Development and human needs

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Latin America: crisis and perplexity

In creating the future, there is either the risk of making errors of perception, or of making errors of action. Concerning perception, two serious mistakes are often made. The first is to believe that the Latin American crisis can be ascribed principally to an external crisis. The second, stemming from the first, is to assume that our depression is just a passing historical circumstance. Although it is true that external conditions do considerably influence dependent and vulnerable economies like ours, it is, none the less, also probable that a recovery of the capitalistic economy in the North will not affect significantly our own recovery.

It would be a delusion to base a strategy for future development on the expansion of exports of primary products. Very simply, indicators suggest that the bulk of primary products will be affected, for different reasons, by unfavourable terms of trade. Moreover, others are already being replaced by more efficient substitutes. Another strategy based on the diversification of exports, that is, of manufactured goods, would inevitably come up against the protectionist policies of the powers in the North. Also, to assume a type of development which is nurtured by external contributions of capital is ruled out altogether on account of the serious and insoluble condition of indebtedness in which we are forced to live.

In our opinion, the future lies in mustering all our energy to design imaginative but viable alternatives. The conditions for these alternatives seem to be quite clear. The two schools of economic thought which have prevailed in the Latin American setting, neo-liberal monetarism and the more inter-ventionist state-centered developmentalism promoted by the Economic Commission for Latin America, these have not been able to satisfy the legitimate needs of the Latin American masses. A new perspective is called for which aims at an adequate satisfaction of human needs. Furthermore, if future development cannot be sustained through the expansion of exports or through substantial injection of foreign capital, an alternative development must generate a capacity for greater self-reliance.

We are proposing an orientation which would enable us to create conditions for a new praxis based on Human Scale Development. Such development is focused and based on the satisfaction of fundamental human needs, on the generation of growing levels of self-reliance, and on the construction of organic articulations of people with nature and technology, of global processes with local activity, of the personal with the social, of planning with autonomy, and of civil society with the state, where 'articulation' is taken to mean the construction of coherent and consistent relations of balanced interdependence among given elements.

Human needs, self-reliance and organic articulations are the pillars which

support Human Scale Development. However, these pillars must be sustained on a solid foundation which is the creation of those conditions where people are the protagonists in their future. If people are to be the main actors in Human Scale Development both the diversity as well as the autonomy of the spaces in which they act must be respected. Attaining the transformation of an object-person into a subject-person in the process of development is, among other things, a problem of scale. There is no possibility for the active participation of people in gigantic systems which are hierarchically organized and where decisions flow from the top down to the bottom.

Human Scale Development assumes a direct and participatory democracy. This form of democracy nurtures those conditions which will help to transform the traditional, semi-paternalistic role of the Latin American State into a role of encouraging creative solutions flowing from the bottom upwards. This is more consistent with the real expectations of the people.

I wish to emphasize at this point the democratic nature of the alternative proposed. Instead of relying on stereotyped ideological options, this document advocates the need to: develop processes of economic and political decentralization; strengthen genuine democratic institutions; and encourage increasing autonomy in the emerging social movements.

The creation of a political order which can represent the needs and interests of a heterogeneous people is a challenge to both the state and civil society. The most pressing question, not only for a democratic state but also for a society based on a democratic culture, is how to respect and encourage diversity rather than control it. In this regard, development must nurture local spaces, facilitate micro-organizations and support the multiplicity of cultural matrixes comprising civil society. This type of development must rediscover, consolidate and integrate the diverse collective identities that make up the social body.

Processes which nurture diversity and increase social participation and control over the environment are decisive in the articulation of projects to expand national autonomy and distribute the fruits of economic development more equitably. Hence, it is essential to prevent the increasing atomization of social movements, cultural identities and communities. To articulate these movements, identities, strategies and social demands in global proposals is not possible through the programmes of homogenization which have characterized the Latin American political tradition. It requires, on the part of the state, new institutional mechanisms capable of reconciling participation with heterogeneity. It also requires more active forms of representation, and greater translucency in the practices of the public sector.

