mystifying functions of global communications can hardly be foreseen.<sup>18</sup>

## grassroots organizations

While no more consistently defined in current discourse than communities, grassroots organizations are generally understood to comprise groups within communities or across communities, constituted at least partly by their members’ choice, in pursuit of common interests. Thus, rural grassroots organizations may be made up of the village poor, tenants, women, or people threatened by activities of the state or private enterprise, such as dam construction or deforestation. Urban organizations may also be made up of small producers in the informal sector, street vendors, or homeless people attempting collective land occupations. Grassroots organizations generally function more through consensus and reciprocity than through hierarchical leadership. Joining or leaving these organizations is relatively easy. Here the questions most relevant for present purposes are the following:

- Their representativeness among the hundreds of millions of people needing collective action cannot be estimated with any confidence. Most of them seem to be short-lived and fluctuate in membership, compared to more structured organizations such as trade unions. While sympathetic observers argue that their numbers and capacity to benefit their members are increasing, it seems probable that in most settings only small minorities among the poor and excluded have organizational ties at any one time.
- Most of their activities are defensive, calculated to achieve small gains in livelihood, ward off threats, stretch inadequate resources through mutual aid, and take advantage of whatever resources are offered by state agencies or NGOs. These tactics can hardly add up to major gains in livelihood or social integration in the face of disintegrating transformations in their economic, political and informational settings, unless — as some ideologists argue — the global order is about to disintegrate altogether, leaving grassroots organizations as building blocks of a “new society of castaways”.
- Grassroots organizations face a permanent tension between their needs for autonomy in solving their own problems and their dependence on

aid and protection from the state and NGOs. The ideas of grassroots organizations concerning their own identity, their place within societal transformations, the meaning of “empowerment”, etc., are bound to derive in large part from external interlocutors. They may therefore be confronted with choices between radically different interlocutors, or be led to conformism with the vocabulary of the most promising sources of aid.<sup>19</sup>

- The leaders and interlocutors of grassroots organizations include not only altruistic sources of aid and activists trying to raise people’s consciousness or fit them into visions of a new society, but also mobilizers who are acting for personal advantage, to create clientelistic obligations, or to broaden the following of a political party. Grassroots organizations are thus vulnerable to exploitation and intimidation. In many settings, the more authentic organizations are deeply anti-political due to distrust of the corruption and arbitrariness of state functionaries and political party machines. They cannot expect to be left alone by local and national power structures once they are seen to be potential assets or threats. Political participation may then become necessary for safeguarding the internal purposes of the organization. However, to the extent that the organization is localized and made up of the disadvantaged, its political participation will be vulnerable to manipulation or dangerous to its members.

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## part 2: rethinking social integration, assuming responsibilities

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### the challenge

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The different dimensions of globalization, advancing unevenly and interacting with political and cultural reactions and adaptations, are likely to continue to have diverse and contradictory consequences that can be influenced but not controlled through international and national policies and institutions. In striving for valid and constructive generalizations, one can identify several pitfalls and fallacies in the extensive scholarly discourse on social integration. These pitfalls represent exaggerations of legitimate preoccupations and attempts to interpret and find value-oriented solutions to real dilemmas.

There is the pitfall of “technocratic triumphalism” or confidence that the One Right Answer has been found. Previously evident in claims for development planning, this attitude can now be seen in the exclusive reliance on market forces to solve all problems, or in visions of an “information age” rendering obsolete all previous social institutions and human relationships. The opposite of this attitude is that of “catastrophist condemnation” of all the processes now dominant. Environmental collapse is predicted, as is the “war of all against all”, the breakdown of existing institutions in the face of new social movements, with “societies of castaways” possibly surviving. Intergovernmental as well as voluntary issue-oriented organizations are particularly susceptible to “utopian normalization”. This pitfall refers to uniform norms, declarations of rights and “plans of action” being applied to the infinitely varied and continually changing real processes of social integration and disintegration.

The history of the twentieth century should warn against the dangers of extrapolating present trends into the long-term future. Expectations at the beginning of one decade have continually been confounded by the realities of the next. Extrapolation is justified and unavoidable as a means of calling attention to apparently non-sustainable environmental, demographic or distributional conjunctures. However, the major phenomena of globalization, institutional change, and so forth make it advisable to combine such extrapolations with a predisposition to “expect the unexpected”. The approach to social integration taken here thus strives to be sensitive to the

changing visibility of “major problems” and the tendency for integrative “solutions” to become problems in their turn.

This approach accepts a permanent tension between adherence to universal values, realism concerning the limits of human rationality and political processes, respect for democratic choice and searching for the practical means of making this democratic choice more widely accessible. It focuses attention on factors that diminish responsibility for choice and action, on the part of institutions and actors (collective as well as individual). This may be through adherence to doctrines legitimizing only one solution, thus making choice irrelevant or self-defeating; or through resignation, passivity or opportunism in the face of processes of change that seem irresistible as well as unintelligible. This approach demands a renewed effort at many levels to assume responsibilities for making human relationships contribute to well-being, equity, solidarity and creativity. Such an effort requires historical awareness of institutional development and cultural differentiation, strengthening understanding of the sources of present crises and pointing to lessons from past illusions.

It is justifiable to argue that more extensive and up-to-date information supporting sounder explanations is needed for this purpose and that social research institutes have a valuable role to play. Here again, however, contradictions emerge. It is evident that social institutions and actors today are unable to digest satisfactorily the abundant information (and misinformation) already deluging them or to act upon the theories and prescriptions that social scientists draw from this information. Availability of information is not the only element in making crises visible and encouraging action. It would even appear that, while information has continually become more comprehensive and widely diffused, knowledge of the dimensions and intractable nature of problems has led to cycles of urgent concern followed by resignation and avoidance.

