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**AWAITING FOR GODOT:
GOVERNANCE, MARKETS AND ETHICS
IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES */**

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INTRODUCTION: IS “GODOT” A SURROGATE FOR SUSTAINABILITY?

The environmental crisis underneath repeated calls for a new, sustainable style of development, draws attention to the fact that we are running out of resources and out of places to store or dispose wastes. It reveals also that we are living in an age of scarcity of adequate institutions to face the realities of this truly ”ecological transition” --from simpler, quasi-natural systems to more complex patterns of interactions between humans and nature (BENETT, 1976). Therefore, the sustainability crisis, more than ecological or environmental, turns out to be an *ecopolitical* crisis, directly related with the institutional systems that regulate the property, distribution and use of the planet’s resources (GUIMARÃES, 1984).

The emergence of this ecological dimension in social life poses hitherto unforeseen challenges to the social sciences, and to the everyday concerns of citizens, government and private enterprises as well (DEUTSCH, 1997). In effect, how a collectivity deals with nature discloses as much about its internal social relations as the other way around. Compounds these challenges the current ideological discourse on ethics, markets, and governmental regulation. Therefore, it seems pertinent to explore the political and institutional dimensions of the current debate on sustainable development, as well as its implications for environmental policies, particularly in view of the realities of developing countries.

It must be emphasized, from the outset, that we confront no longer the situation pictured in the report of the Club of Rome, *The Limits to Growth* (MEADOWS et al., 1972), when attention had been drawn to the exhaustion of natural resources. After all, society may confront such challenges, albeit in an imperfect and limited fashion, via substitution of natural capital for physical capital, be it through the invention of new products that substitute near-exhausted resources (e.g., hydrogen for petroleum to fuel transportation), be it by new technologies (more fuel-efficient engines) that enlarge existing reserves. What we face today are radically different circumstances. Present institutions must cope with the frailty of environmental processes that cannot be simply substituted by others. One cannot substitute the ozone layer, neither can climate stability be substituted, unless one accepts as valid the search of another planet to where earthlings may migrate once the cycles and natural processes which supports life on Earth are ultimately drained.

It may be further argued, in addition to the concerns of the Club of Rome regarding the depletion and exhaustion of specific natural resources, that we may be also suffering the burdens of some sort of absolute limits on Earth. The best evidence of this has been provided by the team of scientists which have indicated that the human economy has already appropriated about forty percent of the net terrestrial photosynthesis, or one-fourth once we include oceans and other aquatic ecosystems (VITOUSEK et al, 1986 and 1997). If these scientists are correct, this means that once the world’s population doubles (by mid-century?), eighty percent would have been used. As Herman DALY (1991) sarcastically reminds us, a 100 percent appropriation is both ecologically feasible and highly undesirable socially...

It adds to the uniqueness of contemporary world the fact that the higher we rise in advancing our technological society, the more intimate and demanding the interconnections between ourselves and our forgotten nature become. And the more tightening there is of the links between our numbers and our needs and aspirations, as some of the resources for satisfying them

become exhausted, the more we must confront their effects. Scarcity of one resource generates rising prices of others, fueling inflation. As populations rise, more and more employment must be found, and resources are used up faster. As the competition to grasp a greater share of resources goes unchecked, we place increasing strains upon the stability of our social and political institutions.

If this picture does reflect the current situation in every corner of the world, the persistence of poverty and inequality in many quarters of the planet—in some, it has actually worsened—only renders it more difficult, hence ecopolitical, to confront the crisis of sustainability. Klaus TÖPFER (2001) could not have been more to the point, condemning the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks against the United States, when he warned that:

“When people are denied access to clean water, soil, and air to meet their basic human needs, we see the rise of poverty, ill-health and a sense of hopelessness. Desperate people can resort to desperate solutions. They may care little about themselves and the people they hurt ...I am not suggesting for a moment that poverty and environmental degradation are factors on their own. Intolerance also has its role. But it can fan the flames of hate and ignite a belief that terrorism is the only solution to a community's or nation's ills.”(2001)

This *ecopolitical* approach assumes, as John PASSMORE (1974) points out, that an ecological problem cannot be confused with "a problem in ecology". The latter is essentially a *scientific* challenge, of understanding some particular ecological phenomena, whereas an ecological problem is fundamentally *social* in nature, a predicament that we believe society would be better off without it in the first place. In fact, an adequate understanding of current crisis must acknowledge that the ecological outcomes of the way people use the earth's resources are ultimately related to the modes of relationships amongst people themselves. Unless we devise new ways to integrate the wisdom of natural and social sciences, we may end up spending considerable effort to add less knowledge about more obscure or irrelevant phenomena. Never before have we been so close not to disaster—in the way many zealot environmentalists believe—but rather to experiencing, on a planetary basis, the limitations of our fragile life-support systems. Activists and intellectuals alike tell us that nothing short of a planetary ethics must arise if we are to survive as a species. Thus, anything short of ecopolitical knowledge is bound to render the work of social scientists and policymakers substantially meaningless in their attempts both to understand society and to formulate better policies for improving the quality of life of its members (ALIMONDA: 2002).

Even though it would be too far-fetched to even suggest that Samuel BECKETT (1952) was thinking about the environmental dimensions of *sustainable development* in the evening 5 January 1953, at the world premiere of one of his most famous plays in the Left Bank Theater of Babylon in Paris, this classic of the Theater of the Absurd, does regain its strength nowadays. As it is well-known, Beckett unravels the profound malaise of the “suffering of being”, pictured in the tragicomedy of Estragon and Vladimir awaiting for something to alleviate their boredom. Yet, the main thrust of the play is definitely about hope. In more than one way, the hopelessness of the current affairs of the planet environmentally-wise may turn us all in Estragon and Vladimir, struggling to pass time believing in what many refer as the *oxymoron* of sustainability (DALY and TOWNSEND, 1993). As in Beckett's classic of the genre, the more time we spend talking about our sustainability's Godot, it seems the less likely it is realized. Likewise, there may be a religious kinship between these fictional characters—Godot and sustainable

development –since both represent humanity’s eagerness for the elusive return of a savior, in our case, to rescue the planet from the mess we have put it into. In effect, as Herman DALY (1996) have aptly indicated,

“Impossibility statements are the very foundation of science. It is impossible to: travel faster than the speed of light; create or destroy matter-energy; build a perpetual motion machine, etc. By respecting impossibility theorems we avoid wasting resources on projects that are bound to fail. Therefore economists should be very interested in impossibility theorems, especially the one to be demonstrated here, namely that it is impossible for the world economy to grow its way out of poverty and environmental degradation. In other words, sustainable growth is impossible.

*In its physical dimensions the economy is an open subsystem of the earth ecosystem, which is finite, nongrowing, and materially closed. As the economic subsystem grows it incorporates an ever greater proportion of the total ecosystem into itself and must reach a limit at 100 percent, if not before. Therefore its growth is not sustainable. The term "sustainable growth" when applied to the economy is a bad **oxymoron**—self-contradictory as prose, and unevocative as poetry.”* (p. 192-93, emphasis added)

Consequently, it does seem fit to attempt a critical overview of governance issues around the formation and implementation of environmental policies designed under the framework of sustainable development in recent decades. First, a brief introduction on how global perceptions about sustainable development have evolved, to then turn to the challenges lying ahead in view of a tow-fold and reinforced tendency. On the one hand, the deepening of the so-called *globalization* process, and on the other, the primacy of market mechanisms and instruments as the proposed foundations to tackle the environmental increasing signs of the unsustainability of current styles of development –that is to say, of prevailing patterns of production and consumption.

Attention is subsequently focused on the main thrust of the emerging international environmental regime, the multilateral environmental treaties embodied in it and the institutional and regulatory progress made in environmental regulation, highlighting as well the attempts made to integrate public policies, economic instruments and citizen participation. Specific governance issues pertaining to environmental policies are briefly reviewed, in special the interrelations with the trade regime. Finally, some inevitable, prospective comments on research issues for the coming future are spelled out with a view of charting the environmental governance agenda lying ahead of us.

Hopefully, the ensuing pages will stir our interest and act as a catalyst for further work on the much needed governance foundations of environmental policies, nationally and internationally. However, an inevitable and necessary warning seems in order. First, even though it does make sense to analytically distinguish environmental policies in order to highlight natural resources and pollution policy objectives and institutional settings, this paper chooses to emphasize their common attributes. Secondly, despite a concerted effort to be as “global” in scope as possible, it must be reminded that the characteristics and the experience observed in the Latin American and the Caribbean countries do inform most of the analysis. Therefore, no claims at generalization can possibly be made.

Finally, a more “structural” approach has been favored, which means to say that specific, current affairs type of issues have been intentionally left out of the analysis. For instance, instead of commenting on the appropriateness, pluses and minuses of establishing a World Environmental Organization (WEO) to counterbalance the existing World Trade Organization (WTO), it seems more adequate to analyze the two respective international regimes (for specific comments on the WEO, see BIERMANN, 2001; ESTY and IVANOVA, 2001; NEWELL, 2001, MOLTKE, 2001; ZISSMOS and WHALLEY, 2001). The creation of a WEO, under current practices of decision-making within UN could be indeed problematic, to say the least. Paraphrasing George KENNAN (1970), one of the most influential U.S. diplomat and a distinguished scholar as well, commenting on the early 1970s proposals to establish an environmental watchdog within the UN, “the UN is a mess and the environment is a mess; we’re trying to use one mess to clean up another” (cited in GUIMARÃES, 1991:146).

It appears to be clear that the existence of the WEO would not assure, in itself, greater environmental governance if profound changes are not introduced in other international organizations, foremost in the WTO. Conceivably, it would be more strategic for environmental governance, rather than the WEO, the establishment of an International Environment Court and a further reform of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development (one is now underway), an important “soft law” and political forum of environmental governance internationally (DODDS et al., 2002). Regionally, the European Union scheme is undoubtedly superior to that of NAFTA, since it encompasses executive (European Commission), legislative (European Parliament) and judicial (European Court of Justice) functions.

Yet, all disclaimers being considered, one can only hope that specific comments must be judged against the backdrop of their relevance, rather than their being territorially or issue representative. After all, if one wants to grasp the ideological motivations of military regimes in Latin America, one does not necessarily have to undertake a representative survey of military in different countries of the region. An in-depth interview with Augusto Pinochet should suffice to grasp the main facets of such ideology. Living in a world dominated by a prime-time-TV approach to world events (i.e., according to what is in the headlines), it would be more attuned to the best social science research tradition to study ecopolitical phenomena according to more structural, long term dimensions, rather than to produce one more fact-filled analysis describing some fashionable environmental topic in different parts of the world.

GLOBAL PERCEPTIONS CONCERNING SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT SINCE THE RIO EARTH SUMMIT

The 1990s began with significant changes in the international debate on environmental problems. The highest level of attention to the impending environmental crisis was undoubtedly the Summit of the Earth which took place in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Rio-92 laid the foundations for a new world vision about the environment, turning the global agenda into one of sustainable development. The conventions on Biological Diversity and on Climate Change represented paramount steps in this direction. Likewise, the Earth Summit has heightened the public awareness about the interconnections between the environmental, social, cultural and economic dimensions of development, often absent in the environmental public and academic research and

policy interests. Gradually, sustainable development began to penetrate the economic and political discourse as well.

The opening of new international decision-making forums to include emerging issues brought up by renewed signs of environmental stress worldwide has been closely related with the evolution of the actual situation as well as of the agenda in many regions of the world. This process has deepened in the decade since Rio-92 as a direct result of globalization (ECLAC, 2001). Among many aspects, globalization reinforced in real trends the concept in vogue at the end of the 1980s relative to the exhaustion of specific models of economic and social organization, while revealing at the same time the insufficiencies of the prevailing styles of development to respond to the new challenges. Styles of development in which the traditional problems of poverty and inequality have now been compounded by the ecological limits and environmental requirements to achieve sustainable development in the XXI Century.

This became quite clear in the text itself of the Resolution 44/228 of the United Nations General Assembly, adopted without a vote on 22 December 1989, which convened the Rio Conference three years later. As stated in the Resolution, all governments were “gravely concerned that the major cause of the continuing deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of production and consumption, particularly in industrialized countries”. In effect, if the need to increase national wealth to satisfy the basic needs of a growing population can represent severe pressures upon the endowment of natural resources of a determined region, on the other hand, the increment of extractive and industrial activities may entail an even sharper deterioration in the carrying capacity of the ecosystems that provide essential environmental services for sustained economic output.