It is not the purpose of this document to propose a state model that promotes Human Scale Development. Rather, our emphasis is on empowering civil society to nurture this form of development. This is not to minimize the importance of the state but to develop further the potential role of social actors, of social participation and of local communities. Our preoccupation is a 'social democracy' or rather a 'democracy of day-to-day living' which does

not imply a lack of concern for 'political democracy' but a firm belief that only by rediscovering the 'molecular' composition of the social fabric (micro-organizations, local spaces, human-scale relations) is a political order founded on a democratic culture made possible. We believe that in order to avoid the atomization and the exclusion of people – be it in political, social or cultural terms – it is absolutely necessary to generate new ways of conceiving and practising politics. Thus, this document attempts to open up a space for critical reflection on the way we live and, more importantly, on the urgent need to develop a new political praxis.

Development and human needs

This new praxis starts from a theory of human needs for development. Human needs must be understood as a system; that is, all human needs are interrelated and interactive. With the sole exception of the need of subsistence, that is, to remain alive, no hierarchies exist within the system. On the contrary, simultaneities, complementarities and trade-offs are characteristics of the process of needs satisfaction.

Needs and satisfiers

As the literature in this area demonstrates, human needs can be classified according to many criteria. We have organized human needs into two categories: existential and axiological, which we have combined and displayed in a matrix (see Table 7.1, pp. 206–7). This allows us to demonstrate the interaction of, on the one hand, the needs of Being, Having, Doing and Inter-acting; and, on the other hand, the needs of Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Creation, Leisure, Identity and Freedom.

From the classification proposed it follows that, for instance, food and shelter must not be seen as needs, but as satisfiers of the fundamental need for Subsistence. In much the same way, education (either formal or informal), study, investigation, early stimulation and meditation are satisfiers of the need for Understanding. The curative systems, preventive systems and health schemes in general are satisfiers of the need for Protection.

There is no one-to-one correspondence between needs and satisfiers. A satisfier may contribute simultaneously to the satisfaction of different needs, or conversely, a need may require various satisfiers in order to be met. Not even these relations are fixed. They may vary according to time, place and circumstance. For example, a mother breast-feeding her baby is simul-taneously satisfying the infant's needs for Subsistence, Protection, Affection and Identity. The situation is obviously different if the baby is fed in a more mechanical fashion.

Having established a difference between the concepts of needs and satisfiers it is possible to state two postulates: first, fundamental human needs are finite, few and classifiable; and second, fundamental human needs (such as those

contained in the system proposed) are the same in all cultures and in all historical periods. What changes, both over time and through cultures, is the way or the means by which the needs are satisfied.

Each economic, social and political system adopts different methods for the satisfaction of the same fundamental human needs. In every system they are satisfied (or not satisfied) through the generation (or non-generation) of different types of satisfiers. We may go as far as to say that one of the aspects that define a culture is its choice of satisfiers. Whether a person belongs to a consumerist or to an ascetic society, his/her fundamental human needs are the same. What changes is his/her choice of the quantity and quality of satisfiers. In short, what is culturally determined are not the fundamental human needs, but the satisfiers for those needs. Cultural change is, among other things, the consequence of dropping traditional satisfiers for the purpose of adopting new or different ones.

It must be added that each need can be satisfied at different levels and with different intensities. Furthermore, needs are satisfied within three contexts: (1) with regard to oneself *(Eigenwelt)*; (2) with regard to the social group *(Mitwelt)*; and (3) with regard to the environment *(Umwelt)*. The quality and intensity, not only of the levels, but also of contexts will depend on time, place and circumstances.

Poverties and pathologies

The proposed perspective allows for a reinterpretation of the concept of poverty. The traditional concept of poverty is limited and restricted, since it refers exclusively to the predicaments of people who may be classified below a certain income threshold. This concept is strictly economistic. It is suggested here that we should speak not of poverty, but of poverties. In fact, any fundamental human need that is not adequately satisfied, reveals a human poverty. Some examples are: poverty of subsistence (due to insufficient income, food, shelter, etc.), of protection (due to bad health systems, violence, arms race, etc.), of affection (due to authoritarianism, oppression, exploitative relations with the natural environment, etc.), of understanding (due to poor quality of education), of participation (due to marginalization of and discrimination against women, children and minorities), of identity (due to imposition of alien values upon local and regional cultures, forced migration, political exile, etc.). But poverties are not only poverties. Much more than that, *each poverty generates pathologies*. This is the crux of our discourse.

