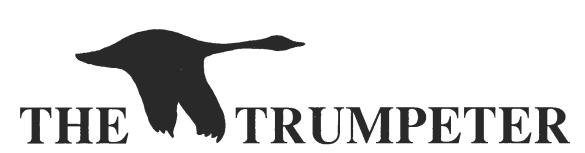
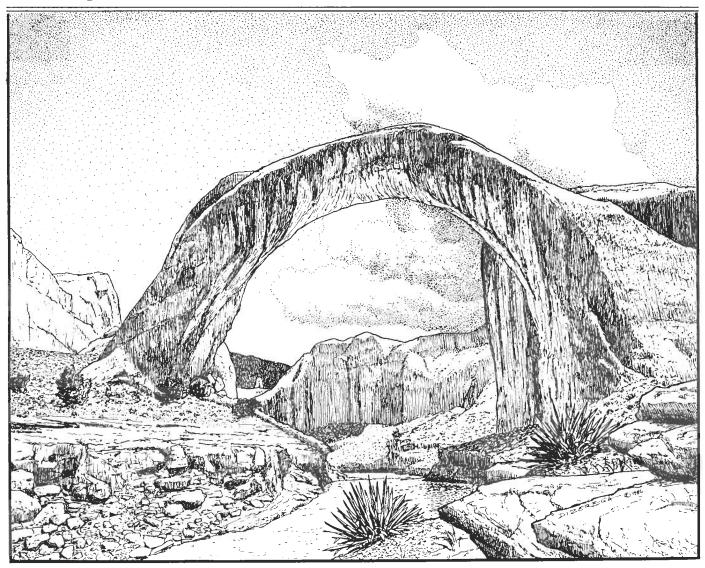
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ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS IN LATIN AMERICA: IN SEARCH OF A UTOPIAN VISION

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Introduction

Many people in Latin America, since the late 60's and especially in recent years, have denounced the intense exploitation of natural resources, forest clearcutting, wildlife extinction, increased pollution, and urban marginalization taking place there. They have suggested several measures to handle this crisis. These voices have emerged from government and non-government agencies, from biologists, sociologists, wildlife conservationists, planners, and from the common people.

The discussion first focused on what to conserve, and how to conserve. Today, a new question is emerging: Why conserve? This situation has resulted in the first ethical evaluation of environmental work in Latin America. Environmentalism remains a controversial field. The reason for this situation is that the ultimate objectives of the environmental movement are not clear, and common positions are shared only by a fraction of the groups. But this only speaks at a superficial level, and this is not an anomaly isolated to the environmental movement, but is a more general situation, also detected in economics, politics, planning, and so on. Present thinking is utilitarian and pragmatic, and transcendent principles are excluded. Science and values are separated by a wide gap, and there is no vision of the future based on new metaphysical grounds. As there is nothing like an utopian vision, we might feel stoical submission to an inevitable fate is all that is open to us.

The objective of this paper is to attempt an initial response to this problem, which I conceive to be rooted in an ethical crisis. In this analysis I suggest that this is a result of the lack of a shared utopian vision. I will first examine the ethical setting of environmental problems on the S.A. continent. Then, I will briefly deal with some cases from my own work. I will close with some suggestions for future research and practice.

Ethical Dimensions of the Environmental Movement in Latin America

Initial interest in environmental problems in Latin America emerged in different disciplines (e.g. biologists, wildlife environmentalists, public health officials, planners, etc.). Most of them were concerned with the destruction of specific wilderness sites, or the extinction of particular noteworthy species of animals and plants. In later years, the issues broadened, and new people were added to the movement, as we now faced other serious problems such as urban poverty, nuclear wastes, and chemical pollution. Aware of the present diversity of positions, I will distinguish two main approaches. Although this is an oversimplification, it will nevertheless be useful for this discussion. I distinguish, then, between the environmental managers and the antihegemonic groups.

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGERS are characterized by a strict conservation position, and want a better management of present development practices, so as to reduce adverse environmental impacts to a minimum. They stress the technical approach to environmental problems. They lack historical perspective and do not see environmental work as a tool to produce historical changes. Their relationships with other social groups is minimal. Furthermore, they give little attention to ethical reflections on these issues. Some of the most commonly uttered moral imperatives from this group are: "We ought to conserve natural resources for future generations or present use;" and "...because of a scientific imperative." In this group I include many government agencies but also large non-government conservation organizations. We must acknowledge that these groups are doing valuable work in some particular cases. They have reduced the rate of environmental destruction in some areas. They have also obtained good results in protecting some rare and endangered species. However, in my view, they are dealing with symptoms, and have not reached the basic causes of the disease in either their thinking or actions.

