Participation: a case study of how invaders organize, negotiate and interact with government in Lima, Peru

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I. INTRODUCTION

THIS PAPER CONSIDERS what is meant by "citizen participation", especially the different meanings that the term has for different actors such as community organizers, those working in government agencies or the staff of international agencies. The discussion is illustrated by the story of how an invasion was organized in Lima in 1971 and the compromise negotiated between the invaders and the government which eventually led to the formation of a new settlement, Villa El Salvador. The paper then outlines the changing view of participation within government for the period 1971 to 1980 and how this affected the development of Villa El Salvador. It concludes by considering what lessons the case study implies for planners working with low-income groups.

II. CITIZEN PARTICIPATION

AN INFLUENTIAL PAPER published in an American planning journal in 1969 defined citizen participation as "a categorial term for citizen power" and went on to present a "ladder of participation" with eight rungs, beginning at "manipulation" and ascending to "citizen control".[1]

I suspect that this is not a helpful way to try to understand citizen participation in the Third World. Perhaps it only seemed to work in the United States at the end of the Sixties because that idea of the struggle upward to power via a single set of institutions was the conceptualization which dominated the thinking of both citizen groups and liberal policy makers. The paper cited certainly recognizes that group participatory processes which may appear to be leading to power are not doing so; the bottom rungs of the "ladder" are really "non-participation" designed to con the powerless into feeling better about it all.

But I think that citizen participation is more complicated than a simple transfer of power from top to bottom. We must understand citizen participation as part of political and governmental institutions which are complex and shifting, in which strange alliances abound, in which the motives to participate on all hands are conflicting and far from simple, and in which multiple interpretations are usually

1. Arnstein, Sherry R. (1969), "A Ladder of Citizen Participation", *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, Vol. XXXV, No. 4, July.

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possible.

An issue paper from the United Nations Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), prepared by Marshall Wolfe,[2] begins by posing a central difficulty rather neatly. Wolfe begins with "the supposition that tensions between the efforts of the state to 'promote' popular participation, on the one hand, and the efforts of the groups 'hitherto excluded' to increase control over resources and regulatory institutions on the other, are permanent although continually changing." The community groups want to enhance their control over power and resources; those with power see participation as a way, in the long run, of consolidating power at the top.

In addition, there is the question of *who* comes to be the custodian of the people's power, to the extent that the people acquire any power. As Wolfe goes on to say: "the tensions are tripartite, even if one assumes for the moment that the 'hitherto included' have lost their monopoly of power. They involve the political parties and other movements organized at the national level that aspire to represent the people and dominate or influence the state. Each of these actors needs the other two but its limitations demonstrated by experience justify distrust on the part of the others."

Who speaks for "the people"? The municipal government? The left parties? The local community leaders? The "average citizenry" as interrogated via public gatherings or public opinion polls? These are not simple abstract questions of political theory; the answers they receive in practice constitute the stuff of community organizing.

To make our discussion a little more concrete, let us consider the forms of participation which have characterized a single project: Villa El Salvador, just outside of Lima (some 20 kilometres from the city centre). My information on the settlement is somewhat dated; a case study done for the United Nations in 1980. However, since the focus is on the history of the project, for our purposes this may not matter. The project is very large and very poor; it is where the Pope was taken to show him the problem of poverty in Lima. Villa El Salvador was the outcome of a very large land invasion in 1971.[3]

III. THE INVASION PROCESS

LAND INVASIONS ARE a kind of established tradition in Lima. In the thirty-odd years from 1940 to 1972, the population of the Lima metropolitan area increased from half a million to over 3.3 million people. A good deal of this additional population was accommodated by the founding of various squatter settlements around the established city. Lima itself sits on a coastal desert and while it is not an attractive prospect to set up housekeeping with a family on the sand, the flat terrain, the moderate climate and the absence of agricultural use impose relatively few barriers to squatting. Starting from a negligible amount of squatting in 1940, by 1972 there were over 300 settlements housing over 800,000 people, a quarter of Lima's population.

Throughout this period, the invasion of land has been both a problem and an opportunity for Peruvian politicians and political parties. No political party would ever officially sanction land invasions; the defence of private property and of public order has always been considered the responsibility of government. At the same time, no Peruvian government has been able to resolve the increasing

2. Wolfe, Marshall (1983), "Participation: The View from Above. An issue paper for a global sub-debate", Popular Participation Programme, the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development, Geneva, March (unpublished).