In the Latin American context examples of persistent economic pathologies are unemployment, external debt and hyperinflation. Common political pathologies are fear, violence, marginalization and exile. Our challenge consists of recognizing and assessing these pathologies generated by diverse socio-economic political systems, with every system creating in its own way obstacles to the satisfaction of one or more needs. A further challenge is to develop and fulfil dialogue in pursuit of a constructive interpretation of the

issues and solutions raised here. These challenges form the basis for an ongoing programme of participatory action research which has blossomed in hundreds of communities in Latin America since *Human Scale Development* was published.

Deprivation and potential

The very essence of human beings is expressed palpably through needs in their twofold character: as deprivation and as potential. Understood as much more than mere survival, needs bring out the constant tension between deprivation and potential which is so peculiar to human beings.

Needs, narrowly conceived as deprivation, are often restricted to that which is merely physiological and as such the sensation that 'something which is lacking is acutely felt'. However, to the degree that needs engage, motivate and mobilize people, they are a potential and eventually may become a resource. The need to participate is a potential for participation, just as the need for affection is a potential for affection.

To approach the human being through needs enables us to build a bridge between a philosophical anthropology and a political option: this appears to have been the motivation behind the intellectual efforts of, for example, Karl Marx and Abraham Maslow. To understand human beings in terms of needs, that is, conceived as deprivation and potential, will prevent any reduction of the human being into a category of a restricted existence.

Human needs and society

If we wish to define and assess an environment in the light of human needs, it is not sufficient to understand the opportunities that exist for groups or individuals to actualize their needs. It is necessary to analyse to what extent the environment represses, tolerates or stimulates opportunities. How accessible, creative or flexible is that environment? The most important question is how far people are able to influence the structures that affect their opportunities.

Satisfiers and economic goods

It is the satisfiers which define the prevailing mode that a culture or a society ascribes to needs. *Satisfiers are not the available economic goods.* They are related, instead, to everything which, by virtue of representing forms of Being, Having, Doing, and Interacting, contributes to the actualization of human needs. Satisfiers may include, among other things, forms of organization, political structures, social practices, subjective conditions, values and norms, spaces, contexts, modes, types of behaviour and attitudes, all of which are in a permanent state of tension between consolidation and change.

For example, the availability of food is a satisfier of the need for Protection

in much the same way that a family structure might be. Likewise, a political order may be a satisfier of the need for Participation. The same satisfier can actualize different needs in different time periods.

The reason that a satisfier may have diverse effects in various contexts is due to the following: the breadth of the goods generated; how they are generated; and how consumption is organized. Understood as objects or artifacts which make it possible to increase or decrease the efficiency of a satisfier, goods have become determinant elements within industrial civilization. In industrial capitalism, the production of economic goods along with the system of allocating them has conditioned the type of satisfiers that predominate.

While a satisfier is in an *ultimate sense* the way in which a need is expressed, goods are in a *strict sense* the means by which individuals will empower the satisfiers to meet their needs. When, however, the form of production and consumption of goods makes goods an end in themselves, then the alleged satisfaction of a need impairs its capacity to create potential. This creates the conditions for entrenching an alienated society engaged in a productivity race lacking any sense at all. Life, then, is placed at the service of artifacts, rather than artifacts at the service of life. The question of the quality of life is overshadowed by our obsession to increase productivity.

Within this perspective, the construction of a human economy poses an important theoretical challenge, namely, to understand fully the dialectic between needs, satisfiers and economic goods. This is necessary in order to conceive forms of economic organization in which goods empower satisfiers to meet fully and consistently fundamental human needs.

This situation compels us to rethink the social context of human needs in a radically different way from the manner in which it has been approached by social planners and designers of policies for development. It is not only a question of having to relate to goods and services but also to relate them to social practices, forms of organization, political models and values. All of these have an impact on the ways in which needs are expressed.