ANTIHEGEMONIC GROUPS are a more diverse set, including politically motivated persons disillusioned with traditional parties, religiously motivated groups (notably Catholic grassroots groups), minority groups (particularly feminists and anarchists), and a mixed group of people primarily interested in environmental issues. The antihegemonic groups stress the ethical issues, but not the technical ones. They have a deep involvement in social issues, and work closely with other grassroots movements. The ethical reflections of these groups is not well organized, and often has little theoretical support, but it is intense. Thus, one could expect these groups to produce fresh new positions on these matters. They share a basic questioning of present day development styles, and they search for alternative pathways. In everyday life they try to follow their ethical and historical concerns. They consider the environmental movement as a tool of historical change. In fact, most of these groups appeared first in the social arena, and only recently evolved into the environmental dimensions. They are more interested in certain aspects of urban life, e.g. pollution, poverty, nuclear wastes, and there is still some distance between them and those in wildlife conservation and the science of ecology.

The Social Dimension of the Environmental Problems

The social dimensions of Latin American environmental problems have been described in particular by the antihegemonic groups. Early environmental concern by the late 60's was directed to wildlife conservation and natural resources management. The expansion of the ecological viewpoint to the political and social arena was resisted by S.A. governments, and

environmentalists were accused of trying to thwart development. Nevertheless, antihegemonic groups introduced an environmental ethics that tried to show the relationships between the natural and social dimensions of the problems. I will present some recent examples of this relationship that have been argued for in the region:

1. There is the relationship between poverty levels and environmental disruption, both in rural and urban settings;

2. There is the issue of access to land and its distribution, which is exemplified by problems that range from very small owners overexploiting the soil, and causing severe erosion, to very large farms that engage in extensive forest clearcutting;

3. There is also the issue of war, particularly in Central America, where intensive bombing and use of chemicals causes not only human casualties, but also drastic environmental damage;

4. Finally, there is nuclear technology: There are nuclear reactors both working and under advanced construction in Brazil and Argentina; there has already been a serious nuclear accident in Brazil: and there is a project for a nuclear waste dump in Argentina close to the border with Chile.

These kinds of problems justify the increasing interest in ethical problems by environmentalists. The recent evolution of this process leads me to stress some emerging characteristics of the movement, that are useful for this analysis:

A. A new feature of the situation is that most governments and government agencies are now speaking in favor of conserving natural resources. This does not mean that they are carrying out effective actions.³ This raises the question of whether an "environmental discourse" is entering the ideological apparatus of the State, as defined by Althusser.

B. The environmental movement, whichever tendency under consideration, is still a small social force in Latin America. In general, there is as yet only weak relationships with other social forces such as political parties, labor unions and other grassroot movements.⁵ Perhaps exceptions are the alternative environmental labor union movement "R-Cause" in Venezuela, and the participation of environmentalists during the recent transition to

democracy in Brazil.

C. The environmental movement is also a highly diversified social force, and there is poor coordination among its members. Although I have distinguished two main perspectives, within each one there are several tendencies. Furthermore, the consideration of environmentally related social problems is still a matter of controversy. Liaison and networking efforts have had limited success and are advancing slowly.

D. There is a gap between the declared ethical setting and actual everyday practice. Most people would say that we should "protect Nature," but few behave this way in their own lives. This inconsistency is observed in many other fields.

Beyond the above cited problems, the environmental movement is healthy in the sense that is steadily growing. Furthermore, since it is a frontier movement, new and noteworthy approaches would be expected to develop from within it.

The social dimensions of environmental problems and the different approaches proposed by the above groups, leads me to distinguish two ethical postures. Inspired by Arnae Naess' distinction between shallow and deep ecology, I will distinguish between shallow and deep ethics. I will later discuss the reasons for this. I will now briefly characterize each one.