If one looks at responsibilities for social integration in the terms proposed above, it is obviously essential to identify as precisely as possible the agents who are to assume these responsibilities. Commonly, however, international discourse either completely avoids doing this, or uses identifications so vague or sweeping that they carry no meaning in the real world. Examples of these techniques of evasion are the use of the passive voice (e.g. “Such-and-such a policy **must be** carried out”) and of the first person plural (e.g. “**We** must do thus and thus” — where “we” sometimes seems to include the whole human race, sometimes all persons of good will, sometimes a public that the author is scolding for not having behaved as it should). According to another ineffective formula, **countries** must assume the responsibilities in question. In terms of real action, however, countries are unsatisfactory interlocutors, made up of institutions and actors with many different purposes and varying openness to ideas of social integration. “Growing awareness” and “increasing recognition” are among the most venerable and overworked formulas in discourse on social policy questions. They generally

express the user's hope of lending an aura of consensus to his or her conviction that something ought to be done. In the absence of identifiable agents, however, recognition may lead to an evasive or ritualistic response.

Formulas that relate responsibilities to institutions — intergovernmental organizations; the complex of transnational enterprises; states and their governments; class, interest-group, religious and issue-oriented organizations; communities and grassroots groupings — are still prone to overgeneralization. Reasoned conjectures can at least be made as to whether the institution in question can assume specified responsibilities and under what conditions it can do so. One must inquire further and take into account the very wide differences between and within institutions of a given type and the likelihood that superficially similar institutions can have quite different roles according to the settings in which they appear. It is also possible that institutions (or the actors within them) are continually changing, sometimes receptive to given responsibilities, sometimes not. A survey such as this cannot enter very far into these questions, and so risks leaving a picture of complexities and contradictions baffling to the actors seeking clear scripts for their roles.

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## the state and democracy

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During the past four decades, an unprecedented world system has taken shape consisting of more than 180 independent states differing enormously one from another in almost every conceivable respect. They are, however, formally equal in the right to control their internal affairs and at the same time formally committed to performing certain responsibilities vis-à-vis their people that are laid down by the intergovernmental organizations to which most of them belong.

As this system has evolved over the years, several elements have continually contradicted its codified suppositions: the economic and political dominance of the forces controlling the larger and wealthier states; the struggles deriving from the Cold War; the incongruities between the model of “nation state” and the ethnic, cultural or religious heterogeneity of the populations of many real states; and the exercise of power by self-serving and self-appointed élites based on wealth, bureaucratic control of the state machinery or armed forces. In the recent past, some of these contradictions have become less constraining, but others have become more so. Economic and informational globalization has reduced the previously precarious capacity of national governments to make policy choices. This capacity has been further threatened by the diversification of social and cultural self-

identification and striving for local or group autonomy. In some cases, government preoccupations have been narrowed as they concentrate on repressing these struggles. The populist, nationalist and socialist ideologies that gave shape to the policies of many states have become discredited, and so has the concept of “development” as a process that can be managed or planned by the state. The technocratic and bureaucratic machinery built up by most states to meet their responsibilities is either undergoing major reforms, sometimes amounting to dismantling, or is contending with diverse resistance from within the civil society. At the same time, pluralist democracy has become the most widely recognized source of legitimization of the state and conceptions of human rights have become a continually more influential constraint on the exercise of power by forces controlling states.

Democracy and related terms, such as participation, have taken on many contradictory meanings in the discourse and practice of the period leading to the present crises of legitimacy and responsibility. Its affirmation as the basis for re-legitimizing institutions and assigning responsibilities to social actors, after the discrediting of systems and ideologies many of which identified themselves as “democratic”, obviously requires a serious effort at definition. Such an effort is now under way, confronting situations of lowered expectations and popular disillusionment with electoral practices, along with a proliferation of group demands for a voice concerning the continual shocks to expectations and phenomena of social exclusion.

Democracy, according to one recent exploration of its relevance to the world of today, implies a juxtaposition or balancing of representation of majorities’ interests, citizenship and limitation of power through fundamental rights.<sup>20</sup>

“Tout ce qui affirme ou impose une *one best way*, ... une norme de conduit identifiée à l’universalisme de la raison, est une menace pour la démocratie.”<sup>21</sup>

A compatible approach to establishing criteria for democracy insists that:

“Outcomes of the democratic process are uncertain, indeterminate, *ex ante* ... [and it is] the people, political forces competing to promote their interests and values, who determine what these outcomes will be ... The fact that uncertainty is inherent in democracy does not mean that everything is possible or that nothing is predictable. Contrary to the favourite words of conservatives of all kinds, democracy is neither chaos nor anarchy. Note that ‘uncertainty’ can mean that actors do not know what can happen, that they know what is possible but not what is likely, or that they know what is possible and likely but not what will happen. Democracy is uncertain only in the last sense ... Democratization is an act of subjecting all interests to competition, of institutionalizing uncertainty. The decisive step toward democracy is the devolution of power from a group of people to a set of rules.”<sup>22</sup>

Such formulations imply that, to the extent that democratic values and procedures influence human affairs, people will be able to make meaningful political choices, defend their perceived interests, and set limits to the dictates of technocrats, bureaucrats, ideologists, prophets and people who concentrate economic power. They even imply that the majority has a right to be wrong in the eyes of these diverse agents of policy.

Democracy conceived as a self-limiting quest for responsibility involves the whole range of institutions discussed above. The international system, the networks of interest-group and issue-oriented organizations, political parties, local communities and neighbourhood groupings, families and households, can all come closer to democracy in this sense. Signs that many of them are moving in this direction are now obscured or contradicted by opposing tendencies. However, the most important and problematic arena for democracy remains the “national” state. The present system of states will undoubtedly transform itself in the coming years as unpredictably as it has done in the recent past. States will relinquish part of their sovereignty to world and regional institutions, globalizing economic and technological processes, and the claims to self-determination or self-management of “communities” defined by locality, livelihood or cultural self-identification. Nevertheless, as was stated earlier, there seems no alternative to the territorially based state as the basis for citizenship, defining and protecting rights, and being the arena within which majority choices and inter-group compromises emerge through elections and negotiations.