The evolution in the perceptions about current challenges, as well as in the concrete actions that have resulted from the new global agenda, allows for a overall positive assessment of the international context for sustainable development since Rio. New concepts have been enshrined in multilateral treaties and conventions, such as the principle of “shared yet differentiated responsibilities”, the “polluter pays” principle and the “precautionary” principle. New, non-State and Civil Society actors have also been incorporated, with the unforeseen and unprecedented weight, among these, of environmental NGOs in general, and of the scientific community in the specific instance of climate change (VIOLA and LEIS, 1995; VIOLA, 1998; BÁRCENA, 1999).

It should be stressed, however, that the emergence of new actors does not necessarily mean the abolition or a weakened role of the State. Quite the contrary, it has grown in recent years the recognition, despite the ideological sways of the last decade, that the State still holds key responsibilities in regulatory matters and of articulation among the diverse productive, community and social sectors, especially in education, public safety and the environment (GUIMARÃES, 1996a, 1996a; WORLD BANK, 1997). This recognition assumes ever more importance when it is acknowledged that governance --referred until very recently to the transition of authoritarian to democratic regimes, or in relation to the need to tame hyperinflation and the economic instability-- is founded today in the possibilities of overcoming poverty and inequality (CALDERON, 1995).

As stated in the 1994 edition of the UNDP’s Human Development Report, nobody should be condemned to a brief or miserable life only because he or she was born in the wrong class, in

the wrong country or with the wrong gender. The new foundations of civilized life which will provide governance to political systems worldwide require, therefore, the emergence of a new *development paradigm*. A sustainable development paradigm that puts human beings at the center of the process of development, one that considers economic growth as a means and not as an end in itself, one that protects the opportunities of life for current and future generations, one, in short, that respects the integrity of the life support systems of the planet.

In this context, the State still provides a contribution to development which is *unique*, *necessary* and *indispensable* (GUIMARÃES, 1996a). *Unique* because its logic transcend the logic of market forces, particularly in dimensions such as ethics, equity and social justice, which are foreign to market mechanisms and institutions, and incorporates as well the defense of the so-called “diffuse rights” intrinsic to citizenship. *Necessary* because the very logic of capital accumulation requires the production of “public goods” that cannot be produced by competitive actors in the marketplace, particularly in imperfect markets as the ones of the emerging economies. *Indispensable* because it addresses issues such as climate change, biodiversity depletion and many other issues not amenable to the microeconomic calculus of discount rates and rates of return, particularly when future generations (who, by definition, cannot participate in today’s market) are brought to the forefront of environmental regimes. In addition, one must remind that the challenges posed by social inequality or environmental decay cannot be defined as *individual* problems, embodying instead social, *collective* problems. It is definitely not the case of guaranteeing access, via the marketplace, to education, housing, health or to an environment free of pollution. Instead, these entails the recovery of collective (solidarity) practices of fulfilling material and spiritual needs of human well-being (GUIMARAES, 1996).

From a not so positive standpoint, the evolution of the global agenda concerning environmental regimes and sustainable development has entailed also new threats. One must underline, in the first place, the warnings made in the mid-nineties of avoiding that concerns for the environment allow for the introduction of new “conditionalities” in international development aid. Developing countries should resist also the tendencies to replace development aid for trade, what was summarized in Rio in the “trade, not aid” proposal. Unfortunately, if in Stockholm the developed countries committed themselves to assign 0.7 percent of their GDP to international aid, in Rio that cooperation amounted to almost half as much, which led to the inclusion in the Rio Declaration of a call to reinstate “the Stockholm commitment” (ECLAC, 2002b). Notwithstanding that, five years later, during the Special Session of the UN General Assembly, summoned in 1997 to assess progress made since Rio-92, development aid had decreased even more, to levels close to 0.2 percent of the GDP of the developed countries. Therefore, it seems justified to indicate that the discourse and the commitment of new and additional resources for developing countries has been replaced by the reality of less resources than those available even before Stockholm. In fact, less resources than in the period between World Wars.

On the other hand, in many public and private sectors the principles of environmental protection and of sustainable development are still considered a restriction to economic growth. This has severely limited the public capacity to halt and reverse the increasing environmental deterioration of critical ecosystems and to control pollution. Most of the explicit environmental policies in place, particularly in the less developed regions of the world, as well as the instruments of direct and indirect regulation, are of a reactive character. Preventive and promotion policies favoring environmental quality vis-à-vis productive competitiveness have

received much less attention. Also incipient have been the capacity of environmental management institutions to devise transectoral policies and to assume a cross-cutting role in international negotiations since Rio-92.

In short, it is correct to suggest that almost ten years after Rio, the world has hardly begun the path towards sustainable development. It is true that many governments assumed with enthusiasm the commitments of the 1992 Summit, and has attempted to bring to fruition the many Rio Conventions, the Rio Declaration and Agenda 21, but the achievements so far have been clearly insufficient. It is also true that this process have not been carried out only by national governments. Many civil and private organizations, universities and research centers, as well as countless local governments, have become more and more involved in the implementation of the Rio “spirit” and actual decisions. Yet, much is still to be done to confront the many and varied challenges ahead, some of which did not exist at the time governments met in Rio over ten years ago. The Johannesburg 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, it is fair to say, though unfortunately, fell far short in advancing the commitments made in Stockholm and Rio (GUIMARÃES, 2003a).

THE EMERGING INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL REGIME

International regimes can be studied from different and complementary perspectives. Broadly speaking, these may be approached from the viewpoint of a system of rules and regulations between State and non-State actors governing a specific subject area (KRASNER, 1983). They may also be perceived as a system of rights and (substantive) duties and obligations, with corresponding (objective) procedures and mechanisms to guarantee the enforcement of internationally adopted decisions concerning determined aspects of the global agenda (LIST and RITTEBERG, 1992). Finally, one may study international regimes as a group of social institutions that govern explicit actions of collective actors with respect to the behavior of sovereign States (YOUNG, 1989).

Insofar as *environmental* regimes are concerned (see, among others, HURRELL and KINGSBURY, 1992; SONNENFIELD and MOL, 2002; VIOLA, 2002), these have brought to the forefront of international relations radically different meanings to the traditional precepts of governance and sovereignty. Among other aspects, environmental regimes have unfolded new concepts of shared, yet differentiated, responsibilities with respect to the global commons. This facet implies that what is required of nation States in terms relinquishing portions of their sovereignty in favor of internationally adopted environmental decisions may be manifested in different ways, whether the nation in question is considered to be developed or less developed according to economic criteria, technological prowess or perceived responsibility in bringing about the environmental impact being addressed by the regime. On the other hand, environmental regimes have enshrined as well important and unprecedented principles for international cooperation. The oldest, dating back to the early seventies, refer to the “polluter pays” principle, which means that nationally and internationally those actors responsible for actions hampering the environment should also bear the financial burden to redress their impacts.

Most likely, the truly revolutionary aspect of environmental regimes relate to the “precautionary” principle strengthened through the Climate Convention. Briefly stated, it postulates that scientific uncertainty about an environmental problem cannot be an excuse

preventing effective action when the consequences of said problem may be irreversible and even catastrophic for humankind once scientific precision can be established. We may indeed consider the precautionary principle revolutionary both for international and national politics alike once we acknowledge its implications for other areas of public policy, particularly as they relate to risk assessment and prevention, as well as to consumer protection.

It may suffice to imagine what will happen once consumer groups or governments decide to apply the precautionary principle to areas such as smoking or genetic engineering of agricultural and food products. In fact, this new turn of events seem to be gaining vigor, as attested by The San Francisco Board of Supervisors adoption of the precautionary principle as city and county policy June 17, 2003, an unprecedented breakthrough in the management of environmental matters in the U.S. (RACHEL, 2003).

An additional characteristic of international environmental regimes pertains to the unforeseen and unprecedented weight of non-State and Civil Society actors, among these, environmental NGOs in general and the scientific community in the specific instance of climate change (BORN, 1999; VIOLA and LEIS, 2001). The emergence of these actors appears to respond to three related dynamics. First of all, the end of bi-polarization and the consequent decomposition of automatic alignments and ideological and power blocks dominating international relations. Secondly, the relative loss of significance of bi-lateral agreements and the strengthening of multilateral institutions, instruments and mechanisms to resolve international disputes. Thirdly, because environmental problems reveal the truly central and defining aspect of the term “globalization”. This last facet of environmental regimes deserves further comments.

Globalization is often used, sometimes inadequately, to refer solely to the increasing interdependence of financial and commercial relations throughout the planet. As it will be mentioned later, we must be careful to differentiate the various *dimensions* of globalization, both as *vectors* and as *processes*. At this point, however, it is apt to stress that it is precisely in the environmental arena, more than in any other area, that the truly *global* character of international relations manifests itself. On the one hand, environmental problems become matters of international concern only because they reveal global processes. Even though one may correctly state that *local* processes such as the burning of fossil fuels cause the greenhouse effect, climate change affects the entire planet, including the vast majority of countries that produce a small proportion of greenhouse gases. As a matter of fact, this explains why the best way to sum up environmental challenges is the popular dictum of “think globally, act locally”.

More to the point advocated here, if no country is immune to the consequences of disturbing vital life support cycles, environmental problems can only be solved if *all* countries implement joint and coordinated actions. Even if a country decides to abolish the use of fossil fuels altogether, it will still suffer the consequences of climate change until all countries decide to take action. This distinctive *global* feature of environmental problems has been best synthesized in the words of former French Prime Minister Michel Rocard at the end of Rio-92. When asked to explain the reluctance of President Bush to fly to Rio because of his country’s opposition to the Biodiversity Convention, only to change his heart at the last minute, Rocard remarked that “condemned to live together, from now on we are also condemned to come together even to disagree” (GUIMARÃES, 1992:98).

In effect, an unprecedented phenomenon derived from the expanding scale of human activity has been scientifically documented over the past three decades. This trend has produced worldwide environmental impacts, such as global warming, the thinning of the ozone layer, the loss of biodiversity, the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes, and the gradual encroachment of desertification processes and drought. The acceleration of economic globalization and environmental deterioration has given rise to greater ecological and economic interdependence, making this a unique moment in history (MACNEILL et al, 1991). An equally unparalleled environmental regime, represented by a new generation of multilateral environmental accords, began to take shape after the Earth Summit. As was reaffirmed in the Rio Declaration, environmental issues constitute an primary dimension of development, one that goes to the very heart of production and consumption and that consequently influences every aspect of economic and social development.

The Rio-92 conference was a landmark event because it produced agreements that afforded more comprehensive treatment of global environmental issues by focusing on the goal of sustainable development. The five Rio agreements represented the most universal and coordinated political step taken in the early 1990s towards establishing an international system of cooperation for mainstreaming the environmental dimension into development. These instruments explicitly incorporate the concept of “common but differentiated responsibilities”, first formulated in Stockholm and fully acknowledged in principle 7 of the Rio Declaration.

Thanks to the worldwide awareness of countries’ interdependence in the face of global environmental problems, the legally binding instruments formulated in Rio de Janeiro were adopted and ratified more quickly than in previous decades and by practically all members States of the United Nations. The essential change of this new generation of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) has been the acknowledgment of an explicit correlation between environment, health, and production and consumption patterns, on the one hand, and, on the other, economic, commercial and social policies. This has been particularly evident in the Kyoto and Cartagena Protocols, and in the Rotterdam and Stockholm Agreements. Other advances post-Rio have also been embodied in other multilateral agreements with emphasis in environmental concerns that, due to the advance in scientific knowledge, represented emergent topics. This has been the case, for example, of the Global Program of Action for the Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities (1995), the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (1998) and the Stockholm Agreement on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001).

As one of the additional outcomes of the Earth Summit, the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) was incorporated into the international institutional structure in order to provide a more comprehensive, cross-sectoral follow-up for the Rio agreements. As provided for in Agenda 21, the Commission is to hold annual sessions for the purpose of assessing the progress made and anticipating new challenges based on an integral development perspective. This has fostered the gradual involvement of other sectors (energy, agriculture and health care, among others) and of national authorities responsible for environmental protection. Over the past decade, however, the CSD has faced two major difficulties: incorporating the environmental dimension into sustainable development, and the lack of integration with socio-economic policies. These obstacles have hindered policy coordination efforts to further integral development (DODDS et al, 2002). One of the positive aspects of the situation has been the

growing involvement of both global and regional agencies and bodies of the United Nations system which have been using innovative approaches in the follow-up to specific chapters of Agenda 21.