SHALLOW ETHICS conceives of moral imperatives as restricted to humans. It stresses individual options over social options. It supports a fragmented vision of reality, and a gap between values and practice (that is to say between ecology and values, politics and values, and so on). Ethical reflection related to Nature is reduced, and the environment is relegated to resources for human use. It holds that humans have the wisdom to manage Nature.

DEEP ETHICS conceives of moral imperatives as inclusive of humans and Nature, living and non-living. It has a holistic ecological approach to reality, acknowledging its complex structure and processes. It also stresses the social dimension of moral issues, and consequently the historical and ecological responsibility of the environmental movement.

Environmental managers generally support a shallow ethics, not only in the ecological arena, but also on social, cultural, economic and political issues. Their procedures follow the Latin American "development paradigm" as described by Mansilla, a concept convergent in some aspects with that of ideology, and with that of "developmental progressivism." The development paradigm is characterized by a view of history as a linear process, always progressing, with human activities becoming more and more efficient, exploiting Nature, which has no rights. This is rooted in "collective pre-conscious" values. These include: (1) obsession with the economic, technological and material features of culture; (2) a science developed in one direction, supporting continued material progress through new and more sophisticated technologies; (3) criticisms which are directed to environmental problems in a minimal way, since these are considered negative and threatening to the present order. As these postures are rooted in collective unconscious structures, they are irrational and immuned to criticisms. The critical breaking point of the paradigm is when other humans are conceived as resources to be exploited, and then this reveals the tight connection between social and environmental issues.

Deep ethics calls for a transition from this paradigm to a new one. I understand deep ethics to include not only a deep ecology, but also reaching into other perspectives and fields. The growing awareness of the close relationships between social and environmental problems now enables us to enter the realm of deep ethics. This new alternative paradigm is part of an emerging utopian vision.

The examples cited here support the view that there are few, if any, common ultimate objectives shared by all environmental groups. The overall goals are not clear. A similar situation exists in other fields, such as economics and politics. There are several schools that each attempt to find new development styles on a human and ecological scale. This turns into intensive discussions about ethics and about the dichotomy between practice and ideas. This debate supports the idea that the problems the environmental groups face are only symptoms of deeper social problems. 10 I consider that this basic problem is the lack of a shared utopian vision.

The Utopian Vision

As pointed out by Cardoso, we are in the paradoxical situation of living in a time when we know that utopia is possible. 11 We have the knowledge, the technological power, and the human resources, but we lack the essential confidence to undertake the utopian project. This crisis explains the gap between specific activities, such as politics and economics, and ethics and feelings; the dissociation between abstract knowledge and human feelings; the dissociation between what is done, and what we consider ought to be done. We can describe our times as characterized by the lack of utopian vision, which was destroyed mainly by philosophers and writers such as F.A. Hayek and K.R. Popper. 12 Humans facing every day reality realize they have limits, but it is precisely these "limits" that turn out to be major challenges for forward and transcendent movement. The limits of the possible move with action, and in fact throughout human history these "limits" have changed. As pointed out by Mannheim, ¹³ and also by Lenk, ¹⁴ utopia is like an explosive power that pushes action toward the utopian vision. Mannheim shows that the utopian vision is also fed on the negative features of present society, and it looks to transform this situation. Thus, we place the utopian vision in the category of transcending limits. Utopian vision is not interested in understanding present times as part of the past, but to transcend the past and the present to a new future.

We have no utopian project by means of which to guide our movements. Yet, it has the promise of showing how, from the present reality, an "impossible" future could emerge, and it gives us a sense of the direction we should take to get there. Utopia will be always at least one step ahead us. We will never be quite able to reach it, because after each step we advance toward it, the vision as a dynamic project, moves ahead as well. Thus, utopia turns out to be an "impossible dynamic." We must know what is impossible to realize what is possible. There are not realized utopias, only many possible projects for moving in their direction. Utopia and present order have a dialectic relationship, because utopia summarizes what has not been done or consummated, and that makes a given order to break out of, and it promotes changes leading to a new order, which in turn would promote further utopian visions. In this respect I share somewhat Heller's Marxist concept of 'radical utopia,' 15 which does not permit us to define precisely the societal structures or functions of utopia, but only to delimit the values. However, I do not endorse all of Marx's. I stress the issue of values here, for utopia cannot be entirely described within the present order, for it requires a new one.