Affirmation of the indispensability of territorially based states does not mean a vision of such states as potentially rational, benevolent and coherent entities capable of devising and applying “integrated approaches” to the question of social integration. It does not mean evasion of the shortcomings of real states and the enormous differences between them. It does not require the drawing of rigid dividing lines between democratic and undemocratic states, nor the assumption that any state that has held a competitive election thereby becomes democratic. Rather, it assumes that all states are fields of contention between the political, economic, and cultural forces and heritage both strengthening and negating or eroding democracy. The capacity of a given state to function democratically or otherwise depends on three dimensions of the meaning of “state”: first, the state as a symbol of nationhood, a basis for citizenship; second, the state as “public sector”, as an aggregation of institutions, regulations and bureaucracies; and, third, the state as government or régime, ideally representing the majority choice or a workable compromise between organized minorities. The prospects for democracy can be unfavourable, though rarely altogether negative, given the following conditions: if allegiance is to symbols other than the nation; if the public sector is viewed as ineffective, corrupt and inequitable; and if the current régime emerges from a situation of contending minorities with incompatible values or narrowly focused single-issue constituencies, or majority alienation and apathy.

These considerations point to the need for understanding, based on research and theoretical constructions, of the range of real national situations. This research is essential for relevant ideas on the strengthening of state responsibilities for democratic governance and social integration. The relevance of the findings, of course, will depend much less on how they are received by norm-generating institutions above the struggle, than on how they are diffused and used by actors trying to improve social orders. Illustrative descriptions of several types of national situations may help to clarify the argument.

First, one can identify certain states that meet conventional criteria for nationhood and also for formal democracy. They have periodic elections, vigorous inter-party competition, varied and autonomous institutions in the civil society, and free communications media that reach the majority of the population. At the same time, their capacity for coherent policy-making has been semi-paralysed by institutionalized corruption; the exercise of arbitrary violence with impunity by the military, police, landowners and criminal networks; economic processes that are dynamic but anarchic, generating environmental devastation and persistent high inflation. In addition, the gap in power, wealth and access to education and other social services between population groups is so wide that much of the population is excluded from democratic participation except in the form of electoral manipulation. In the eyes of the groups holding power, as well as large middle strata striving desperately to achieve “modern” standards of consumption, the excluded are invisible while passive and a threat of anarchy if they make demands. Certain ethnic minorities are particularly vulnerable to exclusion and arbitrary violence, but the majority of the excluded and impoverished are not culturally distinct.

In such a situation, various political movements, issue-oriented organizations and social movements (involving minorities among the middle strata as well as among the excluded) have their own conceptions of responsibilities for democratic social integration and are struggling heroically to make them effective. Some of these conceptions focus on modernization and democratization of the state, while others distrust the state and look to widening autonomy for the new social movements within the civil society. The national régime representing the state claims wide responsibilities for integration, but in practice can hardly go beyond opportunistic crisis management. The state as public sector, and the array of provincial and local administrations, have components that function effectively and democratically and others that are undergoing disintegration or are in the hands of self-serving cliques. Important for the groups struggling to modernize and democratize the society are: participation in international discourse on these questions, information on comparable problems and tactics elsewhere and, of course, material support. At the same time, they find it difficult to reconcile their feelings of urgency regarding societal transformation and redistribution of wealth and power with the self-limiting

open-ended conception of pluralist democracy summarized above. Such actors have probably had their fill of universalistic ideologies and policy prescriptions from abroad during the eras of state-managed development optimism, the Cold War, and the subsequent stabilization and structural adjustment policies.

Some other states have régimes that are centralized and predominantly authoritarian, but afford some scope for policy debate and interest-group representation through formally democratic but controlled electoral procedures. Some of these states have achieved sustained high rates of economic growth, built up extensive and relatively equitably distributed public services, and greatly reduced the extent of poverty. Here the régime is anxious to demonstrate that its style of development is more successful and equitable than others and is confident that it is assuming all the responsibilities that are called for to enhance social integration. It is ambivalent about the penetration of global consumerism and the information revolution, seeing these both as symbols of success and as culturally disintegrative forces. It has an underlying dread that political competition will unleash ethnic or religious conflict, and is determined to preserve existing inter-group compromises. It is selectively open to innovative ideas but aggressively hostile to entreaties from abroad that it become more democratic according to universalistic norms, as well as to criticisms of how its growth-centred policies impact on minorities or the environment. Some internal critics and institutions of the civil society, and possibly some state functionaries, would welcome the backing of international norms for democracy and protection of human rights that might confront the régime's narrow and sometimes unpredictable limits of tolerance. States with patterns of this kind can either move towards pluralist democracy or towards greater repressiveness and conformism, through many combinations of negotiated opening from above and pressures from below.

Other states have been unable to reconcile the conception of "nation" with the narrower ethnic, historical or religious allegiances of their populations, and economic decline has exacerbated this chronic source of instability. Here the territorial state can disintegrate into permanently warring local "communities" or armed factions. In these settings, the nation state, the institutions of pluralist democracy and prescriptions for economic development have been superimposed from abroad on incompatible local realities. The question of reinventing social integration and assigning responsibilities therefore takes on a complexity that makes statements of good intentions particularly irrelevant in a survey such as this. Nevertheless, it is evident that population heterogeneity and economic vulnerability do not make disintegration inevitable. Some states have maintained a reasonable degree of cohesion and democratic openness despite these handicaps, while a few have re-emerged from many years of devastating internal conflict to apparent stability. Particularly pertinent here is the self-limiting aspect of democracy, the setting aside of overambitious goals for achieving national unity according to universalistic conceptions of the "nation state".