The post-Rio MEAs established their own institutional structure in the form of separate secretariats having specific mandates arising from the corresponding intergovernmental processes. The proliferation, however, of forums and secretariats for these treaties, and the growing number of intergovernmental organizations created to follow up on them have underscored the need to streamline the international management structure for sustainable development. Actually, the earliest multilateral treaty related to the environment dates back to 17 October 1868, the year the Mannheim Convention on the Rhine (on navigation and water pollution) was signed. Since then, the number has risen to at least 502 international treaties and other agreements related to the environment, of which 323 are regional. Nearly 60 percent, or 302, date from 1972, the year of the Stockholm Conference, to the present (UNEP, 2001).

Thus, the existence nowadays of over 500 legal instruments—which, in many cases, have no practical connection between one another—has given rise to a multilateral environmental treaty “traffic jam”. This fragmentation of the international environmental regime may also bring about important issues of governance, considering that some of these MEAs have not considered priorities of others. A case in point had been the negotiations that led to the Montreal Protocol on ozone depletion, which did not give an adequate treatment to the interconnections between ozone depletion and climate change.

Accordingly, a matter of particular concern to many countries has been the almost complete absence of synergies among these accords, even though, when they are viewed from a territorial perspective, some major areas of common ground can be found. A majority of these environmental agreements, with the exception of the Montreal Protocol and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora, have had very limited success in altering trends. Their wide geographic dispersion, the broad range of issues addressed, and the frequency and duration of meetings have caused the implementation of these agreements to come to represent a major technical and financial burden for the government institutions concerned. Finally, it must be mentioned that many nations have yet to comply fully with their obligations. Of the 182 parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, as of 2002, only about seventy have submitted National Priorities, and only twelve of the top 20 fishing nations have signed the 1995 UN Agreement Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Heavily Migratory Fish Stocks—just four have ratified it so far (WORLDWATCH, 2002:178-79).

In other words, the necessary clustering of MEAs is still a task that calls for completion. This might correct many of the prevailing difficulties, particularly those related to inadequate monitoring, compliance and enforcement tools mechanisms. In addition to that, difficulties are often expressed concerning both the overburden of national reporting required by MEAs, and the lack of regular reporting by many countries, as well as the lack of harmonization of the those that do submit national reports. The same may be said of the lack of integration of the most innovative forms of conflict resolution or dispute settlement institutions, methods and procedures into the international environmental governance.

Moreover, efforts to reconcile commercial goals and environmental needs have often failed, mainly due to a short-term approach to economic issues that deems necessary to assign “correct prices” to environmental services and natural resources (DE MIGUEL and NUÑEZ, 2001). Despite this belief, the solution to environmental problems requires a long-term undertaking, and their nature and characteristics make a full economic appraisal of such resources difficult. Attempts to deal with these problems have been hindered by uncertainties about the source, scope and magnitude of the harm done to health and the natural habitat by pollution, which makes it difficult to accurately calculate the costs of environmental damage (both past and present) and of the economic benefits of reducing pollution or conserving natural resources.

Finally, in contrast to the multilateral trading system, the management of international environmental affairs is marked by a scattered, far from coherent structure. This interferes with the reconciliation of environmental and economic interests. Against this backdrop and using biodiversity as an example, establishing the links between environmental and trade agreements is clearly a pending assignment. Developing countries are also under growing pressure to incorporate environmental components into trade agreements. In the region, this tendency has manifested itself most clearly in the environmental agreement paired with NAFTA and in the Canada-Chile Free Trade Agreement. In spite of strong resistance from Latin American countries, it has recently emerged once again during the negotiations for the establishment of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). As a result, environmental issues are now heavily represented in sub-regional integration agreements. The main objectives of including environmental issues in trade and integration agreements are to prevent the emergence of competitive advantages deriving from lax environmental standards (“environmental dumping”) and to ensure that environmental legislation is not used for protectionist purposes (ECLAC, 2002a). It has been correctly argued in this respect that the pressure to sustain competitiveness, to which countries are subjected by globalization, may prevent governments from taking steps to internalize environmental costs and improve environmental performance if this entails higher costs for domestic producers (ZARSKY, 1997; SCHAPER, 2001, RODRIK, 2002).

THE NATIONAL IMPACTS OF MEAs: INSTITUTIONAL AND REGULATORY PROGRESS IN ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT, POLICY INTEGRATION AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Within the public administration of the State, in the 1970s environmental management was entrusted to sectoral organs and then to environmental bodies at the Cabinet level associated initially with the health sector and subsequently, in the 1980s, with the urban development sector. In some cases, environmental management was tackled from the planning standpoint, with an intersectoral approach in the form of high-level advisory bodies close to the executive (councils, commissions or secretariats associated with the Executive branch of government). The 1980s were rather difficult years for environmental management due, in part, to the adjustment processes deriving from the economic crisis that affected most regions of the world, and this hampered the ability of the public sector to slow the environmental deterioration of critical ecosystems and keep pollution in check (GLIGO, 2001).

The drive towards modern institutions for the environment in the late 1980s and early 1990s gained strength after Rio-92, when most of the countries set up ministries to act as the highest environmental authorities, as part of a process designed to give environmental management the integral nature it calls for. Natural resources have always been the main basis for the economic development, so it is not surprising that for over a century they have been establishing sectoral bodies for the promotion and development of those resources, but it must be acknowledged that these bodies have not all grown up in the same way. In some countries, environmental functions were assigned to traditional bodies (in the fields of public health, agriculture, town planning, mining, etc.) and then passed on to intermediate authorities (advisory commissions at the highest levels of the Executive). In the most recent stage, new bodies have been set up which have often been the result of the grouping together of existing areas of government, now defined with broader objectives.

This last model now predominates, although there are still cases of environmental matters being integrated in a single body, subordinated to other sectors. Therefore, the highest authority for environmental matters usually takes one of two forms. In most cases, it is a ministerial body, but in others the authorities concerned are collegiate. In the latter case, the multisectoral nature of environmental management has led countries to place it at a higher level of government and, instead of establishing a ministry of the environment, they have preferred to set up a collegiate body with the participation of all the areas of the public administration whose decisions affect natural resources in some way. In some cases representatives of NGOs, academic circles, production sectors, etc., also participate in these bodies (UNDP, 1999, RODRÍGUEZ-BECERRA and ESPINOZA, 2002).

Progress in the institutional arena has also extended to supranational sub-regional integration and cooperation, through the generation of specific spaces for discussion and work. Latin America and the Caribbean is a case in point. Mexico, which is a contracting party to the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), is also a party to the parallel agreement on the environment among the NAFTA countries and their trilateral Environmental Cooperation Commission (ECC), which is designed to further cooperation on environmental matters among Canada, Mexico and the United States. In the Central American sub-region, the Central American Commission on the Environment and Development (CCAD) was set up in 1989 as part of the Central American Integration System (SICA), a Commission which is taking on great importance as a forum for ministers of the environment and of other areas. On the basis of common positions, these have proposed a number of sub-regional agreements on biodiversity, hazardous wastes, forests, among others, accompanied by a portfolio of environmental projects and a successful financial strategy. This boost for sustainable development issues was ratified by the signing of the Central American Alliance for Sustainable Development (ALIDES) in 1994, which considerably strengthens the integration of the subregion on the basis of a common approach to sustainable development.

In the case of the Caribbean, in 1994 the United Nations Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States adopted a full program of action which the Caribbean ministers undertook to apply in the sub-region. In South America, the same type of evolution has taken place within the Mercosur trade agreement, with the creation in 1996, subsequent to the 1991 Treaty of Asunción, of the Working Subgroup on the Environment. The member countries of the Andean Community, for their part, followed the same lines by

approving in 1999 the establishment of the Andean Committee of Environmental Authorities as a forum for discussion and consensus on this matter.

This new stage has led to some qualitative advances as regards the definition of the public authorities responsible for environmental management and various material aspects of the national legislation. Among the areas where there has been the greatest legislative progress, one can mention: environmental impact assessment; territorial planning; new offences and penalties; responsibility for damage to the environment; surcharges for pollution and other economic instruments; full endorsement of legal action to protect the environment; citizen participation mechanisms; and limitations of property rights for environmental reasons. Also important are reforms of sectoral laws regulating the exploitation, use and conservation of renewable and non-renewable natural resources.

Not less importantly, several Constitutions contain a number of provisions on the environment, especially those which formally recognize the goals of sustainable development and stipulate that the State has a duty to protect the environment and that all persons have the right to live in a suitable environment. Constitutional status has also been given to one of the most widespread environmental management instruments, the evaluation of environmental impact. Some central principles of the Rio Declaration, such as the precautionary and the “polluter pays” principles, have also been incorporated into some Constitutions, although they have mainly been incorporated into the framework of specific environmental regulations.

The process of integrating environmental policies into other sectoral policies has had its ups and downs in the decade since Rio (ECLAC and UNEP/ROLAC, 2001). Generally speaking, the concept of sustainable resource use and environmental conservation is only just beginning to be incorporated into the different production and services sectors. Traditionally, macroeconomic policy and sectoral policies in the fields of health, education, agriculture, mining, and so forth, have taken very little account of the environmental dimension. Numerous “market failures”, which are identified as one of the main underlying causes of environmental deterioration, reflects this situation. This is also the case in those sectors which make direct or indirect use of biodiversity, such as the agricultural, forestry, fishery and water resources sectors. Likewise, alongside the main environmental authority, many public agencies often have mandates for the administration of renewable natural resources (i.e., ministries responsible for fisheries, forestry or agriculture and the various agencies responsible for water resources, energy, etc.) which frequently overlap and give rise to inter-agency conflicts.

Within an international context characterized by economic instability and frequent financial crises, the scope for orienting public policies towards sustainable development becomes more uncertain, since priority tends to be given to sectoral-type policies rather than integrative policies such as those for sustainable development. Institutions regulating environmental matters face the growing challenge of designing environmental management instruments that can be both effective and economically efficient in the pursuit of environmental objectives, especially in view of the perception that traditional regulatory schemes have not been successful in dealing adequately with the processes of environmental deterioration that affect the region. Furthermore, because of the fiscal restrictions faced by most of the countries, environmental authorities have less scope for strengthening their capabilities through higher budget allocations and must therefore explore other means for self-financing environmental management.

As with institutions, regulatory frameworks for the environment also went through a process of evolution after the Rio Conference. Direct regulation has been the most popular way of approaching environmental problems in the world, with quality and emission or discharge standards being the most frequently used instruments (ACQUATELLA, 2001; STEINER, 2003). The main reasons for it have been the importance of assigning objective values to guide environmental management and the capacity for direct control by the authorities over the conduct of economic actors. During the last decade, an option which has found favor in the developed countries is that of using economic instruments in environmental management to complement traditional direct regulation schemes. These instruments provide greater flexibility, through price/cost incentives, as well as the possibility of obtaining income to finance environmental management and investment through specifically earmarked funds. One new development in this respect has been the use of environmental taxes as an integral part of the fiscal reform plans of the highly developed countries.

Another novel component of the concept of sustainable development in the institutional and regulatory front since the Earth Summit has been the already mentioned expansion of the participation of civil society and the productive sectors in the decision-making process. The possibility of developing sustainable societies requires the provision of the necessary information to civil society, so that its members can take part in the adoption of decisions affecting them and play a constructive, leading role. In the same way, the valuable experiments being carried out at the national and local levels, together with training for responsible participation, are vital elements for taking full advantage of the potential of civil society (GRINSPUN, ALVARENGA and SHAMSIE, 1999). This approach resulted in the institutionalization of citizen advisory bodies of varied and representative composition, and this process speeded up from mid-1990s onward, when many national sustainable development councils or commissions were set up. Their function is to ensure that national plans comply with the objectives of Agenda 21. One of the objectives of national sustainable development councils has been to promote participation in the process of generating public policies and open up spaces for the discussion of medium- and long-term strategies.

Nevertheless, various factors militate against the consolidation of these spaces at the national level, specially in the form of National Sustainable Development Councils. The fact that their functions are not clearly defined, the conflicts that hinder them from ensuring multi-sectoral composition and the difficulty of exerting real influence on other sectors, which regard them as merely “reactive” to the prevailing types of economic and social development, are all obstacles that limit the influence of these organs at the national level. These difficulties for participatory national spaces for sustainable development are somewhat lessened when local actors undertake these actions. As a matter of fact, decentralization processes have made a contribution in this respect, furthering the democratization of national politics and bringing governments closer to citizens. Generally speaking, the decentralization of environmental authority has been more hesitant in countries with a strong centralist tradition than in others, with the role of municipalities being limited to managing some urban services. The areas of decentralized authority usually cover such matters as the handling of solid and liquid wastes, green areas in towns, and soil conservation.