3. The history which follows is based on interviews in 1980. I have not tried to seriously cross-check this information with the published material.

deficit of adequate standard housing or provide sufficient officially sponsored urban developments for the poor. Given this situation, squatter settlements provided a kind of *de facto* strategy which governments and politicians in various ways agreed to, supported, or even (to a degree) sponsored, in return for the political benefits, and the assumed dependence and gratitude of settlement residents.

Law 13517 passed by the Peruvian Congress in February 1961 embodied some of these conflicting strains. Article one declared that the "remodelling, improvement and legalization" of "marginal barrios" was "of necessity, public utility and in the national interest." Article two prohibited the formation of new "marginal *barrios*". Article three gave the National Housing Corporation the authority to form new low-income settlements called "popular urbanizations". But the prohibition in article two does not seem to have slowed the establishment of new settlements. On the other hand, for the first time, the process of incorporating illegal settlements into the legal and services structure of the city - previously informal and unofficial - was given semi-official status.

In 1968, a military coup brought General Juan Velasco Alvarado to power. Velasco's self proclaimed "revolutionary regime" moved rapidly to intervene directly in squatter settlements. An organization was formed to represent these "marginal" communities and was named the National Organization for the Development of Young Towns. The fact that the government referred to the illegal settlements as "young towns" was important in that the term was no longer pejorative and implied official recognition for their inhabitants' right to live there. The decree which established this organization stressed the positive features of what had previously been considered "marginal" settlements and the role of self-help in upgrading them. One of the prominent members of the organization's executive committee, Bishop Bambaren, had for some time been sponsoring non-governmental support for self help and community organizations in these settlements. Thus, before the government entered the picture, the Church had been actively involved in such work. Military officers were also important in this new national organization as they organized a programme for grading the streets in the settlements.

In a sense, then, the quarter of Lima's population who, by 1971, were living in squatter settlements represented various forms of what might be called participatory development: invasion leaders did the initial organizing and site selection; the politicians provided non-legal tenure; the citizens organized settlement and did the building; and, eventually, via more political work by the settlers and their leaders, the public agencies provided some services.

IV. THE INVASION

IN 1971, A group of between 80 and 100 families decided to organize a land invasion. They had already organized an invasion two years previously but eventually they had been removed by the police, after eliciting from the government the promise that they would receive lots on which they could build housing. Months passed. Despite a number of trips to the various ministries, the lots had not been forthcoming. They decided to organize again, but this time they invited Señor Pérez to serve as their organizer. They had heard that through his knowledge of the law, he might be able to obtain better

results. The families may also have been aware that he had previously worked in another ministry as a chauffeur with some of the men now involved in the Ministry of Housing.

Of Indian origin, Sr Pérez was a self-taught man, an omnivorous reader (although he had never attended school) who had learned Spanish at the age of nine. His heroes were anarchists. Sr Pérez was a comfortably-off chauffeur at this point but it happened that he also had a housing problem. He had made application half a dozen times for various government housing programmes but had been refused because of his politics. When approached by the representatives of the squatter families, he was facing eviction from his own dwelling.

The families and Sr Pérez began meeting secretly, in small groups, to organize the invasion. As they did so, new families joined. By the time set for the invasion, 180 families were involved. There is no information on the characteristics of the new members of the invasion group (or on the older set involved in the previous invasion) but what is clear is that the invasion organizer, Sr Pérez, gave the enterprise a more clearly political character. Sr Pérez directed each family to bring a mat (to set up a largely symbolic shelter), food and water, a whistle (for communicating warnings of police approach and the like) and a Peruvian flag. He selected an invasion area outside the city where 48 lots were already laid out but not serviced. These lots had been designated for low-level employees of the Ministry of Aeronautics but had never been occupied.

The date set for the invasion, May 1st, was timed to coincide with meetings of the Inter-American Development Bank in Lima (this being perhaps the most influential international development agency and source of funding in Latin America). But more specifically the invasion was "in honour of those who struggled for the eight hour day in Chicago." A few families invaded the site on 29th April, two days before the carefully planned date set for the invasion but they were forced by the rest to take down their shelters and wait until the moment, just before dawn, on May 1st when everyone would invade the site simultaneously.