In a critical theory of society, it is not sufficient to specify the predominant satisfiers and economic goods produced within that society. They must be understood as products which are the result of historical factors and consequently, liable to change. Thus, it is necessary to retrace the process of reflection and creation that conditions the interaction between needs, satisfiers and economic goods.

The vindication of subjectivity

To assume a direct relation between needs and economic goods has allowed us to develop a discipline of economics that presumes itself to be objective, a mechanistic discipline in which the central tenet implies that needs manifest themselves through demand which, in turn, is determined by individual preferences for the goods produced. To include satisfiers within the framework of economic analysis involves vindicating the world of the 'subjective', over and above mere preferences for objects and artifacts.

We can explain how needs are met: our own and those of others in our milieu, family, friends, members of the community, cultural groups, the economic system, the socio-political system, the nation and so on. We can try to understand how satisfiers and predominant economic goods are related in our environment to the manner in which we emotionally express our needs. We can detect how satisfiers and the availability of goods constrain, distort or enhance the quality of our lives. On this basis, we can think of viable ways to organize and distribute the satisfiers and goods so that they nurture the process of actualizing needs and reduce the possibilities of frustration.

The ways in which we experience our needs, hence the quality of our lives, is, ultimately, subjective. When the object of study is the relation between human beings and society, the universality of the subjective cannot be ignored. Any attempt to observe the life of human beings must recognize the social character of subjectivity. It is not impossible to advance judgements about the subjective. Yet there is a great fear of the consequences of such a reflection. Economic theory is a clear example of this. From the neoclassical economists to the monetarists, the notion of preferences is used to avoid the issue of needs. This perspective reveals an acute reluctance to discuss the subjective-universal. This is particularly true if it is a question of taking a stand in favour of a free-market economy. Preferences belong to the realm of the subjective-particular and, therefore, are not a threat to the assumptions that underlie the rationale of the market. Whereas to speak of fundamental human needs compels us to focus our attention from the outset on the subjective-universal.

The way in which needs are expressed through satisfiers varies according to historical period and culture. The social and economic relations, defined by historical and cultural circumstances, are concerned with the subjective and the objective. Hence, *satisfiers are what render needs historical and cultural, and economic goods are their material manifestation.*

The evolution of human needs

Owing to the dirth of empirical evidence, it is impossible to state with absolute certainty that the fundamental human needs are historically and culturally constant. However, there is nothing that prevents us from speaking of their socio-universal character because people everywhere want to satisfy their needs. In reflecting on the nine fundamental needs proposed in this document, common sense, along with some socio-cultural sensitivity, surely points to the fact that the needs for Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Creation and Leisure have existed since the origins of *homo habilis* and, undoubtedly, since the appearance of *homo sapiens*.

Probably at a later stage of evolution the need for Identity appeared and, at a much later date, the need for Freedom. In much the same way, it is likely that in the future the need for Transcendence, which is not included in our proposal, as we do not yet consider it universal, will become as universal as the

other needs. It seems legitimate, then, to assume that fundamental human needs change with the pace of evolution. That is to say, at a very slow rate. Therefore, fundamental human needs are not only universal but are also entwined with the evolution of the species. They follow a single track.

Satisfiers behave in two ways: they are modified according to the rhythm of history and vary according to culture and circumstance. Economic goods (artifacts, technologies) behave in three different ways: they are modified according to episodic rhythms (vogues, fashions) and diversify according to cultures and, within those cultures, according to social strata.

In summary, perhaps we may say that fundamental human needs are essential attributes related to human evolution; satisfiers are forms of Being, Having, Doing and Interacting, related to structures; and economic goods are objects related to particular historical moments.

Evolutionary, structural and episodic changes take place at different paces and rhythms. The movement of history places the human being in an increasingly unrhythmical and unsynchronized domain in which human concerns are neglected more and more. In the present moment, this situation has become extreme.

The speed of production and the diversification of objects have become ends in themselves and as such are no longer able to satisfy any need whatsoever. People have grown more dependent on this sytem of production but, at the same time, more alienated from it.