With regard to the promotion of economic instruments that require local capabilities, these have been transferred to the sub-national levels only to a lesser degree. The process of valuing the municipalities more highly as organs for promoting development at the local level is

supported by the provisions of Agenda 21, chapter 28 of which specifically identifies the sustainable development activities that are to be carried out at the local level. Thus, there have been initiatives at the municipal level which links together groups of municipalities to promote local versions of Agenda 21. Although concrete results are not yet sufficiently widespread, the approximately 7000 cities embarked in an Local Agenda 21 exercise attests to the fact also that there has been a very proactive tendency among local authorities to use long-term development strategies adopted on the basis of participatory planning processes envisaged by AG21. Among the many actions taken within this framework are sustainable land use, the fight against unemployment and social disintegration, the application of appropriate population and spatial distribution policies, rational use of energy, the establishment of sustainable systems of transport and communications, conservation and rehabilitation of historical and cultural heritage landmarks, and the improvement of rural settlements.

It is thus fair to state that there has been a growing movement towards changes in terms of mobilizing a civil society that increasingly demands greater spaces for participation: indigenous groups, different types of NGOs (in such areas as gender, the environment, economic and social development, the role of municipalities, etc.), business and trade associations, and consumers' groups. From their own standpoints and interests, these groups create greater awareness about sustainable development and promote more active forms of behavior. This tendency has been strengthened in recent years by the explosive growth of information and communications technologies and networks, thereby enabling these organizations to obtain information very rapidly and to work quickly, in close coordination.

Finally, another avenue for public participation has been expanding as well by the more active role of Parliaments world wide. Most countries have provided in their legislation for various forms of specialized participation in environmental matters, including mechanisms that give citizens access to information at different levels, representation of citizens' organizations on various collective bodies (national, regional or local councils on sustainable development or the environment, councils on protected areas or river valley areas, national commissions on climate change or biodiversity, etc.), and public hearings about granting environmental licenses for large scale or infrastructure projects. In order to strengthen the role of these forms of representation, institutions must be made accountable to the legislature, with express or implicit authority in environmental matters, as it takes place when instances such as those of ombudsmen have been created. So far, however, these have only been used in exceptional cases.

HAVE THE PROSPECTS FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT WORSENERD?

Humankind has given the impression, especially in the past decade, that it is acquiring a clear understanding of the challenges that modern civilization will have to overcome in order to survive. Yet, the issues that seem to permeate the political debate within and between nation-states bear little resemblance to ecopolitics. Certainly, there is much talk about starvation in Africa, the moral obligation to improve the distribution of resources on a global scale, and the need to reverse the degradation of tropical rain forests that harbor most species. Nonetheless, "defense"-related subjects dominate the public agenda. Governments all over the developed world recognize that starvation, pollution, and the squandering of resources are all part of the same ecopolitical equation. At the same time, their actions entirely elude the nature of the

environmental crisis. The naiveté of many world leaders today recalls the example offered by Alvin TOFLER (1974) about the simplemindedness of the elders of an Indian tribe that for centuries has lived off the produce of a river at its doorstep. Its culture and economy are based upon fishing, boat building, and harvesting the soil fertilized by the river, so that the future of this community merely repeats its past. But what happens when this tribe pursues its traditional style of development unaware that a dam is being built upstream? Its image of the future is misleading, dangerously misleading, for the river will soon dry up or become a trickle .

The search of solutions to the sustainability challenges in planetary scale will require new forms of articulation and coordination among the countries of the region, since the developed countries have demonstrated to act much more coordinated in the identification and defense of their shared interests. The latter has been demonstrated through confidential documents recently declassified, which revealed that even before Stockholm, the so-called Brussels's Group – Belgium, France, Germany, The Netherlands, United Kingdom and the United States-- plotted to resist the creation of UN Environmental Programme (UNEP) and to undermine environmental regulations. Are indeed quite revealing the behind the curtains maneuvers of this "unofficial policy-making body to concert the views of the principal governments concerned", and according to a note of one of the group's first meetings, "it will have to remain informal and confidential." This meeting took place in July 1971, nearly a year before the Stockholm conference opened. Written by an official in what was then the British Department of the Environment, this note goes on to say that Britain wanted to restrict the scope of the Stockholm conference and reduce the number of proposals for action. In an indirect reference to what would later become UNEP, the paper says a "new and expensive international organisation must be avoided, but a small effective central coordinating mechanism ... would not be welcome but is probably inevitable" (HAMMER, 2002).

Recalling Karl MARX (1963) assertion over one century ago, it does seem that history, once repeated, turns into farce. Indeed, many of the behaviors observed in these pre-Stockholm schemes reappeared in full gear during the phases that lead to Johannesburg-2002. At least in the United States, it has become public the intense behind the scenes lobby against the Rio+10 Summit. According to a press release by and environmental NGO, lobbyists financed with US\$850 thousand by the oil giant Exxon pressed President Bush not to attend the Summit and to boycott the negotiations on climate change (FRIENDS OF THE EARTH, 2002). The Exxon document alleges that "even more than the Rio Summit in 1992, the Johannesburg Summit is going to prove to be a global media stage for many of the most irresponsible and destructive elements involved in critical international subjects like the economy and the environment. Your presence would only serve as propaganda for and give credibility to anti-liberty, anti-people, anti-globalisation and anti-Western agendas." These lobbyists further advocated that "the least important theme among these global questions is that of climate change and we hope that your negotiators keep themselves away from this negotiation table and the focus of the meeting," In their opinion, "the worst result of Johannesburg would be any step towards an agreement on a World Environment Organisation, as suggested by the European Union." Unfortunately, these wishes became true and their lobby turned out to be quite successful.

In addition to multilateral and concerted regional actions, countries are required to redefine the concepts and practices of cooperation and of sovereignty for the consolidation of a new international order. An order in which national interests must converge with humanity's planetary interests as a whole, but in harmony with the sovereign rights of each country to decide

its future as a nation. Regionally, it is also urgent to define a vision of the future for Latin American and the Caribbean, and of the viability of the development that is needed and that it is wanted for the countries, individually, as well as for what they have in common as a region. In advancing a future for Latin America and the Caribbean in the XXI century, there is no doubt that the biological, cultural and social diversity of the region will play a decisive role in fostering sustainable development. At the level of the national strategies of development, it goes without saying that the relationship between environment and development faces perverse crossroads in this region: the situations of extreme poverty and of deep socioeconomic inequalities to that wide majorities have been relegated.

To further complicate matters, most scenarios discussed today about the new millennium emphasize the process of *globalization* (ECLAC, 2002a). Indeed, globalization includes different phenomena that are often misunderstood, leading to contradictory interpretations (GUIMARÃES, 2003c). Some authors define it exclusively in *economic* terms (increasing homogenization and internationalization of consumption and production patterns), in its *financial* expressions (the magnitude and growing interdependence of capital flows internationally), or also in its *commercial* aspects (increased external "exposure" and openness of national economies). Others prefer to emphasize the character of globalization in its *political* (widespread predominance of liberal democracies and of civil liberties worldwide, as well as new forms of social participation and empowerment) and *institutional* dimensions (prominence of market forces, increased convergence of regulatory mechanisms and instruments, increased flexibility of labor markets). Still others choose to highlight the speed of *technological change* (its impacts in the productive apparatus, in labor markets as well as in structures and relations of power) and the impressive revolution experienced by *mass media* ("massification" in access, transmission and dissemination of information, greater prospects for decentralization, possible erosion of national cultural identities).

However, making use of a somewhat different approach to analyze these clearly multifaceted phenomena –looking at globalization as a *process* more than as a group of specific *vectors* –some still prefer to study these from the viewpoint of *international relations* and of the emergence of new economic, commercial and political alliances and blocs. Not few, including myself, consider it more revealing to unveil globalization from a *sustainable development* perspective. These question, for instance, the economic rationality of globalization in its many dimensions vis-a-vis the logic and the pace of natural processes. In other words, capital (flows) may have become "globalized", yet the same has not taken place with respect to labor or natural resources.

Moreover, the prospects of a process of globalization founded upon an upward, unlimited and unchecked economic growth model are also seriously disputed, particularly in view of the reality of exhaustion of many natural resources (e.g., fauna, flora, non-renewable sources of energy) as well as of deterioration of natural processes which are crucial for the ecosystem viability of life on the planet (ozone layer, climate, etc.). As Kenneth Boulding, a leading pioneer of sustainability, sarcastically suggested "anyone who believe that exponential growth can go on forever in a finite world is either a madman... or an economist." Finally, those of us who subscribe to these and other serious reservations point also to the growing consensus about the social unsustainability of the current style of development, a reality of globalization in the midst of increasing social inequality and exclusion, a reality which certainly precedes but has been exacerbated by the very process of globalization (STIGLITZ, 2002).

One may deepen a *socio-environmental* standpoint by asserting that the character of globalization, or at least of the neoconservative ideology underlying and legitimating the hegemonic modernity of today's world, appear to leave but only two alternatives to emerging countries. Either these integrate themselves fully –albeit subordinated and dependent-- in the globalization bandwagon of the world market, or it will not remain nothing more to those countries than the reality of backwardness masked behind the illusion of autonomous development.

The position advocated here supposes that the foregoing standpoint in fact begs the real question. At the heart of today's challenges lies, not the inevitable tendency of insertion into a world increasingly globalized, but what mode of insertion is convenient to emerging economies, whether prevailing patterns of insertion allow these countries to retain the national control of growth, and what sort of alternatives allow these societies to maintain and foster social cohesion, cultural identity and environmental integrity. As Alfredo Calcagno, father and son, have appropriately pointed out in a brilliant book debunking neoliberalism (CALCAGNO and CALCAGNO, 1995):

"We are told that we must all board the modernity train (as if there was only one), even though we do not know where it will take us, we do not know whether we will be allowed to board it as full-fare passengers or service personnel who are sent back to their origin once the journey is over, or whether we will turn ourselves immigrant labor at the final destination. In short, we are being counseled, as sovereign countries, to adopt a behavior that no liberal (as a matter of fact, not even a sane person) would embrace at a railroad station..."

The expansion of the globalization process has also intensified latent tendencies to establish quantifiable, measurable parameters to all and every single phenomena of an socio-environmental nature. At the very outset, one must acknowledge that quantification or "parameterization" cannot aspire to a higher logic than human values. Thus, we should heed to the words of no other than Einstein himself, a hard scientist par excellence, who warned that "[mathematical laws]... insofar as they refer to reality, they are far from being true; inasmuch as they constitute something accurate, they do not reflect reality" (cited in CAPRA, 1975:39). Far from attempting to disqualify the mathematical, quantified base of economics, these comments point to deficiencies of economic theory, including environmental economics –not to be confused with ecological economics— to adequately grasp the complexities of socio-environmental phenomena. The later require interpretations that incorporate as well qualitative, institutional and historical aspects not easily or directly measured via quantitative parameters. Initiatives to establish indicators of sustainable development (GALLOPIN, 2003) such as the *Ecological Footprint* (WACKERNAGEL and REES, 1996; CHAMBERS, SIMMONS and WACKERNAGEL, 2000), the *Dashboard of Sustainability* (HARDI and SEMPLE, 2000) and the *Barometer of Sustainability* (PRESCOTT-ALLEN, 1997), among many others, are definitely a most welcome tendency in the right direction.

Still, much criticism has been levied also against recent attempts at valuation of the environment, for these (mistakenly) suppose that ecological cycles respond to the same *tempo* and processes that characterize economic, social and cultural processes (GUIMARÃES, 1998). Quite to the contrary, what is reprehensible is the neoconservative fundamentalism of trying to

put the market as an absolute, flawless deity, thereby reducing the entire challenge of sustainability to a simple question of "getting the prices right". It is undoubtedly far better to have at least some notion of the economic value of environmental goods and services, even if an arbitrary one, than to do not count on analytical tools to assist decision taking embedded in environmental regimes. It thus represent a step in the right direction the research efforts under way by a multi-disciplinary group of North-American scholars (CONSTANZA et al, 1997), who have endeavored to estimate the economic contribution of seventeen categories of environmental services provided by different ecosystems (pollination, erosion control, nutrients cycles, etc.) and distributed along sixteen biomes (forests, coral reefs, marshlands, etc.). Preliminary results have indicated that the average economic value of the total services offered by the biosphere amounted in 1997 to US\$33 trillion, as compared to a world Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of US\$18 trillion that year. If these services were to be traded in the market, the "price tag" of each of the seventeen services would have cost annually to the world economy from \$16 trillion to \$54 trillion.