The successors to the “real socialist” states of the recent past face different but equally formidable challenges. These states assumed very wide responsibilities for social integration, claiming democratic legitimization and policy infallibility on the basis that they had correctly understood the laws of history. Manipulated participation in a wide range of institutions and ideological indoctrination involved the whole population, to the extent of the régime’s abilities. Despite abundant evidence of repressiveness, corruption and bureaucratic bungling or inertia, the régimes were widely credited with stability and considerable economic and social achievements. Their sudden collapse has involved wholesale ideological and institutional reversals, with the successor régimes’ capacity to manage transition constrained both by radical delegitimization of state power, and the persistence of economic and political power centres deprived of ideological justification. At first, oversimplified visions flourished: of the replacement of arbitrary state power by pluralist democracy and of state planning and ownership of the means of production by private initiative and market forces. Open expression of interest-group, ethnic and other conflicts was to replace enforced suppositions of social cohesion. While the experiences of the successor régimes in managing these reversals have differed widely, the reversals have generated insecurity, widening inequalities, and exclusion of part of the population from employment and from the pre-existing safety net of social services and subsidies. The sequence of events, and the inability of new, partly imported, rules of the game to achieve a reasonable degree of consensus, have stimulated a ruthless pursuit of self-interest and a flaunting of consumerism among minorities, as well as sullen resentment, xenophobia, hopelessness or scapegoating among large groups. Intellectual currents and social movements striving for democratic reintegration are also present. They are, however, insecure and divided in their quest for answers to the problem of reconciling shared responsibilities for social integration with the reality of pluralist democratic procedures and a market-oriented economy.

Many other national patterns could be distinguished within the world system of states — from stable and relatively well-integrated, but possibly overbureaucratized, welfare states to states controlled through terror in the hands of cynically predatory armed forces. Of course, none of these patterns can be static. The main point in describing them is to throw into relief what should, perhaps, be obvious: that economic and cultural globalization and the division of humanity into a system of states that are formally equal in rights and similar in responsibilities have not reduced the disparities between these states. The intensity of global interactions makes the range of possible futures for these states even more diverse. In the light of experiences during the recent evolution of the system of states, it is less feasible now than it might have seemed a few years ago to subject this diversity to universalistic norms, policy prescriptions, laws of history or utopian blueprints.

Some general principles may nevertheless be proposed to social actors striving to make these states better perform their roles. These principles tend to be more negative (what to avoid) than positive (what to do):

First, policy subordination to democratic choice and to uncertainty of outcomes implies that there is no infallible “one right way” to achieve social integration or any other goal. The wonders of the information revolution can help make decision-making more coherent and flexible, but they cannot altogether rationalize the contending forces behind policy-making. Neither can they transform the human element of the executive and legislative bodies which must arrive at decisions. As the press demonstrates every day, even the pursuit of relatively restricted sectoral policies, in which the executive has a clear idea of what it wants to do and enjoys majority approval, encounters endless problems in formulation, compromise and execution. The effort of the Clinton administration to reform the health care system in the United States is a conspicuous case in point. In most states and in most policy areas, conditions are less favourable. Proposals for “integrated” or “holistic” approaches commonly evade the complexity of the decision-making process in pluralist democracy.

Second, the organicist view of the nation state is incompatible with the interpretation of social integration advocated here, as well as with the composition of most real states:

“If the nation is organism, it is not a body than can breed divisions and conflicts. Those who do not partake in the national spirit can only be those who do not belong: alien to the body of the nation. And if the nation is an organism, it is not a body that can tolerate alien elements. Individualism and dissent are manifestations of not belonging.”<sup>23</sup>

The organicist view of the nation state is obviously most damaging in multi-ethnic or multi-religious societies, but in more homogeneous societies, it can justify a stifling conformism manipulated by power holders and supportive of stereotyped social class, age-group and gender roles.

Third, all “national” societies contain diverse class, interest group, ethnic, cultural, religious, gender and other sources of conflict, some of them more intractable sources of potential disintegration than others. The interplay of these conflicts, the continual emergence of new groups or the redefinition of groups in order to claim a voice in democratic decision-making, is inseparable from the kind of dynamic social integration that can be hoped for. At the same time, to the extent that participants define these conflicts as irreconcilable, zero-sum games to be resolved only by complete separation or unchallenged dominance of one group, they become pernicious. This outcome depends partly on the historical evolution of conflicts, partly on the ideologies that different actors construct to rationalize their partisanship, and partly on the continually changing challenges to adapt or suffer exclusion that the global system presents to different groups. Better understanding of

the sources of conflicts, and principled opposition to ideologies that define them as irreconcilable, can presumably contribute to their management. However this question, like others discussed here, does not lend itself to facile generalization.

Fourth, self-limitation of state interventions and the diffusion of responsibilities to other institutions, the market or civil society, do not imply retreat to the minimal night-watchman state. The cycle of discrediting the state, stemming from its past overambitious claims as well as market-oriented or social movement-oriented ideologies, probably will and should be reversed. The forces controlling states can legitimately strive to widen responsibilities, just as political movements and institutions of the civil society, as well as international organizations and movements, can legitimately keep these efforts under critical scrutiny. Devolution or contracting-out of public social responsibilities to supposedly competitive private entities may in many cases be justifiable; but when the state subordinates this approach to free-market dogmas and disregards the realities of the private sector, the results are likely to be inefficient as well as inequitable.<sup>24</sup> No society can expect the state to reach a permanently satisfactory balance between overregulation and overprotection, on the one hand, and *laissez faire*, on the other. Recent experience suggests, however, that, for social integration and equity, state relinquishment of previous responsibilities for social services and regulation of threats to public welfare are at least as harmful as inefficient and over-reaching efforts to meet these responsibilities.