On May 1st, just before dawn, the 180 families went out onto the desert site with their mats, food, whistles and Peruvian flags. A priest from a church in a settlement nearby quickly reported the invasion to the police since he thought that they had invaded a site designated for a new church. Five truckloads of troops led by an officer arrived on the scene. Sr Pérez quoted Law 13517, which he interpreted as providing Peruvian adults with the right to a place in a "young town" (*pueblo joven*). The troops withdrew. During the days that followed, there were more visits from the authorities who repeated their demands that the squatters disperse.

On the third day of the invasion, Sr Pérez and a committee of five went to the Ministry of Housing. They were kept waiting for five hours while all the officials were in the presidential offices, conferring about the invasion. When the officials finally met the group, they were astonished to find that the leader of the invasion was their old friend and former chauffeur, Sr Pérez. They encouraged him to contact an engineer to develop a site plan for the lots.

On the following day, even while the invasion was in progress, some of the invaders went to the Ministry of Justice to incorporate themselves as an association; the name they chose was "Association of Fathers of Families for their own Housing Delfin Levano" (Delfin Levano being a well-known Peruvian anarchist leader). They found that they were in direct competition with another "housing associa-

tion" formed by people in a working-class neighbourhood which had already been negotiating with the Ministry of Housing for lots in the area which they had now invaded. Some of these people now joined the Pérez organized invasion; others continued to press their claims through official channels, with the strong support of the Ministry of the Interior.

As the radio and newspapers reported the land invasion in progress, hundreds of additional families came to join it. By the morning of the fifth day, when a large contingent of troops came to displace the invaders, 9,000 families were reported to be occupying the hillside. Although the troops expected to use force, they had not intended it to be lethal. They had brought tear gas, buckshot and materials to ignite the mats. But they also brought a local Major who could show them the terrain and this Major carried a revolver. When he was provoked by the brother of one of the squatters, the Major shot and killed the man.

At the funeral which followed, Bishop Bambaren, long a supporter of squatters, preached a fiery sermon in support of the invasion. The Minister of the Interior, who was taking a "hard line" against the invaders, had the Bishop arrested, together with a couple of other priests who had supported the invaders. These events were bound to create quite a stir at the meeting of the Inter-American Development Bank, taking place at that time in Lima. A show-down between the Ministries of Housing and the Interior led to the forced resignation of the Minister of the Interior. On the seventh day of the invasion, the government offered Sr Pérez a large tract of land - at that time about five kilometres from the outskirts of Lima - on which the invaders might take up lots with the government's formal permission. Some of the invaders viewed the offer as a sell-out and remained where they were. But Sr Pérez hired an engineer who then began to lay out lots in the area which was to become Villa El Salvador.

With this agreement established, Sr Pérez was feeling relatively secure. Stable participation was at hand. However, on the next day, while in his car, he was arrested. For the next three months he was kept in prison and the invasion leaders decided, in view of the arrest, to maintain a low profile. Thus, the original invasion leadership had almost no role in the organization and development of what was to become Villa El Salvador.

V. SPONSORED SETTLEMENT

IN THE AREA now established for settlement, the government surveyors proceeded to lay out lots of 140 square metres, with broad streets and generous open spaces and an industrial park. The *Plan Regulador* of Villa El Salvador projected a possible future population of half a million. In the meantime, the area was used not only as a relocation site for some 7,000 families from the invasion, but for other needy families from the slums and *barriadas* of Lima. Settlers were required to build some sort of shelter within 24 hours. After two years occupancy, they could apply for legal title to the land at a token charge of five *soles* a square metre. Other families entered Villa El Salvador simply by purchasing lots from settlers who had decided to leave. The population ebbed and flowed as conditions appeared to be improving or deteriorating.

In the meantime, the future streets and plazas were simply

tracings in the sand; people were living in mat shacks and there were no stores or services. Water was dispensed via tank trucks which often ran out before everyone in the area had been supplied. Feelings about the trucks ran so high that, at one point, settlers called the police. The truck drivers went on strike and there was a threat of bringing in the soldiers to deliver water.