No one would dispute the fact that studies such as the one just mentioned still suffer from several flaws, ranging from methodological to measurement ones, deficiencies that are intrinsic to pioneering efforts anyway. Confronted with this sort of criticism, the words of Paul Hawken come to mind: "while there may be no "right" way to value a forest or a river, there is a wrong way, which is to give it no value at all" (PRUGH et al., 1995:XV). Notwithstanding that, it must be underlined the arbitrary nature of any attempt at environmental economic valuation. This means that the degree of "arbitrariness" will be less socially and environmentally pernicious insofar as one is able to make these exercises, their methodologies and measurements absolutely transparent, as well as the decision making process derived from them. In this sense, valuation ceases to be an exclusively economic or technocratic endeavor and turns into a social one.

On the other hand, economic valuation itself must recognize its limits, specially those imposed by a development ethic without which society loses sight that the ultimate objective of valuation is not the market of transactions between consumers, but rather the improvement of the quality of life of human beings. In fact, it would be morally reprehensible to pose the question that underlies valuation exercises of how much one would be willing to pay for breathable air or climate stability. After all, no one would be willing to admit economic arguments of any order to justify that human lives can be justifiably taken away in exchange for some economic or commercial benefit. By the same token, assuming the "ontological" right to life as a moral value applicable also to non-human species and ecosystems, aspects such as time horizons of discount rates –foundations of valuation exercises—become crucially important. The question turns to be, for future generations of course, that what they may receive greater shares of "physical" economic capital in exchange for lower shares of natural capital, without being able to express their own preferences (it should be understandable the reasons why they cannot participate in today's market...). Furthermore, let us not forget that central to globalization is the growing tendency to homogenize cultural values and practices which are intrinsically dissimilar. The "value" of destroying the Amazon or the Argentine and Chilean Patagonia is obviously quite different for Brazilians, Chileans and Argentines than for Japanese, Europeans or North-American citizens, whereas the "benefits" –assuming a most optimistic globalization scenario—may indeed be globally "equivalent".

In short, it may be suggested that the single most important challenge facing the world in the New Millennium is in fact the *quality* of growth (i.e., the increase in the levels of well-being and

the reduction of the socioeconomic inequalities), much more than its *quantity* (i.e., the simple increment of material output). Ambassador Rubens Ricúpero, current Secretary General of UNCTAD, has been very fortunate when recalling “that the theory of the ‘trickle down effect’, of the priority of ‘growing the cake’ first, has never been correct, neither in China nor in the United States. It is not enough to increase wealth or to expand and improve education. They must be accompanied by indispensable distributive policies and corrective and compensatory policies to redress the injustices and imbalances of the past” (RICUPERO, 2001).

Equally fitting have been the words of the U.N. Secretary General, Kofi Annan, in a book of the University of United Nations on the implications of the process of globalization: “millions of people around the world experience it not as an agent of progress but as a disruptive and even destructive force, while many more millions are completely excluded from its benefits” (GRUNBERG AND KHAN, 2000, p. v). As mentioned already, many wrongfully view globalization as inevitable. Although it is true to say that its main engine is technology and the expansion and integration of markets, it is no less true that globalization is **not** a force of nature but the result of processes driven by human beings. As one of the editors of this book indicates, globalization needs to be controlled so that it can be put at the service of humanity, which means that it needs to be carefully administered, by sovereign countries at the national level, and through multilateral cooperation at the international level.” (GRUNBERG, 2000)

Accordingly, one must pay close attention to the implications of globalization for governance at all levels, planetary, regional, national and sub-national. Among many reasons because, just as the authors of the book introduced by Secretary General poignantly remark, world affairs are less and less the combined inter-dependencies among individual countries. Many global dynamics simply ignore national boundaries. The erosion of Nation States bring with it powerless governments and my lead to the end of governance. In their words, “many applaud this erosion of governance –indeed, many see it as the main attraction of globalization. *These are the true anarchists, perhaps more so than the masked youth that smashed windows at eh WTO meeting of Seattle in 1999.*” (idem, p. 3., emphasis added)

Lastly, but not less importantly, it constitutes cause for alarm the new geopolitical reality of security brought about by the events of 11 September 2001. Indeed, one of the most positive traits of the previous international atmosphere referred to the relative openness of the avenues for international negotiation, until the mid-eighties obstructed by the strategic security interests dominating the Cold War. This evolution had allowed humankind to put the environmental crisis at the forefront of the global agenda, not as a collateral effect of growth but as an intrinsic characteristic of the prevailing styles of development. It has not been for another reason that we left Stockholm after a narrowly devised Conference, designed to analyze the deterioration of the *Human Environment*; arrived in Rio aware of the bonds between *Environment and Development*; and were expected to land in Johannesburg to finally adopt decisions for *Sustainable Development*.

The brutal attack inflicted to the United States skyrocketed insecurity in the main world power to levels only comparable to the Berlin blockade or to the Soviet missiles crisis in Cuba. Regrettably, the initial and still predominantly military response resurrects the specter of a new Cold War that stands as a most unfortunate setback in international relations. It would be indeed unfortunate for the efforts of paving the transition to sustainable development if the world were to subordinate the social, environmental and institutional challenges of sustainability to

exclusively geopolitical considerations –that is to say, according to the limits and always problematic interpretations about what constitutes terrorist actions and movements or nationalist actions of protest or of legitimate resistance to foreign encroachment in national affairs.

In fact, history is full of examples of the perverse results of extreme fundamentalisms. If the previous millennium started with the globalization of the Christian Crusades against the Islam, which have conditioned the fate of civilization since then, it phantoms once again the specter opposing Western and Eastern societies' capricious fundamentalisms: economic and religious alike. One should not forget that today's religious fundamentalism of some countries date back precisely to resistance movements to the Crusades --the pre-modern version of the hegemonic, corporate driven "economic wisdom" of today. Many of those same highly organized movements that one could classify nowadays as being "terrorist" have their historical roots in this very same resistance to the Western, heavy-handed world view.

If it had seemed correct to suggest that the historical shift of the international agenda -- from an exclusively environmental one to one of sustainable development-- could be mostly explained by its ethical character, much in the same vein as the evolution experienced by its predecessors, the gender and the human and civil rights agenda (GUIMARÃES, 1996b), many have been warning about the threats posed to hardly fought and attained civil liberties by the measures being suggested to confront the new threats of international terrorism. Equally unfortunate would be to subordinate the collective interests of well-being and of material and spiritual growth to the fundamentalist interests of predominantly market forces. It would definitely represent a step backward to allow that the advances achieved in Western civilization, to a certain degree deepened by the new wave of globalization, be now threatened by the struggle against global terrorism.

No less disturbing has been also the tendency of granting priority to the individual, economic and strategic interests of hegemonic countries, downgrading the fight against poverty, for the reduction of inequities in wealth distribution, and for maintaining the carrying capacity of life support ecosystems, to the lower ladders of international priorities for cooperation. As Joseph Stiglitz, the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economics recognized one month after the attack to the Twin Towers, "there is the growing feeling that maybe we have made a mistake by putting too much emphasis in the selfish material interests, and too little in shared ones" (STIGLITZ, 2001). The risk of turning backwards in the sustainability path is thus real. Hopefully, it will prevail the understanding, as Stiglitz suggests, that "with globalization, comes interdependence, and with interdependence comes the need to adopt collective decisions in all areas that affect us collectively." The issue, therefore, is not whether one can be fully against or for globalization, but rather the consequences of uncritically accepting all facets of it. Klaus TÖPFER (2001), Director of the UNEP, the UN Environment Programme offers an adequate stand by stating that

"You cannot be for or against globalization. It is simply a fact of the modern world. To ignore it you would have to be a hermit or someone, like Robinson Crusoe, who has been abandoned on a desert island. But we need a just and fair system that brings sustainable, economic benefits to rich and poor countries alike. Without this, the forces that forge civil unrest and in the extreme can give rise to terrorism will continue to flourish impoverishing everyone."

In other words, the sad reality today is that thirty years after Stockholm, still await to be echoed by world leaders the warnings voiced by Margaret Mead. In her wise words, "we can recognize that the ways of our forebears are ways to which we can never return, but that the more we can recapture of this earlier wisdom, in a form we can understand, the better we can understand what is happening today, when a generation almost innocent of a sense of history has to learn how to cope with an unknown future, one for which they were not reared." (MEAD, 1970). Three decades later, and in light of the ups and downs of the sustainable development agenda and of its actual accomplishments in Latin America and the Caribbean, Lourdes de Santiago is also right when she reminds us the saying of a Mexican peasant that summarizes the present predicament with profound wisdom: "we were better off when we were worse off" (DE SANTIAGO, 2002). One cannot deny that the world has become extremely more complex in recent decades but it is also real the generalized feeling these days, despite the technocratic *naiveté* of the Stockholm pioneers of sustainability, that those had been certainly happy times although we did not know it.

THE TROUBLESOME GOVERNANCE OF ENVIRONMENTAL POLICIES: MAJOR ISSUES FOR STRENGTHENING IT AND THE NEED FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

As it is well-known, the "modern" notion of sustainability has its origin in the international debate which begun in 1972 in Stockholm and consolidated twenty years later in Rio de Janeiro. Notwithstanding the variety of interpretations found in the literature and in political speech, the great majority of conceptions represent variations on the definition suggested by the World Commission on Environment and Development, presided by the then Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Brundtland (1987). *Sustainable development is that which meets the needs of the present generation without compromising the possibilities of future generations to satisfy their own needs.* As a curious footnote, it should be indicated that, contrary to many views denouncing Marxism's "lack of concern" for the environment, apparently the Brundtland Commission was in fact inspired by the author of *Das Kapital* (MARX, 1967:776):

"From the standpoint of a higher economic form of society, private ownership of the globe by single individuals will appear quite as absurd as private ownership of one man by another. Even a whole society, a nation, or even all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the globe. They are only its possessors, its usufructuaries, and, like boni patres familias, they must hand it down to succeeding generations in an improved condition." (cited in BORÓN, 2000:40, emphasis added)

The often repeated statement that human beings constitute the center and the *raison d'être* of development calls for a new development style that is *environmentally* sustainable in the access and use of natural resources and in the preservation of biodiversity; that is *socially* sustainable in the reduction of poverty and inequality and in promoting social justice; that is *culturally* sustainable in the conservation of the system of values, practices and symbols of identity that, in spite of their permanent evolution, determine national integration through time; and that it is *politically* sustainable by deepening democracy and guaranteeing access and participation of all sectors of society in public decision-making. This new development style must be guided by a new development *ethics*, one in which the economic objectives of growth are subordinated to the laws governing the operation of natural systems, subordinated as well to the criteria of human dignity and of improvement in the quality of people's life.

Expressed in its simplest terms, *governance* may be thought of as the sum of many individuals and institutions, public and private alike, managing their common affairs, or as “the framework of social and economic systems, legal and political structures within which humanity organizes itself” (WHAT, 2001:3). The COMMISSION ON GLOBAL GOVERNANCE (1995) enlarged this definition by suggesting that “at the global level, governance has been viewed primarily as intergovernmental relationships, but it must be understood as also involving non-governmental organizations, citizen’s movements, multinational corporations, and the global capital market; interacting with these are global mass media of dramatically enlarged influence” (pp 2-3). Perhaps the most important, current feature of this understanding of governance stems from the growing importance of the role played by NGOs, mostly as a result not only of the increased awareness and demands for citizen’s participation in governance, but as reinforced also by the equally increased disenchantment with government’s performance in general –further restricted by the advance of market forces and of the neoconservative, anti-regulatory ideology (KORTEN, 1998 and 1999).

Governance issues have undoubtedly national and global implications. At the global level of decision-making, the United Nations represents the highest focus for arriving at a set of common rules of behavior, in multiple realms of societal affairs, designed by and (hopefully) abided by equally State and non-State actors. The sheer number of, in UN language, “multi-stakeholders” involved in this process poses a singular challenge to devise ways and means for strengthening governance. The original, close to fifty founding countries of the UN, with the end of colonialism and of the Soviet Empire, have been currently multiplied to almost 200 member-States, and accredited NGOs in the UN Economic and Social Committee alone number over 2,000 now.

One important, planetary issue for environmental governance is no doubt the provision of public goods and the corresponding sustainable management of the so-called “global commons” (BADEN, 1998; OSTROM, 1990; OSTROM et al., 2002). In fact, the growing interdependence of economic activities and the environment both increases the advantages of adequately providing international public goods and the negative consequences of neglecting their conservation for future generations. Persistent attempts to turn the concept of subsidiarity of the State vis-a-vis market mechanisms into the foundations for governing the commons compound the difficulties for concerted action internationally. As mentioned before, this only adds to the obstacles posed by the plethora of over 500 multilateral environmental agreements without the necessary articulations among them.