Fifth, democratic social integration supposes transparency on the part of the agents aspiring to direct national policy. The policy constraints imposed by the global system make this transparency a formidable requirement for agents competing for electoral support:

“When candidates hide their economic programmes during election campaigns or when governments adopt policies diametrically opposed to their electoral promises, they systematically educate the population that elections have no real role in shaping policies. When governments announce vital policies by decree or ram them through legislatures without debate, they teach parties, unions, and other representative organs that they have no role to play in policy making. When they revert to bargaining only to orchestrate policies already chosen they breed distrust and bitterness.”<sup>25</sup>

Policy choices will continue to shape themselves within institutions of the global system and of territorially based states, through a permanent interplay of different rationalities. These explanations are able to influence, but not control, the multifarious processes that make for social disintegration and the simultaneous emergence of new forms of integration. When trying to make sense of these processes, a quest for universalistic principles and prescriptions for action is unavoidable and can even be considered one of the

constant influences on change. From the standpoint of the present discussion, however, restraint and even scepticism toward this quest are advisable. The experience of the major paradigms of planned development, the welfare state, and socialism is still with us. The outcome of faith in markets as exclusive arbiters or in the information age as a utopia may be just as problematic. If would-be agents of change take the values of democracy seriously, they must balance the planning and norm-making responsibilities of the global system and the state against respect for the right of forces within societies to make their own choices; organize to advance their perceived interests; embrace, resist or transform the seemingly overwhelming pressures of globalization and state regimentation.

It is evident that the more traditional and structured political parties and interest-group organizations, in very different national settings throughout the world, are experiencing crises that derive from different sources. These crises originate partly in changes in class and group identifications among their clienteles, partly in discrediting of their ideologies or their own relinquishment of ideologies, partly in the impact of the information revolution, and partly in their internal degeneration through bureaucratization and corruption. Parties that have dominated national scenes for many years have disintegrated into fragments striving to find new rationales and new clienteles. At the same time, many kinds of new organized political contenders are appearing, refuting predictions of the end of ideology though their durability and integrative capacity are yet to be tested.

In many countries, democratically elected local governments are gaining new responsibilities vis-à-vis the state and are having some success in innovative forms of political action and provision of services. “Empowering” institutions are being established, such as the public defender or ombudsman, designed to give the disadvantaged a voice against intimidation and arbitrariness from agents of the state, employers or other power holders. These institutions are being introduced by the state itself in the course of pluralist democratization in settings that seem highly incongruous with such an innovation. Finally, the social movements and grassroots groupings that have been discussed in various contexts above remain an undoubtedly important but permanently elusive and precarious component of national realities.

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responsibilities at  
the global level

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The “global level” at present comprises a heterogeneous array of institutions and actors holding different visions of the human future, with different means of advancing their purposes. They have different tendencies to ritualize and escape in the face of frustrations and have different links to institutions and actors at the national and sub-national levels. Global institutions and actors interact with and try to interpret and influence economic, political, cultural, environmental, technological, informational and other shifts that are becoming increasingly globalized in their impact on people.

In this context one can distinguish several complexes of global institutions and actors:

One is that of the intergovernmental organizations that have expanded their responsibilities for norm-setting and problem-solving so that these responsibilities become continually more compartmentalized and assigned to separate institutions. Many different kinds of expertise are required for the questions of international norms for economic policies and relationships; for protection of human rights; for population growth and redistribution through migration; for environmental protection; for management of conflicts and reconstruction of wartorn societies; and for the sectoral policies identifiable with “social development”. These require many different kinds of expertise and imply controversies over theories, values and priorities for action and cannot really be “integrated” within one overarching institution or set of prescriptions. At the same time, it is a truism to claim that they are all interrelated and cannot be dealt with satisfactorily in isolation. The danger, then, is that each intergovernmental institution will find itself integrating the totality from its own perspective, in alliance with or under pressure from different issue-oriented organizations and sectoral institutions at the national level. As various observers have pointed out, observance of norms then depends less on their own constituencies than on the holders of purse strings: the World Bank and other lending agencies at the global level, the economically powerful states and, at the national level, the finance ministries.

Probably the most important as well as controversial dimension of global normative responsibilities relates to the legitimization of pluralist democracy and of the associated human rights to criticize power and seek through organized action to defend group interests, change policies and replace régimes. Here the transplanting of political forms and procedures identical to those evolved over a long period in Europe has been central to the formation of the global system of states. Arguments from ideologically diverse standpoints have considered these forms and procedures as requisites for state legitimacy, or even panaceas for countries undergoing disintegrative crises. Such arguments have naturally provoked counter-arguments, sometimes in the name of cultural traditions, sometimes in the name of national unity under the authoritarian leadership needed to deal with crisis or emerge from neo-colonial dependency. As in most of the questions treated in

this paper, it is necessary to balance contradictions and look below the surface of arguments. Formal democracy has often been a façade for oligarchy. The introduction of democratic forms into states weak in social integration and lacking the relevant institutions and values of civil society has generated many anomalies. Endorsement of the democratic character of states by dominant international forces has depended largely on whether their policies harmonized with the perceived interests of these forces. At the same time, arguments for “guided” democracy, authoritarian controls, or cultural uniqueness, whatever their validity in the abstract, camouflage the determination of self-anointed leaders or dominant minorities to prevent opposition forces from emerging.

The international effort to strengthen democracy and respect for human rights is one of the most important trends of our times, and its pursuit will require a continual effort to overcome mystification and satisfaction with façade achievements. This in turn requires interaction with a mobilized and diversely critical public opinion, taking advantage of the information revolution without hopefully being overwhelmed by it. As was stated above, the most serious interpretations of democracy now emphasize self-limitation, uncertainty, relinquishment of the dream of “one right way” to solve international or national problems. These are principles hard to internalize for power contenders in any society. International discourse on norms for democracy ideally should grapple with the limits of majority choice in the real world and the continually diversifying channels for representation, in addition to the authenticity or culture-bound nature of formal procedures and legal guarantees.

The complex of intergovernmental lending agencies, multinational financial, industrial and communications enterprises, and professional economic advisers has, in a sense, dominated in recent years over the norm-setting intergovernmental institutions discussed above. These agencies and enterprises are now held responsible for mounting poverty or social exclusion, the disintegration of states and societies through the debt trap and the national remedies they have dictated, and for environmental dangers. Some of the lending agencies have taken these criticisms to heart: they are now striving to work out their own conceptions of democratic social integration and to reconcile these with their principles of economic responsibility. From the theoretical standpoint of some adversaries, the very nature of capitalism will make this effort self-defeating. However, if there is to be any hope of coherency in the formulation of norms for policies on social integration, participation by donors and national planners will be indispensable.