VI. ORGANIZED PARTICIPATION

THE NATIONAL OFFICE for the Development of Young Towns (ONDEPJOV) began to organize the community on a block level, with a delegate elected from each block. Sixteen blocks constituted a sectoral grouping. In 1972, the National Office for the Development of Young Towns was absorbed by the newly-created National System to Support Social Mobilization (SINAMOS). The future evolution of community organization within Villa El Salvador is closely tied to the history of SINAMOS, an institution directly dependent on the president. The goal of SINAMOS was to bring about a "revolutionary" transformation of Peruvian institutions into ones characterized by participatory decision-making. ONDEPJOV was only one of a number of existing bodies absorbed by SINAMOS; it incorporated agencies dealing with labour organizations, co-operatives, community development, economic development, and farmers, including the agency for agrarian reform. SINAMOS "took off the heads" of the organizations, replacing the administrators with a relatively new group charged with reorganizing their functions. SINAMOS, therefore, became the agency in charge of the organization and development of Villa El Salvador. Villa El Salvador, in turn, became the showpiece project to demonstrate what the Velasco government's participatory mobilization could do in the sphere of the urban community. With such high-level support and SINAMOS to develop new forms of organization, Villa El Salvador was perceived as a creative new experiment.

But the role of SINAMOS, while it gave the community access to resources such as community organizers, and influence on the public agencies, also raised problems. The organization had its own enemies and detractors among the more conservative elements in the government. Some viewed SINAMOS as communist; others at the least considered it to be anti-militaristic. Problems also arose from the fact that the regional office of SINAMOS dealing with "young towns" was a small civilian agency working within a city which was otherwise governed by the military. The two overlapping sets of administrators consequently tended to have different views, which became more divergent with time. Even within SINAMOS, there were factions; some supported more participation and radical change, while others supported more authoritarian and bureaucratic management. Furthermore, while SINAMOS was viewed with some suspicion from the right, it was also viewed in a hostile manner by groups on the left. They tended to view efforts at participatory mobilization as a way of co-opting the community into the organizational schemes of the state.

As people settled the lots in Villa El Salvador, SINAMOS organized them by block and sector. There was group activity in setting-up provisional schools, and there was negotiation for services, which led to the installation of street lighting and public water taps.

A group in SINAMOS was interested in developing a programme for self-help group construction of prefabricated dwellings. Although a small pilot project was begun, it seems to have been very much the creation of one architect. When he died, the programme came to an end, after 69 houses had been constructed. All other construction in process was along quite conventional lines: incremental construction contracted, and in part built, by particular families with private funding; and a Ministry of Housing programme in collaboration with the Central Mortgage Bank for 839 small finished dwellings. SINAMOS staff would have preferred a self-help format, and experimentation with collective financing and provision of workshops. The other agencies insisted on sticking to mechanisms with which they were familiar, such as individual mortgages. Although the houses sold, buyers complained that the units constructed by the government resulted in an inferior house (smaller and flimsier) than one done by self-help and private contracting.

In July 1973, the "First Convention of Villa El Salvador" was held within the community. Participants included leaders from the community and a group of radicalized intellectuals from SINAMOS who were all committed to building a new and better kind of community within the settlement. The discussions reflected the on-going debate within government during this period between the merits of a co-operative form of organization versus a self-managed form called "property of social interest". The community organization of Villa El Salvador was restructured as an "integrated, communal self-managing co-operative", and then soon revised to the *"Comunidad Urbana Auto-gestionaria Villa El Salvador"* (the Self-Managing Urban Community of Villa El Salvador) or CUAVES. The concept was that of an "enterprise city", "rejecting capitalist interest."

The new organization of CUAVES was a complex community organization system. Each block had its specialized secretaries of education, commercialization and production, health and welfare, and vigilance. The 950 blocks were grouped into 64 *juntas directivas* which were, in turn, grouped together by a central *directiva* with its own specialized secretariat. The general secretaries together made up the general assembly of the community.

During 1974, the level of activity was very high. Building began on a community centre, with financing coming at first from raffles within the community. Three other buildings for a community newspaper, cinema, and community theatre were eventually put up with finance from the Peruvian government and the government of the Netherlands. Meanwhile, the leaders of CUAVES were attempting to develop a group of locally controlled industries under the newly passed Law of Social Property. They included a bakery, a woodworking and metal shop, and an enterprise manufacturing posts. Markets were organized on a co-operative basis. A *caja comunal*, or community bank, was established to collect funds to carry out other community projects, such as schools and services.