Paramount in this respect is the international trade regime embodied in the World Trade Organization (WTO). David KORTEN (1995) correctly recalls the fact that a key provision of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) creating the WTO “is buried in paragraph 4 of Article 44” (p. 174). A mandatory provision is made that “Each member shall ensure the conformity of its laws, regulations and administrative procedures with its obligations as provided in the annexed Agreements”, which include all the substantive multilateral agreements related to trade in goods and services and intellectual property rights. The judicial system of the WTO allows any member to question and eventually reverse a country’s law that requires imported goods to meet local or national health, safety, labor or environmental standards that exceed WTO accepted international standards.

The consequences of this rules for weakening or severely undermining governance of environmental laws, locally, nationally and internationally are becoming increasingly known. The world is slowly awakening for the actual Pandora box governments have opened by having a world organization unaccountable to the existing international and national regimes, with severe consequences for advancing social and economic development as well (RODRIK, 2002). A case in point are the glaring contradictions between the WTO provisions on intellectual property rights and the equivalent stipulations contained in the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Most regional trade agreements fall also under the WTO international trade regime, and it has been increasingly documented the potential and successful challenges brought about by dissatisfied parties, mostly private, mostly transnational corporations, once the interests labor, health, equity or environmental issues infringe in the interests of capital (see, for instance, IISSD-WWF, 2001). The implications of this state of affairs are indeed cause for grave concern. Particularly once we acknowledge that any offended party can challenge provincial, state and local laws and regulations within the jurisdiction of member countries, even though these are not signatories to the agreements construed by the WTO.

Despite the fact that the WTO represents an agreement among countries, disputes are often bought about by transnational corporations, which leads to an odd predicament. As Robert KUTTNER (1999) points out, “these corporate global New Dealers are naïve, caught in a catch-22 situation: 1) a global social contract must be brokered and enforced by global economic institutions, 2) in the absence of world government, global economic institutions are captured by global business interests, and 3) global business interests are opposed to a social contract” (p. 4). The fact of the matter is that there is a clear tendency for the trade regime to become *primus inter paris* among other international regimes (environmental, gender, human rights, and so forth). This poses unforeseen questions precisely to the environmental regime. Within a framework that, at the same time, requires and attempts to reinforce the empowerment of local communities – where environmental plights arise in the first place— the institutional framework put in place by the trade regime clearly runs against it.

The predominance of business interests is attested by David KORTEN (1995:177), who mentions that although the composition of the three advisory committees to the U.S. trade representative’s office calls for a balanced representation of different actors, of the 111 members, in the early 1990s, only two represented labor unions, the seat slotted for an environmental advocacy organization had not been filled, and there where no consumer representatives. Interestingly enough, specially for the present analysis of environmental governance, of the ninety-two corporations represented in these committees, twenty-seven had been fined by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency with a total of more than \$12 million for failing to comply with environmental regulations between 1980 and 1990.

Further aggravates this circumstance the veil of secrecy that has become a trademark of negotiations leading to this international regime (FONES-WOLF, 1994; KEGLEY and WITTKOPF, 1999; WALLACH and SFORZA, 1999, GIBBONS, 1999). Briefly explained, when a national or local law is challenged, the case is reviewed in a secret hearing before a panel of three trade experts. The documents presented to the panel are secret, as the individual experts’ vote, and alternative presentations may be made entirely at the discretion of the panel. The final recommendations are automatically adopted sixty days afterwards, unless they are rejected by an

unanimous vote of the WTO's members –a virtual impossibility, unless the beneficiary country have a sudden change of hearts an vote against a favorable decision.

In short, one may advocate, from a human dimensions viewpoint of global environmental change, that the greatest challenge for governance in environmental matters result precisely from the metamorphosis of economics from a scientific discipline “for which we have admiration bordering on adoration” into an “ideology, which we should fear.” (LOWI, 2001: 132). It is about time, paraphrasing the widely known title of the 1979 Aaron WILDAVSKY's classic treatise on public policy analysis, that, as Lowi puts it (*ibid.*), “we must speak truth to power, but is it power willing to listen?”

To begin with, the historical record indicates that a free market does not make it free for all actors, nor make these actors emerge and prosper without an important support from the State. As a matter of fact, the more we advance in the world of corporate transnationals, the more State intervention is needed to guarantee the functional, institutional, legal an policy related requisites for their operation. The amounts to the hypocrisy of “free” trade, which appears to be applied in developing countries only, much less protectionist today than the most advanced economies of the world (RODRIK, 2001).

In addition to that, free trade is actually the free, unregulated and unrestricted flow of capital. After all, as some have caustically suggested, if we really meant “free trade”, there would not be a need for the several hundreds of pages of GATT. Simply one agreement would suffice, thereby abolishing all tariffs and duties on imported goods. Much to the contrary, what we see are thousands and thousands of pages of trade related international dispositions that actually increasingly reduces the sovereignty of national States to manage the social contract upon which these are founded –social, cultural, labor, health, environment and many other related policies and institutions. In short, the more “free trade”, unfortunately and contrary to what ideologues disguised as experts and scientists proclaim, the less and more weakened social obligations become worldwide. The same social obligations –the so-called human and social rights of citizens, and citizenship itself—that have been hard fought and hard attained through social, political and even revolutionary struggles throughout history.

Definitely, it does not sound too “post-modern” or “politically correct”, as a new millennium is inaugurated, to question the ideology of free trade –at least from the standpoint of a neo-conservative globalization. Yet, the beginnings of new millennium has a lot in common with the previous ones, for the First Millennium also got off with the “globalization” of Christianity through its eight Crusades, carried out supposedly to open the doors for Muslim “pagans” of the Christian “heaven” (and not so heavenly institutions as well...). Expeditions that, beyond the chivalrous and righteous character that history books teach us, were in fact organized as military expeditions to open new routes to the commerce, to conquer Muslim territories or simply to solve feudal disputes back home. Thus, not very different of the current “crusades”, supposedly fostered in name of the also superior and more civilized values of free market, and of the free circulation of capitals. Perhaps the greatest difference in this “repetition of history” is the fact that the “Christianization” of those not yet blessed by the promises of the paradise of the free market and of free trade, are now carried out differently. The horses and the catapults of the previous millennium have been now substituted by more civilized, evangelizing instruments, such as the Bretton Woods institutions, with their modern appendices like the World Trade Organization.

The overall position defended here has been echoed also by Herman DALY (1996), a distinguished economist himself, when he uncomfortably recognizes that “my major concern about my profession is that our disciplinary preference for logically beautiful results over factually grounded policies has reached such fanatical proportions that we economists have become dangerous to the earth and its inhabitants” (p. 230). The fundamentalist, *fanatical* aspect of the economic ideology underneath the free trade international regime is once again pictured by Theodore LOWI (2001: 138), when he reminds us that “if Ronald Reagan had been running for office in 1920 instead of 1980, he could have been imprisoned along with Sacco and Vanzetti for his criminally anarchic proclamation that ‘Government is not the solution: it is the problem’.”

In actual fact, as Herman Daly correctly suggests, instead of using the appealing label of “free trade” (after all, nobody would be against the idea of freedom), we should use the more accurate description of “deregulated international commerce”. As for the alleged inefficiency of government’s regulations interfering with international trade, DALY (1993:231) indicates that, contrary to the theory of comparative advantages, more than half of today’s trade involves the simultaneous import and export of essentially the same goods. In his words, “for example, Americans import Danish sugar cookies, and Danes import American sugar cookies; exchanging recipes would surely be more efficient... more in accord with Keynes’ dictum that knowledge should be international and goods homespun (or, in this case, home-baked).”

This approach to the environmental repercussions of a process of globalization deep-rooted in the unrestrained expansion of trade, above any other considerations germane for a sustainable development to materialize, can be summarized as follows:

“The impacts of globalisation on environmental management capacities cut two ways: they constrain governments and they enhance the influence of markets on social and economic outcomes. Markets in turn influence environmental performance through a variety of channels, including technology transfer, changes in the level of demand for environment-intensive goods, substitution effects, green consumerism and others. Rather than triggering a downward spiral, the primary impact of globalisation is to keep environmental policy initiatives “stuck in the mud”. On the one hand, the constraints of competitiveness induced by globalisation retard the capacity and willingness of nation-states to take any unilateral measures, which impose costs of good environmental management on domestic producers. On the other hand, the pressures of policy convergence mean that measures, which are taken, will only be those in step with primary competitors. The net results are first, that markets become the primary drivers of changes in environmental performance, and second, that environmental managers are pressured to maintain the status quo or to change it only incrementally.” (WHAT 2001b:18)

In synthesis, we may suggest that the most pernicious aspect of the international trade regime for governance in general, and particularly for environmental governance, is the fact that, instead of deregulating the economy, what we have witnessed in the recent waves of globalization has been precisely the intensification of *social* regulation to the detriment of the sustainability of development, the weakening of democratic politics and the disempowerment of citizenship. After all, citizenship has always been defined by rights, not by obligations. The latter can only be brought about by the rule of law, and the former can only be conceived with some form of State intervention. Consequently, we may conclude that that the international trade

regime, as it stands nowadays, amounts to “nothing more than a new feudalism, an escape from citizenship into labor and consumer serfdom, depending upon the good will of the corporate lord” (LOWI, 2001:145). Thus, insofar as environmental politics are concerned, the regulatory requirements for the sustainable use of the Earth’s resources and environmental services seem inevitable, and its governance runs definitely against the international trade regime. As Theodore LOWI (2001), once again, concludes:

“Environmental pollution and the use of non-renewable resources are like any public goods: there is an disincentive among all players (especially if they are competitors in a competitive market) to do the right thing because others could share in their contribution without paying, and worse, the added cost of doing the right thing – whether is cleaning exhaust gases or paying above subsistence wages—would force the good guys out of the market. Regulation imposing a higher standard on all players makes all players good citizens and improves the public space by raising the field of competition while keeping it level” (p. 146).

This last comment requires further clarification on the role of markets, actually compounding the difficulties for environmental governance. Reference is made here to the fact that for markets to operate adequately, property rights must be clearly established. However, the private enforcement of property rights would inevitably lead to conflict. As Mancur OLSON (2000:XI) points out, “an economy that relied on private enforcement may even lose the peaceful order that allows the existence of spot markets... Prosperous economies need market-augmenting governments.” Olson’s concept of a “peaceful order as a public good” appears to be most germane for the difficulties mentioned for the emergence of market-driven environmental governance.

For one, because the difficulties of voluntary collective decisions increases as the number who benefit from a collective good also increases. Even though small communities may arrive at agreements which allows for the collective provision of public goods, large groups of stakeholders –precisely the case with the environment-- cannot serve their common interests through voluntary actions. As one of the most creative intellectuals doing research on the “logic of collective action”, the late Mancur OLSON (1965) states, “there is no case in the historical record that I can find where any substantial population has, through voluntary collective action of any kind, established a peaceful order” (OLSON, 2000:90).

On the other hand, if one expects that public regulation oriented to the common good of global society --instead of to the common good of corporate interest-- is the most guaranteed path to strengthen governance of environmental policies nationally and internationally, the future seems indeed gloomy. Using the timely analysis of Immanuel WALLERSTEIN (1997, all quotes, although taken from the electronic version, refer to the pages of the 2002 Spanish publication), one may subscribe to his “in-between” approach along the continuum from those who believe that doomsday is imminent to those who consider the problem is within the possibility of a way-out technical solution. He thus engages in analyzing these prospects the issue from the viewpoint of the “political economy of the world-system”.

Wallerstein’s analysis departs from a two-fold assumption. First, “capitalism is a system that has an imperative need to expand in terms of total production, expand geographically in order to sustain its prime objective, the endless accumulation of capital.” Second, “an essential

element in the accumulation of capital is for capitalists, especially large capitalists, not to pay their bills; this is what I call the ‘dirty secret’ of capitalism” (p. 117). It should be noted, however, that the first aspect is not restricted to capitalists. Thanks in part to the democratization of consumer wants brought about by globalization, increasing numbers of ordinary citizens also wish for capitalist expansion. The real issue then turns to be who pays the cost of environmental externalities, whether the State directly or society. Also, whether this can be accomplished by either cleaning up environmental degradation or investing in replenishing the stock of natural resources (or, still, in looking for substitutes or, at least, substituting non-renewables by renewables).