Multinational enterprises themselves are now under pressure to make better sense of the responsibilities that flow from their global penetration and diversification. They must try to reconcile the conflicts that are inherent to the globalized capitalist system: market shares, financial manoeuvres, mergers and predatory take-overs of other enterprises. They have to maintain

a certain degree of stability and adherence to generally understood rules of the game. They must try to enhance their legitimacy and strengthen their negotiating techniques vis-à-vis intergovernmental organizations, states, and political and issue-oriented movements. Some of these organizations aspire to regulate them and capture a share of their resources, others to transform their values or make them desist from profitable but socially harmful activities. Others seek to delegitimize and destroy them. Multinational enterprises must somehow take into account how their penetration into certain societies has caused social and political disintegration, not to mention the impact of their withdrawal from parts of the world they judge excessively risky. The implications of their infiltration by criminal networks commanding enormous resources, particularly from drug trafficking, become more troublesome. Their reactions are bound to combine self-justification through publicity, insistence on the evils of interference with markets, acceleration of their flight forward through financial, technological and managerial innovation, and authentic efforts to counter environmental degradation and other negative by-products of their activities.

The expansion of multinational corporations, in a context of economic crises and structural adjustment policies in much of the world, has contributed to destruction of the instruments for social protection that have generally accompanied the development of capitalism at the national level. The political viability of the settings for this expansion has thus been threatened. International lending agencies have begun to take this into account and multinationals may well do likewise, however contradictory this would be to other aspects of their functioning. Some multinational enterprises, or individual actors within them, are undoubtedly undertaking initiatives that do not fit the negative stereotypes. In a setting that is changing so rapidly, buffeted by competing theories and polemics, and hard to grasp in its complexity (probably even by the protagonists), it would be absurd to prescribe responsibilities more precisely. However, one of the most significant possibilities for the future seems to be a more open and systematic effort by multinationals to assume social responsibilities. This effort needs to be continually monitored and contested by other institutions and actors, in particular consumer, environmental and labour organizations.

Another complex of institutions and actors at the global level consists of internationally organized political parties and movements, trade unions and other interest-group organizations, issue-oriented organizations and NGOs. Their relevance depends entirely on links with counterparts at the national and local levels. They act as sources of advice and funds, as advocates before the other global institutions and actors mentioned above, and they alert international public opinion to abuses within countries. They are now all grappling with transformations in the groups they claim to represent, with questionings of their own theories and values, with propensities to paternalism or suspicions of paternalism on the part of their culturally diverse national and local interlocutors. They receive precarious public support, are overwhelmed by the intractability of injustice and misery, and

face difficulties in balancing militant advancement of group interests or causes with maintaining openness to the multiple dimensions of human needs and policy options. Within this broad complex of institutions and actors, as was argued above, political parties and trade unions have declined in representativeness and confidence in their international roles. This has been due to the eclipse of class-based revolutionary ideologies and transformation or disintegration of class identifications within countries.

Issue-oriented organizations, religious bodies and NGOs linked to social movements and grassroots groupings within countries have gained in importance, and to some extent have become channels for initiatives of intergovernmental organizations and even of multinational corporations. Here the information revolution is particularly important. There are unprecedented possibilities for direct links between global organizations and localized support networks and local governments in the rich countries, on the one side, and grassroots movements in poor countries, on the other. These links promise to become even more complex as the information revolution advances. A kind of globalization of pluralist democracy is therefore possible, with consequences even more complex than at the national level: uncertainty of outcomes, confrontation of different rationalities, and problems of self-identification and definition of the right to be heard. The prospect is naturally unsettling to defenders of state sovereignty and religious or cultural exclusivism.

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## beyond the crises

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Institutions and actors at many levels have tried to apply coherent policies to the major problems bearing upon social integration and the future viability of human societies. There have been many significant achievements, but in general it would seem that these policies have done more to change the shape of the problems than to eliminate them, and that the new patterns are more threatening than the old. In some areas, cycles of great urgency for action are followed by cycles of relative apathy or complacency as the policies, for one reason or another, have little impact. Meanwhile, the problem does not swell into the catastrophe predicted.

The international visibility of major problems waxes and wanes, with each waxing leaving behind new institutional machinery. Foresight concerning the emergence of new configurations of problems and the broader consequences of narrowly focused policies is generally inadequate. Even more important, formulators of policies guided by technical rationality or universalistic values fail to confront frankly the political and social requisites for policy effectiveness. They also fail to deal with the force of economic and bureaucratic vested interests in perpetuating existing policies or non-policies. Finally, the often deplored “overload of problems” baffles even the political actors who are best disposed to seek an “integrated approach”. As was mentioned earlier — in the case of structural adjustment policies — some of the responsible actors are now trying to learn from adverse social and political consequences and to modify their approaches accordingly. In other cases, most notoriously in the area of drug trafficking and consumption, policies that have proved over many years to be ineffective and largely self-defeating are perpetuating themselves at ever higher costs. The reasons for this escalation lie in inertia, pressure from powerful actors with fixed ideas, and the inability to formulate alternatives that are politically viable and compatible with differing national configurations of the problem. In the case of ethnic or religious conflicts and chronically wartorn societies — the most radically disintegrative phenomenon of our time — global as well as national institutions and actors are having to devote enormous resources to palliating suffering and patching up precarious truces. They are no nearer being able to devise any reliable means of foreseeing and warding off eruptions or reconstructing viable societies.

