Chapter 11
Reclaiming the Green Continent: Ecology, Globalization, and Policy and Decision in Latin America

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ABSTRACT
This essay examines Latin American technological development and its connections with regional economic development, ecological deterioration, political freedoms’ fluctuations, and globalization processes—understood as the spreading interconnectedness of business, science, technology, politics, and culture through large regions or the entirety of the world. The essay investigates how policy and decision issues resulting from Latin American technological development and its correlates can be plausibly addressed and argues for several theses, most notably, that in dealing with the issues, national legislation and international treaties have attained and are likely to attain their purposes only to a limited extent and in a mixed manner; that less legislation-dependent procedures evidence greater effectiveness and political feasibility; and that some globalization processes help fuel the environmental issues, while others help facilitate their resolution. The essay provides some concrete examples of how the issues can be soundly addressed.

INTRODUCTION
During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, many saw Latin America as a land of promise. The Green Continent, as the Colombian historian and educator Germán Arciniegas called it, attracted millions of immigrants who expected it soon to develop its technology—communications, transportation, and energy availability—, thereby promoting economic development and the growth and amenities of its cities (Arciniegas, 1944, p. vii and p. 223; Iannone, 1999, pp. 120-121). Some—Arciniegas among them—also hoped that such
developments would lead to the demise of Latin American dictatorships (Rother, 1999, passim.).

Technological development came to pass in some Latin American regions. Its expected economic and political results, however, have been mixed, and its surprises many. Accordingly, I will ask: To what extent and in what ways has technological development led to economic development in Latin America? What other changes have accompanied Latin American technological and economic development, especially, concerning ecological stability? How are these changes related to processes of globalization, (which I will understand as the spreading interconnectedness of business, science, technology, politics, and culture through large regions or the entirety of the world)? What policy and decision problems does the current situation pose? How helpful are legalistic approaches in addressing these problems? Does soundly addressing them call for a shift away from an exclusive or primary focus on legislation and treaties? What alternative and plausible approaches are there? What are the prospects for ethics and sociopolitical philosophy in dealing with these problems?

Since ethics and sociopolitical philosophy have no purpose in isolation of the concrete problems that call for it, I will first describe, in some detail, cases of development in Latin America, the environmental problems and issues they pose, and the role globalization processes play in them. Then, with these cases in mind, I will argue for seven theses: First, in dealing with environmental issues like those described, national legislation and international treaties have attained and are likely to attain their purposes only to a limited extent and in a mixed manner. Second, such legislation has not been and, unless current circumstances change, is unlikely to be soundly implemented in the foreseeable future. Third, in at least some of the Latin American cases discussed, implementation shortcomings result from lax enforcement, lack of commitment—especially concerning who is going to foot the bill—and lack of human resources. Fourth, past uses of less legislation-dependent procedures, as well as current policy making developments, evidence the greater effectiveness and political feasibility of non-confrontational and non-adversarial approaches. Fifth, the philosophical and political approach the present essay adopts is better suited for dealing with the issues and offers a chance of cementing social and environmental arrangements along morally acceptable lines. Sixth: This approach also offers prospects of a bright future for ethics and sociopolitical philosophy in contributing to deal with environmental problems and issues in Latin America and elsewhere. Seventh: some globalization processes, say, competition for global or regional markets, play a role leading to environmental issues in Latin America and arguably elsewhere; but other globalization processes, say, global communications through high speed communication networks, play a substantial role in facilitating local resistance, negotiation and organization strategies used to defend ecological and social concerns, and assert individual freedoms.

LATIN AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT, POLITICS AND ECOLOGY; SOME SALIENT FACTS

Latin American problems and issues associated with technological developments significantly concern the tensions between risks, benefits, individual rights, and practical constraints involved in deforestation practices, pesticide use, the development of genetically modified organisms, urban waste disposal, energy production, and population change policies. I will describe their salient features in some detail next.

The Transamazonic Highway System

The most conspicuous example of gigantic highway construction in Latin America is the transamazonic highway system. It runs across Brazil’s
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