Marcuse has pointed out the relationship between utopia and fantasy. ¹⁶ Fantasy, as conceived by Freud, is a dynamic process that links deep unconscious structures to conscious reality. The fantasy is not a goal, but a sequence, or a process in which the people participate. This explains why utopia is also the expression of desires and wishes often repressed by every day reality. This was also shown by Manheim, viz. that utopia can be viewed as a reaction to the collective unconscious that support a given order. This explains the relationship between utopia and ideology, and it helps us to understand positions like Popper's, as completely immersed in the ideology of the present order. This present order is supported in collective structures, either the collective preconscious or the social imagination. The link between utopia and fantasy also leads to another point: Art can be a utopian force, which is an idea also expressed by Marcuse. In our highly planned, materialist and technological societies, art is still one of the last frontiers for free ranging fantasy which can lead to utopian projects. 18 Marcus also restricted

the idea of utopia to actual limits of change, and thus referred to the "end of utopia." Furthermore, he later considered that utopia is blocked by the present order. But the limits imposed by society (i.e. rooted in current ideologies) should not be confused with the utopian vision, as the later transcends these limits.

Friedman described a "realizable utopia" as possible, when a person can influence others in such a way as to reach utopia. Actually, this describes a shared project, and actions intending to reach utopia, but it is not a synonym for being realizable. Friedman stated that a "universal utopia" is impossible because of a size problem. Friedman believes that utopias are possible only within small groups. But today we are facing the situation of several coexisting "utopian committees" among many groups, either defined by their scientific interests, or by their geographical origin. I borrowed this concept from Wolfe, and it must be distinguished from the "utopian" vision. ²² The former is a more or less diffuse program for a future, in specific fields, developed by scientists in that field. These "utopian committees" reproduce the fragmented vision of reality of scientists and thus it produces fragmented utopian projects. Some examples of this are the several global reports on development and environmental affairs, e.g. The Dag Hammarksjold, The Founex and The Cocoyoc Reports, etc. These "utopian committees" have had very limited power to change the present situation, and most of the persons involved expended a lot of time and energy trying to convince others that they held the "best" or "true" project. The challenge is to search for common features among these committees, and to share these common features with the public at large. As I conceive of the utopian vision, it is clearly distinct from the "committee" ones, as it lies on a higher meta-level, being deeper and more embracing.

There are clear relationships between the utopian project and societal development. Acknowledging that we can work on a shared utopian project towards a better society, we can distinguish between a eutopic and a distopic society. The first refers to a society actually moving toward a utopia; the latter describes a society without a utopian project. This terminology, developed by Mallman et al., seems more appropriate than that of "developed" and "underdeveloped" countries.23 Eutopic-distopic are extremes of a continuum from healthy societies to those that limit personal development. Eutopic societies permit the integral development of the person on three levels: personal, interpersonal and environmental. This is a result of the equitable satisfaction of human needs. This suggests that current measures of social development, such as the Gross National Product, have little relationship to personal fulfilment. In distopic societies, the integral personal fulfilment is limited, and there are divisions between persons due to the satisfaction of false needs and the lack of satisfaction of genuine needs.

We still do not have a shared utopian project common to the great majority of social movements, nor even among environmentalists. But here are some projects that could be mentioned as examples: Several locally based self-generated projects in Brazil;²⁴ the peasant communities in Mexico promoting locally based activities;²⁵ the several ecotopian visions presented by writers like Devall and Sessions;²⁶ and the more general and diffuse projects of global scale.²⁷ Unfortunately I am unable, and it is not my intention, to present a common project for the whole environmental movement, but only to sketch some elements that I conceive to be indispensable in the search for such a project. These elements are freedom, every day democratic participation,

and a new social order. Democratic practice require more than merely voting from time to time. It should be felt every day. It is impossible to handle environmental problems in the absence of true freedom. Freedom is conceived as an ancient feature of all living beings and their interactions within ecosystems. Thus, if we acknowledge that solution to the current crises must embrace freedom, we should go back to living with things and not above them. This new social order asks for a deeper ethical posture, which values humans and also Nature. As deep ecology states, the well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life has intrinsic value independent of its usefulness for other human purposes. The goal is to live in harmony with other persons and Nature. The ultimate objective is to recover confidence in long term utopian dreams and to know that societal changes for a better world are possible and action should be undertaken. As Heller notes, utopian projects should be radical; it not only supports our hope that a better world is possible, but that we should make a radical commitment to action (See F.N. #15).