In view of this situation, Wallerstein agrees with business positions that these alternatives are too costly, and threaten the maintenance of the average rate of profit. To insist in the internalization of the costs of natural resource depletion and environmental pollution, seriously carried out, “could well serve as the coup de grace to the viability of the capitalist world-economy.” In his own words,

“Whatever the public relations stance of individual enterprises on these questions, we can expect unremitting foot-dragging on the part of capitalists in general. We are in fact faced with three alternatives. One, governments can insist that all enterprises internalize all costs, and we would be faced with an immediate acute profits squeeze. Or, two, governments can pay the bill for ecological measures (clean-up and restoration plus prevention), and use taxes to pay for this. But if one increases taxes, one either increases the taxes on the enterprises, which would lead to the same profits squeeze, or one raises taxes on everyone else, which would probably lead to an acute tax revolt. Or, three, we can do virtually nothing, which will lead to the various ecological catastrophes of which the ecology movements warn. So far, the third alternative has been carrying the day. In any case, this is why I say that there is “no exit,” meaning by that that there is no exit within the framework of the existing historical system.”
(WALLERSTEIN 2002, pp. 121-122)

In short, the two problematic elements of the role of markets in environmental governance, namely Olson’s comments on the increasing difficulties for voluntary collective actions, and Wallerstein’s remarks about “foot-dragging” strategies to avoid regulatory measures to make business or consumers internalize the environmental costs of production, if both are accepted, lead to some troublesome conclusions. First of all, many (the “Nationalists” and some “Liberals”, according to the classification proposed by VIOLA and LEIS, 2001) would advocate that anything short of an about-turn in current environmental policies will be only courting disaster, as the piece-meal approach to climate change of the Kyoto Protocol may be indicative of. Secondly, and as a consequence of the reality that a radical change is highly unlikely and, consequently, reformist strategies will be the order of the day, one must acknowledge the clear limits of reformism in environmental policies. It seems inescapable that reformism as a response to the crisis of sustainability, albeit it may represent the realpolitik prevailing in the world, would only buy Gaia’s time. But then the question turns to be whether the historical time frame for social change is congruent with the cycles of nature, particularly its regenerative one (i.e., how long it would take to restore climate stability once the world gets off of oil; or for the ozone layer to be repaired). Likewise, it becomes vital the search for answers to the scientific question of “thresholds” (i.e., when does climate havoc become “no return” irrespective of piecemeal advances in actual policies).

If the above discussion may seem locked in a catch-22 type of argument, one in which the remedies may end up being far worse than the environmental ailments of the planet, the position advocated here is more kin to the optimism of Immanuel Wallerstein. In his view, we are in the period immediately preceding a bifurcation, when “the present historical system is in fact in terminal crisis.” The challenge before us is what will replace it, and for him “the issue of ecological degradation, but not of course only this issue, is a central locus of this debate.” In my view, following in the footsteps of the pioneer analysis of Herbert SIMON (1957), Wallerstein argues that this debate is about substantive rationality, and “we are struggling for a solution or for a system that is substantively irrational.” It may be justified to reproduce his words at length:

“The concept of substantive rationality presumes that in all social decisions there are conflicts between different values as well as between different groups, often speaking in the name of opposing values. It presumes that there is never any system that can realize fully all these sets of values simultaneously, even if we were to feel that each set of values is meritorious. To be substantively rational is to make choices that will provide an optimal mix.

.....

The traditional argument of entrepreneurs is that such social decisions are best arrived at by the accumulation of individual decisions, on the grounds that there is no better mechanism by which to arrive at a collective judgment. However plausible such a line of reasoning may be, it does not justify a situation in which one person makes a decision that is profitable to him at the price of imposing costs on others, without any possibility for the others to intrude their views, preferences, or interests into the decision. But this is what the externalization of costs precisely does.” (WALLERSTEIN 2002: 117).

As if to reinforce Wallerstein understanding, it comes immediately to mind the words of none less than one of the founding fathers of neoclassical economics, the true believer on “laissez-faire laissez-passer”, Adam SMITH (1776) himself. In order to get across his political economy view across about the tendency of the proprietor classes to connive in reducing worker’s wages and thwarting consumer’s rights, Smith is quite candid and direct: “people of the same trade seldom meet together even for merriment and diversion, but the conversation ends in a conspiracy against the public or some contrivance to raise prices” (1977: Book One, Chapter 10, p. 16).

To put it briefly, one is forced to concur with Wallerstein’s and many others conclusion that we may be indeed in the midst of profound transformations of the capitalist system, at least as we have experienced it up to now:

“No exit? No exit within the framework of the existing historical system? But we are in the process of exit from this system. The real question before us is where we shall be going as a result. It is here and now that we must raise the banner of substantive rationality, around which we must rally. We need to be aware that once we accept the importance of going down the road of substantive rationality, this is a long and arduous road. It involves not only a new social system, but new structures of knowledge, in which philosophy and sciences will no longer be divorced, and we shall return to the singular epistemology within which knowledge was pursued everywhere prior to the creation of the capitalist world-economy. If we start down this road, in terms of both the social system in which we live and the structures of knowledge we use to interpret it, we need to be very aware that we are at a beginning, and not at all at an end. Beginnings are

uncertain and adventurous and difficult, but they offer promise, which is the most we can ever expect.”(WALLERSTEIN 2002:127).

A final comment is in order, though from a different perspective. If the foregoing analysis refer to macro-systemic challenges, environmental governance is not easy to achieve nationally either. For instance, William LEISS (1996), President of the Canadian Academy of Sciences, argues that the competence of national governments in environmental matters have been substantially hampered in recent years, due, among many aspects, to inter-jurisdictional disputes between different government agencies and to the misuse or failures of science in decision-making. According to Leiss, this situation, which he termed “policy traps”, results from the fact that (1) policy requires “yes/no” decisions, whereas science is constantly evolving from one level of uncertainty to another; (2) environmental policymaking evolves in a political context where most issues suffer precisely from the most imperfect scientific understanding; and (3) environmental issues are based on long-term trends, whereas government decisions have a severe immediacy. The natural conclusion is that “to the extent to which the scientific personnel drop their primary focus on actually doing scientific research, and get drawn into protracted policy warfare, they are asked to perform functions for which they have had no decent training or experiential background whatsoever, becoming easy prey for the professional policy specialists in the system, especially those who haunt the central agencies of government” (pp. 3- 4).

The illustrations given by William Leiss, for instance, about the historical record of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency in screening for “toxic substances” is surely telling. Between 1976 and 1984, the EPA placed regulatory controls on exactly four chemicals of the literally dozens of thousands potentially dangerous substances. Similar provisions for pesticides indicates that “only six of six hundred active ingredients... had been fully tested”. In the case of Canada, of the 28,000 substances listed in the “Domestic Substances List”, by 1994 risk assessments had been completed on 44, and 25 were certified as “toxic”. Of these, exactly four had been regulated as of 1995. (idem, p. 7). In this context, Leiss could not be more correct when he suggests that, as far as governance goes, a far superior model for pollution prevention would be to expand the use of cooperative, negotiated frameworks for environmental protection.

In the same vein, even if one may accept that everything is potentially hazardous for humans, it does not follow that everything is unacceptably risky, which means that a radically different mode of pollution prevention is called for. Instead of attempting to regulate and outlaw new risks --the basis for current policies and management, the new foundations should be that “the creation of new risks of a lesser magnitude ought to be not just tolerated, but rather positively encouraged” (idem, p. 22). The assumption being that technologies entail specific types of risks, whose benefits tend “to be amplified in scope and elaborated in detail, requiring new technologies to provision them”.

Consequently, much needed research must be undertaken. Many of these avenues have been explored in these pages. Others deserved to be mentioned as well. Insofar as trying to tame the unrestricted flow of speculative capital that threatens financial stability and political and social unrest, it needs to be further studied the proposals such as the Tobin Tax, first introduced in 1978 by the Nobel laureate James Tobin, a small tax that would be levied on foreign-exchange transactions. In addition to reducing the incentives for short-term speculation, a proposal such as this could yield much needed resources for sustainable development. A recent estimate indicates, for example, that a tax of only 0.1 percent of the daily currency transactions could represent as

much as \$400 billion a year, or forty times the entire budget of the UN and its specialized agencies (WORLDWATCH, 2002).

Research is also called for on the possible impacts, and ways of strengthening, private, voluntary schemes for environmental governance, such as the ISO 1400 series of the International Organization for Standardization (1996), the Global Reporting Initiative launched in 1999 by UNEP and the U.S. CERES Coalition of over seventy major companies, the Standards for Corporate Social Responsibility set forth in 1999 by the also business-led coalition Social Venture Network, and the more recent UN Global Compact unveiled by the UN Secretary General in 2000 and supported so far by over 300 companies

As previously alluded to, global governance, once viewed primarily as concerned with inter-governmental relations, now involves not only governments and inter-governmental institutions but also NGOs, citizen's movements, transnational corporations, academia, and the mass media. And the fact of the matter is the sudden increase in actors, and the corresponding enlargement of the negotiation tracks for tackling environmental challenges, have not be equaled in terms of understanding how new mechanisms can be put forth to deepen both dynamics and, at the same time, increase the overall governance of the international system.

Finally, the most recent feature in the landscape of environmental policies globally have been the much heralded "partnerships" between government, business, civil society organizations, as launched in the context of the Johannesburg-2002 Summit. More than reality, up to this moment these constitute still only a promise, and the positive and unanticipated, perhaps negative consequences for environmental governance, accountability, democratic politics and equity have been rarely subjected to scrutiny o far.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: ETHICS, SUSTAINABILITY AND "THE ABOLITION OF MAN"

The observations introduced throughout this essay require further comments about the *ethical* foundations of sustainable development. In fact, this new development ethics requires that economics rescue its roots, identity and initial purposes as *oikonomy*, or the material supply of the *oikos*, the human home. In a most fortunate coincidence, the same semantic root of ecology, the study of the laws that govern this home. Unfortunately, with the acceleration of modern times, economics has ceased to study ways and means to achieve well being for people. It has turned into and end in itself, a science in which anything that does not have monetary value, anything that cannot have a price attached to it, is not worthy or valuable. This is turning into one of the most pernicious fetishes of modern times, despite the warnings of economists of the stature of 1999 Nobel Price Winner Amartya SEN (1986: 202, see also SEN, 1989):

"Economics assigns an order of preferences to a man and when it is needed it assumes that this utility function reflects his own interests, represents his well being, summarizes his idea of what should be done and describes his choices... In effect, the purely economic man is almost mentally retarded from a social point of view. Economic theory has dedicated much attention to this rational fool comfortably relaxed behind his unique order of preferences for all purposes."

Empirical reality indicates also that wealth accumulation or economic growth does not constitute and has never been a requirement or precondition for development. Human welfare options are projected well beyond economic welfare. Wealth in itself is not the decisive factor, rather it is the use a community gives to its wealth. Just as a person can spend all of his or her income on drugs or on his/her children's education, so countries may spend their assets on weapons or invest in improving the quality of life of its populations. Numbers clearly indicate that countries with equivalent levels of economic riches have radically different welfare levels.

Successive Reports on Human Development published by the United Nations Development program (UNDP, 1990, 1999) clearly indicate that wealth has concentrated in the past fifty years in a way never been seen before. If in 1960 the 20 percent wealthiest people held 70 percent of the world's product, this percentage increased to 82.7 and 86 percent in 1990 and 1998 respectively. Meanwhile, the 20 percent poorest have seen their income fall from 2.3 percent to 1.3 and one percent of the world's products during the same period. Put it differently, in 1960 the gap between rich and poor was 30 times, and increased to 63 times when the eighties began. By the end of the decade (1998), the gap was 86 times already. If in the sixties 358 individuals amassed material wealth equivalent to that of 45 percent of the world population, in 1998 this VIP group was reduced to merely 283 people. More striking, the 3 richest persons of the world today enjoy a wealth equivalent to the GNP of the 43 poorest countries.

Expressing these figures in more *human* terms, they indicate that if we could picture each one of 100 inhabitants of a "global" village, 57 would be from Asia, 21 Europeans, 14 of the Western Hemisphere and 8 Africans. Seventy-five percent would be ethnically non-white. Six villagers would concentrate two-thirds of the entire wealth of the community, and all would be North Americans. Eighty of each 100 would live in precarious housing, 70 would be illiterate, 50 suffer from malnutrition and only one would have achieved university education. Living in the Cyber Age, almost 40 would have never received or placed a telephone call.