“De-responsibilization” of institutions at all levels and lagging or perverse responses to crises derive in part from two equally inadequate policy approaches to the processes labelled “development” and “modernization”. One approach overloaded the “welfare state”, the “socialist state” and the “developmentalist state” with more responsibilities than they could meet. This approach has been characterized by overconfidence in the capacity of institutions to control the future through technocratic plans, regulations, centralized investments in industries and infrastructure, bureaucratized and

standardized public services. Variants of this approach have advanced quite different conceptions of development, but all of them have prescribed universalized norms and roles for the state, other institutions, social classes and experts.

The other approach has had a longer history but, from around the 1950s to the 1970s, exerted less influence. It returned to dominate policy-making during the 1980s. This approach insists on free markets and unrestricted scientific and technological innovation within a capitalist world and national order as the central conditions for the advancement of human welfare. It has delegitimized state planning, investment and intervention in the functioning of markets, as well as most organized attempts to defend interests of groups and classes. According to its precepts, trade, investment and location of production should be unconstrained by national boundaries.

The overconfident application of either of these approaches (the one sometimes being embraced as a panacea when the shortcomings of the other approach became evident), first contributed to de-responsibilization through their pretensions as infallible embodiments of reason, sources of the “one right way” for states and other institutions. If the policy did not produce the desired results, application was not considered to have been consistent or persistent enough. Under both approaches, transformation of institutions, values and lifestyles was expected and even demanded, but in directions defined by the basic principles. Resistance to change, policies informed by values other than productivity, and defence of cultural diversity were deplored as irrational or self-defeating. Although partisans of both approaches generally claimed allegiance to democracy, both provided very narrow scope for democratic choice or responsibility for decision-making.

At present, a second and possibly even more dangerous kind of de-responsibilization has followed upon the first. The application of both approaches — sometimes joined inappropriately or with abrupt reversals from one to the other — has had such perverse consequences that many of the actors at the head of major institutions have lost confidence in their ability to devise and apply long-term policies that reconcile objectives of environmental stability, equity, livelihood and preparation of new generations to cope with the challenges of the information age and the consumer society. Their vision of accessible policy alternatives then becomes restricted to short-term opportunistic crisis management, camouflaged to some extent by ritual declarations of principles.

In discourse on the human future one finds, at the one extreme, dogmatic optimism concerning the beneficent consequences of free markets, scientific conquests and global communication media. At the other extreme lies catastrophist pessimism concerning the consequences of the same trends. It would be absurd to generalize on a world scale about the sensitivity of the public at large to crises of legitimacy and responsibility, but it is evident that real experiences and the messages received from this discourse generate both

complacency and alarm. In some settings, what John Kenneth Galbraith has labelled the “culture of contentment” continues to predominate among majorities that have benefited from rising incomes and more varied lifestyle choices. This culture now merges into a “culture of insecurity” as unemployment, environmental disasters and criminality become more threatening. Large numbers of people, particularly in Asia but present almost everywhere, are emerging aggressively from poverty into “cultures of opportunity”, and are probably indifferent to the crises of institutions as long as these do not hinder their individual and family advancement. Even larger numbers, traumatically expelled from previous sources of livelihood and social integration, are now exposed to the contradictory messages of democratization, populism, consumerism, and ethnic or religious exclusivism. They also have to contend with intimidation from private exploiters as well as agents of the state. The incapacity of institutions to offer effective channels for social reintegration and participation, and the means of making sense of what is happening, is most acutely felt here.

Finally, there are the organizations and movements within civil society and even within the state itself that are trying to reform existing institutions and create new ones from diverse visions of the human future. Some reformers emphasize the re-invigoration of international norms and the rehabilitation of the state and its agents within a framework of pluralist democracy. Others reject large organizations and the very concept of “development”, preferring spontaneous localized social movements.

It might well seem absurd to expect anything deserving the label of “social integration” to emerge from this arena of contending forces, purposes and explanations. Any principles for would-be agents confronting it would have to be so conditioned by warnings of complexities and contradictions as to be more baffling than useful. In any case, a serious attempt at defining such principles would require space, time and a confrontation with the theories and prescriptions contending in the global arena which go beyond the scope of the present survey. The most that can be done here is to insist on the implications of democratic choice, restraint in the quest for unifying explanations of what is happening, and recognition of the legitimacy of conflict combined with recognition of the urgent need for actors to communicate better with each other and make compromises with adversaries.

The preceding pages have suggested that the more promising initiatives will emphasize the central and indispensable role of the democratic state, and will urge upon the state as well as civil society a difficult combination of adherence to core values; distrust of universalized policy prescriptions; support for popular participation in decision-making and popular rights to question the dictates of experts; and recognition that institutions will continue to evolve through the interplay of theorizing, planning, criticism and conflict toward futures that can never be confidently predicted.

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## notes

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1. UNRISD, 1994.
2. Definitions of the term “institution” and distinctions between “institution” and “organization” differ in theoretical discourse. For present purposes, “an institution is a set of rules that structure social action in particular ways ... for a set of rules to be an institution, knowledge of these rules must be shared by members of the relevant community or society” (Knight, 1992). “Actors” are individuals (political leaders, administrators, theorists, publicists, etc.) as well as collectivities (political parties, interest groups, ideologically or religiously inspired movements, etc.). Most institutions can thus be considered collective social actors but not all actors are institutionalized.
3. “What is not accepted and is, indeed, unrecognized is the powerful tendency of the economic system to turn damagingly not on consumers, workers or the public at large, but ruthlessly inward on itself. Under the broad and benign cover of *laissez faire* and the specific license of the market, there are forces that ravage and even destroy the very institutions that compose the system, specifically the business firms whose buying, selling and financial operations make the market. This is a striking development of modern capitalism; the particular devastation is of the great management-controlled corporation. Such destruction has become especially severe in the years of contentment.” (Galbraith, 1993, p.53)
4. Beetham, 1993.
5. “I think we have been experiencing in the eighties very odd convergences of two rather harmful trends that have agreed on the demonization of the state, the state as the source of all evils. The idea has been that if we could somehow get rid of the state all sorts of wonderful things would happen. One of these trends, of course, is from a market-economy, neo-conservative perspective. The second has been in part an understandable reaction to the manifold evils of ‘real socialism’. This is the perspective of the anti-state left, which sees in communities and social movements the production of perfect democracy and all sorts of good things, but only if they can keep apart from and even against the state.” (Statement by Guillermo O’Donnell at the UNRISD conference on the Crisis of Social Development in the 1990s: Preparing for the World Social Summit, July 1993.)
6. Bromley, 1993, p. 404.
7. “Europe is and must remain a high-wage producer. It must increase, not diminish, its investments in education and radically improve the efficiency of those investments. In a world where capital moves at electronic speeds and technology leaks quickly, how can a nation stay rich and powerful if its people become dumber than those of other nations? America is not succeeding in answering that question,