Using SINAMOS, the settlers established relations with some labour groups, with organized newspapermen and with agrarian organizations. Food supply arrangements were made with the latter. The goal was to establish class organization along functional lines, building in mutual support mechanisms.

Below the surface, however, certain strains were apparent. Some of the community leaders were strongly allied with the "radical" group in SINAMOS and their programme of social change. Others

thought that the future lay with the more military-bureaucratic faction. A third group, of a more classic left persuasion, opposed the government, including SINAMOS.

The problems were practical as well as political. The community enterprises were not flourishing. The Ministry of Housing could not (or would not) adapt its construction and financing processes to the collectivizing project of the self-managing community. The technical supervision provided for the community banks (*caja comunal*) by the *Banco Popular* could not compensate for the inexperience of its board. The community funds deposited in the *caja* were both limited in amount and poorly managed. When an agreement was finally reached with the electric company, around 1976, people had to sign individual contracts and provide financing on an individual basis, despite the deposits they had made with the communal banks.

Meanwhile, there were problems at the national level with the Velasco government's efforts to develop participatory institutions, including SINAMOS. It was inherently difficult to develop participatory institutions in a country with minimal experience with democracy, and very large social and economic inequalities. Strong central government seemed necessary to plan economic development and to deal with foreign corporations. Within the enterprises, the participatory organization was inadequately tied to responsibility for production. As workers and peasants organized, they tended to press for additional economic benefits, which led to conflicts between peasants and urban workers, between lower-paid workers and those in more modern industries, and between the groups at the base in general and the central planners focusing on investment and future needs. Rising incomes via participation also brought demand for imported goods which the economy could ill afford. When the participation effort began, Peru's neighbours - Chile, Argentina, Bolivia and Ecuador - were ruled by relatively friendly governments. As neighbouring governments became less sympathetic, the military in Peru became more sensitive to security problems (both external and internal) and hostile to organizational changes which seemed to threaten internal order. The international economic crisis in 1974 brought additional strain. Finally, President Velasco's failing health was a factor which has to be acknowledged.

The "radical" group within SINAMOS, and thus its project for the "self-managing community" in Villa El Salvador, were increasingly isolated within the political structure. It came to the point when, in 1974, the civilian staff of SINAMOS attempted to resign in mass; only by the president's direct intervention were they persuaded to remain provisionally.

However, in 1975, President Velasco relinquished the presidency. The result was a very basic change in the political context to a more traditional, conservative, authoritarian, military structure. Without Velasco's support, SINAMOS ceased to play an important role. SINAMOS leaders who had been involved in community organization and self-management dropped out of sight.

At the same time, on the local level, the somewhat "utopian" programme of the CUAVES leaders had become rather separated from the more mundane concerns of the average family in Villa El Salvador. When the second Villa El Salvador conference was held in 1975, the incumbent SINAMOS-linked leadership, after considerable political struggle, was replaced by a leftist slate.

Meanwhile, from the Velasco strategy of participatory incorporation, the government of Lima had moved, by 1980, to its own version

of a privatization and individualization policy. In 1979, the Peruvian government began to restructure the administrative apparatus for settlements like Villa El Salvador. The central organization for "young towns" was abolished. Its functions were parcelled out to a number of offices in the Ministry of Housing. A new law sought to shift the service and other requirements of marginal settlements to the normal municipal structure, on the same basis as any other urban area. This structure was to be accompanied by a substantial effort to regularize the land titles of families in the marginal settlements.

Two federations of "marginal settlements" have been established. Both oppose the new law. One, the National Conference of Young Towns and Popular Urbanizations (CONAPUP), was founded in 1978 with the support of some of the people who had been active in SINAMOS. It was organized around the self-management ideas which had been central to the SINAMOS effort, and planned to apply this model to other "young towns". The second, the Departmental Federation of Young Towns (FEDEPUP), was founded in 1979; it is confined to Lima, and has a more anti-governmental stance. Both groups argue - as do many other people concerned with marginal settlements - that the new administrative and legal structure will force the families in such settlements to pay taxes and fees for services which they cannot afford. The new law is also perceived as weakening the political leverage of residents of the marginal settlements, since residents will, it is argued, be less likely to organize on a community-wide basis.