I conceive this effort very close to research, teaching and learning. The close relationship between a utopian project and a new program to understand the world can be found in Moro's (1517) "Utopia," but also in Bacon's (1620) "Great Instauration." I acknowledge that Bacon's vision presents an anthropocentric relationship to Nature. As pointed out by Bookchin, "Bacon's 'Great Instauration' had been a functioning reality for thousands of years, not merely in class society's attempts to subjugate Nature for the purposes of control, but to subjugate humanity itself." To explore these issues in greater depth would require another paper paying attention to the cultural contexts. However, we must note Bookchin's concern for a new reconciliation between humans and Nature.

A Case Example: A Latin American Perspective on Social Ecology

At this point I think it is necessary to give a concrete example of how some of us developed a utopian vision with a deep ethical commitment for environmental work. I think that social ecology can provide us with concrete cues on this path, as it deals with a holistic and dynamic vision of reality, in its concern about values and practices, in the context of historical responsibilities.

A Latin American approach to social ecology can be viewed as rooted in a utopian project. It allows for a new practice, a new understanding of the world, a new ethics. Social ecology is also an effort to understand the world, particularly through research, and it aims to share this knowledge with others, particularly through teaching.³² I will briefly present an example of the development of our current concept of social ecology, emerging from my work and that of my colleagues at CIPFE.

Our initial work followed the widespread "environmental education" strategies inspired by the World Wildlife Fund of the US (WWF-US), e.g. see Liebermann. The results of the programs were poor, as we did not understand the complexity of the everyday life of the persons to which we addressed our work. After this experience, we developed a new program that we defined as "interactive," and this ultimately resulted in our concepts of "social ecology" (see preliminary reports by Gudynas). The interactive program enabled us to know how humans perceive their environment, how they interact with it,

and how they propose to manage it. It clearly shows that environmental work must also be social work.

The present working definition of social ecology, as currently conceived in our group, can be summarized by the following basic postulates:

- A. There cannot be a scientific study of natural ecosystems, without an interrelated scientific social study;
- B. We are interested in processes, not in static descriptions, and the historical perspective is of high relevance, as it helps us to recover the history of human communities, and their environments:
- C. Environmental work is social work, for to promote alternative human-environmental relationships is to promote social change;
- D. Social-environmental work promotion must be done with the people, and not for the people. There are neither teacher nor pupils.

We attempt to develop practices for both individual persons and environmental settings, and we assume historical responsibilities fall upon each of us. Utopian visions emerging in shared settings from social ecology work gives a value framework that help to guide daily practice, and it provides elements for a serious critique of present society.

In conclusion, work that reveals the unified relationships between education, research and practice, can produce a draft for a utopian vision, which involves many of these points. To the extent to which they deal with the relationships among humans, they could permit us to advance on this path of reconciliation with Nature. Here is a challenge for our ideals, and it is our duty to search for such a utopian vision and project.

Notes

Literature cited includes references to original editions when available, followed by the Spanish version in brackets.

1. This classification is essentially based on E. Gudynas, 1988, "Ethics, Environment and Development in Latin America." In Ethics, Culture and Sustainable Development, (J.R. Engel, ed.), IUCN Sustainable Development Series, Earthscan-IUCN, (in press). It is inspired by B. Devall & G. Sessions, 1985, Deep Ecology. Peregrine Books, Salt Lake City, IItah

2.On the social dimension of environmental problems, the following references are listed as examples: J.E. Hardoy & D.E. Satterthwaite, 1985. "Third World Cities and the Environment of Poverty," pp. 171-210. In The Global Possible: Resources, Development and the New Century, World Resources Institute, Yale Univ. Press. O.A. Perez, 1987. El silencioso dolor de una guerra escandalosa. Efectos de la guerra en el ecosistema salvadoreno. Neuva Sociedad, Caracas, 87:139-148. C. Aveline, 1984. De Baixo Para Cima. A Utopia No Brazil. Vozes, R. Japeiro.

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4.L. Althusser, 1970. Ideologie at Appareils Ideologiques d'Etat. La Pensee No. 151, Paris. (Aparatso Ideologicos del Estado, Nueva Vision, B. Aires, 1984).

5.For comparisons with the social movements see A.G. Frank & M. Fuentes. 1988. "Nine theses on social movements." IFDA Dossier, 63:27-44.