although it gives the impression of trying mightily. There is no answer other than the obvious: it cannot. Mass production once provided an outlet: it provided high-paying jobs to low-skilled, poorly educated people. But the emergent mode of production, flexible-volume production, offers no such protective shelter. It relies fundamentally on formal (not traditional craft) skills, on the ability to interpret symbolic data. That means first-rate, formal education.” (Cohen, 1993)

8. “In 1990, 47.4 per cent of the employed population in the United States, 45.8 per cent in the United Kingdom, 45.1 per cent in France, and 40.0 per cent in West Germany were engaged in information-processing activities, whether in the production of goods or in the provision of services, and the proportion continues to rise over time.” (Castells, 1993:17)
9. UNRISD, op.cit., 1994.
10. One of the more optimistic surveys of current trends presents the imperatives of the information age in the following terms: “Society, community, family are all conserving institutions. They try to maintain stability and to prevent, or at least to slow, change. But the organization of the post-capitalist society of organizations is a **destabilizer**. Because its function is to put knowledge to work — on tools, processes and products; on knowledge itself — it must be organized for constant change. ... It must be organized for systematic abandonment of the established, the customary, the familiar, the comfortable, whether products, services and processes, human and social relationships, skills or organizations themselves.” (Drucker, 1993)
11. NGO revenues from 18 OECD countries increased from 2.7 billion US dollars in 1970 to 5.2 billion in 1988 (at 1986 prices), while official funding rose from 1.5 per cent to 35 per cent of these totals. During the same period World Bank funding of NGO activities increased dramatically (Vivian, 1993).
12. “The new era ... affords NGOs a new role. Their legitimacy depends on their popular base, and on their potential — through influence with governments or through sheer might — to become agents of social change. As conduits for local democracy they have the potential to strengthen, and to force institutions to be more accountable and more responsive to the needs of ordinary people.” (Clark, 1991) See also Uphoff (1993).
13. An evaluation based on research in Zimbabwe probably has a much wider application: “Terms such as ‘empowerment’, ‘participation’, ‘transformation’, and ‘community’ are used without establishing any explicit understanding regarding their meaning. Thus NGOs are vulnerable to manipulation by outsiders who employ the same terms for distinctly different purposes. The use of the term ‘empowerment’ gives the clearest example of the divergence between rhetoric and actual practice among NGOs. NGOs call for the empowerment of communities. In practice, what this ‘empowerment’ typically consists

of is attaining ‘self-reliance’ — that is, the ability of people to reduce their ‘dependence’ on government or donors. It does not entail any changes in actual power relationships or in control over resources. ‘Community’ is another term which is generally used uncritically. It often refers, in reality, to a very limited segment of society centred on community leaders and élites. The ‘empowerment of communities’, therefore, could often be as well expressed as the ‘enrichment of individuals’.

“The indications are that ‘empowerment’ was originally used by development NGOs in a much more fundamental sense. ... But the appropriation of the term ‘empowerment’ by the political right wing in some northern countries, and its redefinition to mean ‘self-reliance’, has led to an unacknowledged shift in emphasis by the NGOs which receive funding from industrialized countries. Because NGOs did not establish their operations on a theoretical foundation, their shifts in strategies are not always internally recognized.” (Vivian and Maseko, 1994)

14. For provocative denunciations of development mythology combined with variations of this approach to social movements, see Sachs (1992) and Latouche (1993).
15. Breman, 1993.
16. Scheper-Hughes, 1992.
17. Amalric and Banuri, 1992. The rather ungainly term “de-responsibilization” refers to the perceived loss of local capacity to decide how to cope with local social and environmental needs in the face of state centralization, combined with unintelligible economic, demographic and cultural transformations.
18. “The ‘informatization’ of the world economy changes the conditions and possibilities for national policies. Economic globalization means the globalization of local social movements. Local becomes global and global becomes local.” (“Introduction” to Carnoy et al., 1993)
19. “New socio-political identities ... stem from the popular movements’ continuous interaction with various collaborators. The process can thus basically be seen as a play of mirrors, through which the grass-roots groups construct their self-image so that it reflects their dialogue with different interlocutors.” (Correia Leite Cardoso, 1992)
20. “Pour être démocratique, un système politique doit reconnaître l’existence de conflits de valeurs indépassables, et donc n’accepter aucun principe central d’organisation des sociétés, ni la rationalité ni la spécificité culturelle ... Ce qui conduit à définir la démocratie, non par opposition à la société de masse, mais comme un effort pour remonter de la consommation individuelle de biens marchands à des choix sociaux qui mettent en cause des rapports de pouvoir et des principes éthiques. Plus s’opère cette remontée et plus apparaît, au-dessus de l’individu consommateur, d’abord le citoyen, c’est-à-dire le membre d’une société politique qui délibère sur l’emploi de ses ressources et sur ses principes d’action, ensuite le sujet, c’est-à-dire la capacité et la volonté de l’individu d’être un acteur, de contrôler son

environnement, d'étendre sa zone de liberté et de responsabilité.”  
(Touraine, 1994:171, 193, 270)

21. Ibid.
22. Przeworski, 1991, pp. 10, 12, 14.
23. Ibid., p. 92.
24. See Mackintosh, 1994.
25. Przeworski, op.cit., 1991, p. 186.