(There is, on the other hand, strong evidence that legal property titles are much desired by the inhabitants of marginal settlements in Lima and other Latin American countries. A survey of attitudes towards government services among the squatters of Lima, taken in 1967, found that the issue of property titles topped the list both in the prevalence and intensity of concern. It is difficult to tell at this point whether the efforts to regularize titles will have the adverse consequences claimed by critics and, if so, if people's attitudes will change).

VII. VILLA EL SALVADOR AND ITS ORGANIZATIONS IN 1980

WHEN I VISITED Villa El Salvador in 1980, I was given, by knowledgeable people, population figures varying from 150,000 to 350,000. There were still a few mat shelters and other provisional dwellings, but masonry building, many two storeys, was common. The streets still consisted of fine sand. Except in the most outlying parts of the settlement, water and sewer lines with individual connections had been installed, and the first lawns were appearing. A new problem had emerged: the accumulation of arrears in payment by some families. The water and sewers agency had been threatening to cut off the water of those who said they were unable to pay.

There is a good deal of private commerce in the settlement, some locally owned and some branches of large businesses as, for example, a branch of a plumbing fixture supplier and at least three branch banks. However, most of the economically active population of the settlement commutes to work in Lima, a distance of five or six

kilometres. The inadequacies of the bus system are a current leading concern among settlement residents; there are buses, but not nearly enough for the demand. Some people believed that paved streets would lead not only to improved bus services but also, by easing deliveries, to improved supplies of food and other goods at lower prices.

Another area of need was the health services. The small local "hospital" is supposed to have a 24-hour service but, in fact, is not equipped to deal with emergencies. For any serious medical problem one must go to Lima but there is only one ambulance.

The *barrio* had a modern technical school as well as a new primary school for 1,500 students. However, a staff member of UNESCO estimated that no more than 60 per cent of school-age children attend school.

The major-felt problem in Villa El Salvador in 1980 appeared to be the high unemployment - at this time general in Lima - with its resulting economic deprivation. Though CUAVES still existed, its level of activity without the "animators" (organizers) was much lower than in the SINAMOS days. It had severed itself from the government at about the same time as the government cut off its connections with CUAVES. The community centre was vacant and locked. The building constructed to house cultural activities was open but little used, although wall murals and signs such as "Theatre Expression of the People", "Art at the Service of the People", suggest the old days. Even the mural on the exterior wall had never been completed; only the tanned worker arms were painted in.

A Ministry of Housing staff member dealt with issues of lot boundaries and regularization of property titles in the small office which people refer to as "the one which used to be SINAMOS."

The elected community leaders of CUAVES negotiated with the water and sewers agency in a business-like manner. These services were installed in 1978, at a charge to each family of 30,000 *soles*, amortized over one to ten years depending on the family's particular circumstances. Although the price was established in the course of the negotiations, the arrangements were similar to service installations in any new community, with the contracts between each family and the enterprise.

In late 1975 and 1976, Villa El Salvador residents focused on the lack of (functioning) schools. Residents supported the formation of a teachers' union, which organized a strike ("front for the naming of teachers"). Although their protest march into Lima in April 1976 was repressed by the police, it did lead the government to appoint secondary school teachers to the "young towns".

During the period when Villa El Salvador was most highly mobilized as a community, its "demands" were unusual in centering not simply on services, but also on the development of community enterprises. The community efforts in this sphere were much less successful. I found co-operative markets still existed, but only four people were employed in community manufacturing efforts. Some people think that the community enterprises *could* have succeeded if they had been given more organizational help; others believe it was just too difficult to compete with commercial enterprises.

Although community organization has not been particularly successful in the area of job creation, several programmes in the community have been directed at alleviating hunger. The Catholic parish sponsored a programme providing breakfasts daily to 5,000

children in 31 centres in the community. Each breakfast programme is run by three local women, who are not paid but who are able to feed their own children in the programme and are also learning to cook and to keep accounts. The food comes from CARITAS, a Catholic charity organization; the pots and stoves from a group in Holland. The parish started a programme of 2,000 cheap dinners and acquired a farm on which to grow vegetables. At the same time, an Adventist organization was running, with government support, a rather large programme which distributes food provided by the United States Agency for International Development (the US government's official aid agency) to women who take training courses and do community work (clean-up, tree planting) in return for receiving the food.