6. The diversity of opinions could be seen in the declarations on the participation (or not) in the political arena, and the strategies to follow; see H.M. Ensensberger, 1973. **Zur Kritlk der Politischen Okologie**, Kursburch-Rotouch Verlag, Berlin (**Para una Critics de la Ecologia Politica**. Anagrama, Barcelona, 1974). M. Caldwell et al., 1976. **Socialism and the Environment**. Spokesman Books, Norttingham (**Socialismo y Medio Ambiente**, G. Gili, Barcelona, 1976). H. Kurth et

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7.A. Naess, 1973. "The Shallow and the Deep, Long-Range Ecology

Movement. A Summary. Inquiry, 16:95-100.
8.F.H.C. Mansilla, 1981. "Metas de desarrollo y problemas ecologicos en America Latina." Cuadernos Soc. Venezolana Planif. 150-152:1-183.

9.G. LaFreniere, 1988. "Environmentalism and Utopian Progressivism: Relationship Between Utopian Visions and Metanoia." **Trumpeter**, 5(1):14-18.

10. This kind of situation has been signalled by H. Marcuse, 1964, One Dimensional Man, Bacon Press, Boston (El Hombre Unidimensional, Planeta-Agostini, Barcelona, 1985). L.W. Moncrief, 1970. "The Cultural Basis of Environmental Crisis." Science, 17:508-512. Habermas. 1987. La modernidad, un proyecto incompleto (reimpreso en Relaciones, Montevideo, 40:12-14. E. Menedez Unena, 1987. J. Habermas: la crisis de la sociedad industrializada. Relaciones, Montevideo, 43:12-14. M. Wolfe, 1987. Agentes del "desarrollo". Rev. CEPAL, 31:111-117.

11.F.H.C. Cardosa, 1977. "Towards Another Development," pp. 21-39. In Another Development, Approaches and Strategies (M. Merfin, ed.).

Dag Hammarskjold Foundation, Uppsala.

12.K.R. Popper has particularly undermined the utopian program. Popper seems to be a force in strengthening an ideology opposed to any utopian project, as he considers present social limits and contents are inevitable, and he even seems to tolerate repression of those who try to break the present limits. This has happened with environmentalists, as many of them have been persecuted. Popper draws and supports limits, but is unable to see beyond them, so he rejects any utopian vision. See F.J. Hinkelammert, 1984. **Critica a la Razon Utopica**. Colec. Economia Teologia, San Jose, Costa Rica.

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Madrid, 1958).

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17.5. Freud, 1915. "Das Oribewusste." Int. 2. Psychoanat. 3(4):189-203, (5):257-269. (El Inconciente, Obras Completas, 6:2061-2082,

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24.Aveline, op. cit.

25.ANADEGES, 1987. "Una Red Alternativea." Comunidad, Stockholm, 61-62:7-14.

26. Devall & Sassions, op. cit., pp. 161-177.

27.R. Dumont, 1974. Utopia o Muerte. Monte Avila, Caracas.

28.A Naess, 1986. "The Deep Ecology Movement: Some Philosophical Aspects." Philosophical Inquiry, 8(1-2):10-31.

29.T. Moro, 1517. Utopia. (Alianza Univ., Madrid, 1986).

30.F. Bacon, 1620. The Great Instauration. (La gran restauraction, Alianza Univ., Madrid, 1985).

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32."Social Ecology" has different meanings. My approach is spelled out in full elsewhere (E. Gudynas, 1988, Ensayo de conceptualizacion de la ecologia social: una vision latinoamericana, Cuadernos Latinoamericanos Ecologia Social, 1:3-17), but it converges with the positions of Devall & Sessions, op. cit., Bookchin, op. cit., and other authors. As A. Naess (1988, pers. com.) pointed out, the deep ecology movement gives high relevance to social issues, although in the published work this is not always evident. Thus, we stress social components, as stated by Bookchin, but after a deep ecological perspective is sketched. I conceive of social ecology as a scientific program, rooted in a deep ecology concern, looking for a science that combines research and action to change the given order. I also stress basic research, particularly with affected communities following "participative research" efforts in Latin America. (See e.g. reports in C. Rodrigues Brandao, 1981, Pesquisa participante. Ed. Brasiliense, Sao Paulo).

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