Finally, if we add the product of all developing countries, these would barely reach the assets of the 300 largest transnational companies. Actually, a recent study reveals, in addition to the growing equity gap between humans, the unprecedented power amassed by transnational corporations in recent decades. The 51 largest economies of the world today are actually corporations, which assets greater than the combined GDP of the economies of the developing world. General Motors' assets tops the wealth of Denmark, IBM is equivalent to Singapore, and Sony to Pakistan. The 200 largest corporations, while employing only 0.78 percent of the labor force, respond to 27 percent of the world's product (ANDERSON AND CAVANAGH, 1999). This combined reality of wealth inequalities and power concentration has led the UNDP (1999) to state that "*the new globalization rules – and the actors that write them – are aimed at integrating global markets, neglecting the needs of the people that the markets cannot satisfy. This process is concentrating power and is marginalizing poor countries and people.*"

As a matter of fact, one should not need the recourse of an empirical argument to justify the foregoing remarks. The very approach to these issues adopted by some of the founding fathers of neoclassical economics could not have been more straightforward. It is indeed quite revealing in this respect to reproduce at length the thoughts of no other than John Stuart MILL (1987) himself, curiously published in the same year of the *Communist Manifesto* (MARX and ENGELS, 1969) came to light, although from the opposite end of ideological spectrum:

"I cannot, therefore, regard the stationary state of capital and wealth with the unaffected aversion so generally manifested towards it by political economists of the old school. I am inclined to believe that it would be, on the whole, a very considerable improvement on our present condition. I confess I am not charmed with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on; that the trampling, crushing, elbowing, and treading on each other's heels, which form the existing type of social life, are the most desirable lot of human kind, or anything but the disagreeable symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress.

...

That the energies of mankind should be kept in employment by the struggle for riches, as they were formerly by the struggle of war, until the better minds succeed in educating the others into better things, is undoubtedly more desirable than that they should rust and stagnate. While minds are coarse they require coarse stimuli, and let them have them. In the meantime, those who do not accept the present very early stage of human improvement as its ultimate type, may be excused for being comparatively indifferent to the kind of economical progress which excites the congratulations of ordinary politicians; the mere increase of production and accumulation ...I know not why it should be matter of congratulation that persons who are already richer than any one needs to be, should have doubled their means of consuming things which give little or no pleasure except as representative of wealth...It is only in the backward countries of the world that increased production is still an important object.

...

It is scarcely necessary to remark that a stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement. There would be as much scope as ever for all kinds of mental culture, and moral and social progress; as much room for improving the Art of Living, and much more likelihood of its being improved, when minds ceased to be engrossed by the art of getting on ...Only when, in addition to just institutions, the increase of mankind shall be under the deliberate guidance of judicious foresight, can the conquests made from the powers of nature by the intellect and energy of scientific discoverers become the common property of the species, and the means of improving and elevating the universal lot." (pp. 759-751)

It should be abundantly clear, from an *ethics of sustainability*, that it does not make any sense to reinvent a new society based on a movement of expansion of markets, even more so once it is acknowledged that technological progress remains the driving force of globalization. If this could be somewhat correct in terms of production, the evolution of humankind indicates that technology must be oriented by a value system. Without these, without a new ethics of development, the human being is simply an artifact, devoid of humanity.

The yearning for unlimited, unregulated and unrestricted growth, based on the belief of an equally unbounded technological progress, the only and unfortunate situation it produces is the alienation of human beings, transforming them into robots that crave for the satisfaction of his or her immediate material needs. Robots accumulating possessions that bear no relation with the needs for survival or for spiritual growth. In spite of the fact that we have been taken to believe blindly that the more we become consumers instead of citizens, the more we will come closer to freedom and happiness, the truth is that we become less humans in this process. By means of a subtle indoctrination process, and using the appropriate ideology, this task is generally carried without much effort. Truly, this is carried out so well that most of us believe that it is obeying his or her own will, without noticing that this "will" has been conditioned and manipulated in favor of a new modernity embedded in the globalization of the markets.

It is curious to notice, in this respect, the words of Marx written more than one century ago, from an opposing ideological standpoint of scholars such as the already quoted Adam Smith and Stuart Mill, and when the internationalization of capitalism was still crawling and nobody could imagine the point it will arrive at. Commenting on private property and the distinction between "being" and "having", Marx poignantly denounced that:

"Private property has turned us so stupid and partial that an object is only ours when we have it, when it exists for us as capital or when we directly eat it, drink it, use it, inhabit it, etc.; in short, when we use it somehow... In this way, all our physical and intellectual senses have been replaced by the simple alienation of all of these. The less you are and the less you express your life, the more you have and more alienated your life is... All of what economists takes from your life and from your humanity is returned to you in the form of money and wealth". (cited in FROMM, 1962:48)

The contrast of being or having was also prominent in the thought of Erich FROMM (1978), who warned one hundred years later that "love [and solidarity] is *not* something that one can have, but a process... I can love, I can be in love, but I don't have... anything; in fact, the less I have, the more I am able to love." Contrary to the maximum precepts of the neoliberalism --I consume, ergo I exist-- with its corollary of "if I am consumer I am a free citizen", Fromm pointed out almost three decades ago: "to *have* freedom doesn't mean to be liberated of all the principles that guide life, but the freedom to grow in agreement with the laws of the structure of the human existence; on the other hand, the freedom in the sense of not having impediments, of being free of the yearning to have things and the own ego, it is the precise condition to love and to be productive".

Reiterating the basic argument behind the present analysis, current affairs reveal that sustainable development has become such an indispensable reference in political, corporate and civil society discourse that ends up running the risk of losing much of its meaning for social change, and of being reduced in strategic importance to a simple rhetorical resource (GUIMARÃES, 1995; LELE, 1991; NAREDO, 1998). It is in fact impressive the unanimity in favor of sustainability, as it is equally impressive the impossibility of finding any social actor of importance not committed to sustainable development. Being that as it may, sustainability faces the prospect of transforming itself from being a strong "candidate to paradigm" to becoming a convenient "politically correct slogan." William LEISS (1996), for instance, is basically correct when he states that "sustainable development is a doctrine that was never very clear to begin with, has not gained a great deal of additional clarity since it was first formulated, and is also always being reformulated to suit particular purposes." (p. 16). Considering that official statements that sustainable development "recognizes the interdependence between economic, social and environmental policy" abound, Leiss is again right. Both by recognizing that "this is another nice sentiment, but what does it mean in practice?", and by suggesting that "the more one encounters the phrase, the more it seems that we might all benefit from a temporary moratorium on its usage." (ibid.)

An important requirement to avoid this fate has been the suggested development of operational mechanisms to incorporate sustainability in public policies, as well as the construction of "territorial indicators of sustainability" (GUIMARÃES, 1998). As a matter of fact, what the present analysis has attempted can be expressed in very simple terms. In one of his

best achieved films, *The Serpent's Egg*, Ingmar Bergman demonstrates masterfully that an appropriate reading of social and political tendencies can reveal what is in store for the future of society. Playing in a brilliant way with the solitude, the astonishment, the drama, the terror and the emotional breakup of his characters, revealing them against the backdrop of the debacle of the Republic of Weimar, and putting them in movement in the same scenario for the rise of an equally dark character, the then political aspirant Adolf Hitler, Bergman is able to reveal something that the world, particularly Germans, were unable to see at the time. That Nazism was subtly bewitching an entire nation until amassing absolute power in 1933, while almost destroying Western civilization with its authentic arsenal, not of arms but of charms. Although it is even trivially obvious to state that the origins of the German national-socialism dates back to long before the end of the Weimer Republic, it was not so obvious at the time. As Bergman points out, that the "egg" of the new order had already been incubated many years before. Quietly, deviously, insidiously hatching like a snake... and nobody or very few ever noticed it! Likewise, one of the most important challenges of modern times is to determine the "genetic" characteristics of the sort of ecopolitical creature that current styles of development are engendering (GUIMARÃES, 1991a).

It is for no other reason that it has been suggested that sustainable development addresses precisely the three basic components of the "dilemma" that has summoned these reflections – governance, modernity and environment-- jointly with the ethics that grants them social significance. Towards this end, it becomes ethically urgent the democratization of the State, and not its abandonment and total substitution by the market. Taking into account the economic and social distances between sectors of the society, with their known results of polarization, distrust and resentment, the State still represents, although with serious problems of legitimacy, a key actor to regulate conflict of interests and to guide the development process. It must be recalled once again that the difficulties caused by extreme situations of social inequality and of environmental degradation cannot be defined as individual problems, constituting instead social, collective challenges. It is definitely *not* an issue of guaranteeing access, via market mechanisms, to education, to housing, to health or to an atmosphere free of contaminants, but of recuperating collective means for satisfying of these needs. As stated in the Brazilian National Report to the Earth Summit, "in situations of extreme poverty, an individual who has been marginalized from society and from a nations' economy has no commitment whatsoever to avoid environmental degradation, if society cannot prevent his or her own degradation as a human being in the first place" (GUIMARÃES, 1991b:24).

Having being subjected to intense attack and having barely survived its "extinction" in the hands of the apostles of neoliberal economics and politics, the State is undoubtedly wounded and weaker nowadays (GUIMARÃES, 1996a). Its main threat comes from abroad. The internationalization of the markets, of production itself, and of cultural models, questions the capacity of the States to maintain national identity and social cohesion, fragmenting its monopoly of power to handle international relations, strengthening in its place the transnational bonds of dominant segments of society nationally and internationally.

If it were to persist the tendency verified in previous decades, when the State assumed many of these relationships (e.g., the negotiation and subsequent "statization" of private foreign debt), the future does not hold much promise indeed. As if the *Brave New world* (HUXLEY, 1932) has finally been realized, policies carried out by the State run the risk of becoming nothing more than ambulances, simply running around --and always behind schedule-- picking up the

wounded and disposable of a globalization framed by the neoconservative ideology. All in a context in which greater portions of the decisions that are crucial for a nations' future, and for social cohesion as well, are arrived at outside of its territory, and implemented by actors completely foreign to the social, political and economic realities of the country.

Hence, the future of environmental regimes --and of sustainable development, for all it matters-- is intimately associated with the future of politics. Immediately comes to mind Fernando Henrique Cardoso's warnings that "if no symbiosis can be found between politics and public interest, it will be rather troublesome to maintain democracy". Without it, Cardoso goes on cautioning, "we will move back to a world of markets, not in its good sense --of a market that educates, of a market that softens, of a market that civilizes—but a market almost as war; and market as war --this Hobbes knew quite well— gives rise to a State to impose order over affairs, which would not be the democratic State, the rule of law, but its very opposite." (CARDOSO, 1995:94).

It must be underlined as well important tendencies, although in a different dimension to the one just mentioned, referred now the reality of the relationships between human beings and nature, as these are expressed in contemporary modernity. Clive Lewis could not have been more accurate when he stated that "what we call the power Man over Nature is in fact the power of some men over other men, using nature as their instrument" (LEWIS, 1947:69). This implies that situations of environmental degradation reveal nothing else than inequalities of social and political power (patterns of relations among human beings and the form society is organized), as well as structural distortions of the economy (patterns of consumption of society and patterns of production organized to satisfy these). If this represents indeed an accurate description of environmental problems, it becomes rather evident that possible solutions to the current crisis of civilization via sustainable development will have to be found within the social system itself, and not on some technological magic or market gimmick.

Projecting the realities of power between human beings in the long run, with the consequent implications about how these will bring about the incorporation of nature, the scenario turns even more feeble and somber. Indeed, just as the relationships of power are synchronically determined, there is also diachronic, inter-generational asymmetry of power among humans. In other words, each generation exercises power (making use of nature) on subsequent generations; while these, when modifying the inherited natural endowment, resist and attempt to limit the power of their predecessors. This process, repeated indefinitely, ends up not representing more power over the natural world. Just the opposite occurs, thus rendering human society more fragile in nature's hands. The later in time a generation lives, and, by definition, the more it lives closer and closer to the extinction of species, less power it will have at its disposal the adapt nature to its needs and wants and to dominate other humans as well. As Lewis concludes mournfully, albeit so appropriately (in a period when sustainability was not yet fashionable), "*Human* nature will be the last part of Nature to surrender to Man"...and those subjugated will not be "men at all; they will become artifacts". Man's final conquest will prove to be in fact "the abolition of Man" (pp. 72-77).

So much for a debate on the future prospects of environmental governance, I believe. Perhaps we should definitely turn ourselves into Estragon and Vladimir. Entertain ourselves and keep on squabbling over the fragile and increasingly threatened state of the planet... while awaiting for Godot' sustainability.

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BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

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