People with a commitment to community organization in the settlement have mixed feelings about these programmes. They recognize that hunger exists within the community but they see the programmes, particularly the distribution of food from the US government's aid programme, as weakening community organization and leading to "de-politicization" of the settlers.

UNESCO funded a project, planned in the Velasco era, which is to develop basic health and educational programmes in 46 marginal settlements, of which Villa El Salvador will be one. The programme, managed by a former SINAMOS member, enlists community participation within "modules" of a couple of classrooms, kitchen and health centre and requires the co-ordination of both the health and education ministries. As of January 1980, three modules had been constructed; the central government was pressing for 50 by May, before the elections. The project's director described the programme as an effort to democratize technique and information, especially in the field of medicine. He said some people feel that the project's organization creates a structure parallel to and competitive with CUAVES, the community organization.

VIII. SOME CONCLUSIONS

WHAT CAN WE learn from this story? What generalizations are possible? Reality can be variously interpreted and reinterpreted, so multiple and alternative lessons can be drawn. Here are some which seem to me to emerge.

"Local politics" and "citizen participation" at the community level are linked to national politics, not simply as a reflection of, but also as an agency in that politics. For example: the struggle between SINAMOS and traditional left leadership in Villa El Salvador was part of an historic struggle to define the path of social transformation in Peru.

But "community politics" need not go very deep. Passionate activism among the leadership may be combined with disinterest among the mass of people. In my days in Villa El Salvador many persons with whom I spoke seemed to know little or nothing of the political history and present organizational life of the settlement.

Every community planner or project organizer is strongly aware of the political system and of government as a source of resources for people at the grassroots. But the reverse is also true: people are a resource for politics and government. The whole participatory drive of the Velasco government, to which SINAMOS was central,

represented this fact.

Government is not unitary. For the planner, or for the organizer, it must be seen as institutionally complex. For the Ministry of Housing, the squatters were a resource in an on-going inter-agency struggle with the Ministry of Interior. For the reformers in the Velasco government, organizing Villa El Salvador in the SINAMOS framework was both a demonstration project for the participation policies in general, and a part of the deep - and ultimately fatal - struggle of the reformist element in the government to dominate the conservatives in the military.

The attempt to organize to obtain control of additional resources is both practical and symbolic; material interests are at stake, but these are interpreted as part of one or another larger social process. For the leader of the invasion, this movement of the masses to seize land which should rightfully be theirs was a great anarchist action. It was also meant to be, for him as for the rest of the participants, a way of acquiring a housing site. But the visionary motive was no less real than the practical one - perhaps in the case of Senor Pérez more real.

Organizers pursue their visions through the channels which may appear to be available at a given point in time. Organizations go out of existence, but organizers drop out of sight and reappear. Although SINAMOS was, in 1980, part of the past, a former SINAMOS member was developing a project for Villa El Salvador.

There is not a single ladder of participation. The leftist organizers in Villa El Salvador had a markedly different vision of the way for people in the settlement to gain power and resources than did the organizers from SINAMOS. For the anarchist organizer of the invasion, both of these visions were wrong, representing forms of participation which would in the end mean a loss rather than a gain in power.

If these are some of the generalizations, what use can a planner make of them?

In the first place, take seriously both the material interests and the alternative visions which animate the politics of participation. Think of the way the world must appear to the organizer.

This may have very troublesome specific applications. One, for example, is that you cannot expect the community leaders *both* to press the interest of "the community" in getting more power and resources *and* have them do the cost-collection for your building process. To do the first requires an organizing effort for which the second would be extremely detrimental.

The implications for the planner of taking seriously the alternative visions of community politics are more difficult. Should the planner choose? Should he or she manage not to take sides? What the planner must not do, I am convinced, is to treat these visions as trivial. The planner, focused on a particular project or programme, may easily see the struggle between visions as disruptive, ignoble factionalism. Disruptive it probably is; factional, certainly. But people have died for these alternative visions, and they are not ignoble.