It is only in some of the regions marginalized by the crisis and in those groups which defy the prevailing styles of development, that autonomous processes are generated in which satisfiers and economic goods become subordinated once again to the actualization of human needs. It is in these sectors that we can find examples of synergic types of behaviour which offer a potential response to the crisis which looms over us.

A matrix of needs and satisfiers

The interrelationship between needs, satisfiers and economic goods is permanent and dynamic. A dialectic relationship exists among them. If economic goods are capable of affecting the efficiency of the satisfiers, the latter will be determinant in generating and creating the former. Through this reciprocal causation, they become both part and definition of a culture which, in turn, delimits the style of development.

As Table 7.1 indicates, satisfiers can be organized within the grids of a matrix which, on the one hand, classifies needs according to the existential categories of Being, Having, Doing and Interacting, and, on the other hand, according to the axiological categories of Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Creation, Recreation, Identity and Freedom. This matrix is neither normative nor conclusive. It merely gives an example of possible types of satisfiers. In fact, this matrix of satisfiers, if completed by individuals or groups from diverse cultures and in different historical moments, might vary considerably.

An examination of the different fields in the matrix with their possible satis-fiers demonstrates clearly that many of the satisfiers can give rise to different economic goods. If we take, for instance, field 15, showing different ways of Doing to actualize the need for Understanding, we see that it includes satisfiers such as investigating, studying, experimenting, educating, analysing, meditating and interpreting. These satisfiers give rise to economic goods, depending on the culture and the resources, such as books, laboratory instruments, tools, computers and other artifacts. The function of these goods is to empower the *Doing of Understanding*.

Examples of satisfiers and their attributes

The matrix presented is only an example and in no way exhausts the number of possible satisfiers. Because satisfiers have various characteristics, we suggest for analytical purposes five types that may be identified, namely (1) violators or destroyers, (2) pseudo-satisfiers, (3) inhibiting satisfiers, (4) singular satis-fiers, and (5) synergic satisfiers (see Tables 7.2 to 7.6).

The first four categories of satisfiers are exogenous to civil society as they are usually imposed, induced, ritualized or institutionalized. In this sense, they are satisfiers which have been traditionally generated at the top and advocated for all. On the other hand endogenous satisfiers derive from liberating processes which are the outcome of acts of volition generated by the community at the grass roots level. It is this that makes them anti-authoritarian, even though in some cases they may originate in processes promoted by the state.

One of the important aims of Human Scale Development is to affect change in the nature of the Latin American State. It should move from its traditional role as a generator of satisfiers which are exogenous to civil society, to a stimulator and creator of processes arising from the bottom upwards. Particularly, given the tremendously restrictive conditions which the current crisis imposes on us, an increase in the levels of local, regional, and national self-reliance should be deemed a priority. This objective can be met through the generation of synergic processes at all levels of society.

The fact that several of the satisfiers offered as examples do not appear in the matrix is due to the fact that the tables are more specific. It must be borne in mind that the matrix is merely illustrative and not normative.

Application of the matrix

The schema proposed can be used for purposes of diagnosis, planning, assess-ment and evaluation. The matrix of needs and satisfiers may serve, at a preliminary stage, as a participative exercise of self-diagnosis for groups located within a local space. Through a process of regular dialogue – preferably with the presence of a facilitator acting as a catalysing element – the group may gradually begin to characterize itself by filling in the corresponding

Table 7.1 Matrix of needs and satisfiers*

Needs according to axiological categories	Needs according to existential categories			
	Being	*Having*	*Doing*	*Interacting*
Subsistence	1/ Physical health, mental health, equilibrium, sense of humour, adaptability	2/ Food, shelter, work	3/ Feed, procreate, rest, work	4/ Living environment, social setting
Protection	5/ Care, adaptability, autonomy, equilibrium, solidarity	6/ Insurance systems, savings, social security, health systems, rights, family, work	7/ Co-operate, prevent, plan, take care of, cure, help	8/ Living space, social environment, dwelling
Affection	9/ Self-esteem, solidarity, respect, tolerance, generosity, receptiveness, passion, determination, sensuality, sense of humour	10/ Friendships, family, partnerships, relationships with nature	11/ Make love, caress, express emotions, share, take care of, cultivate, appreciate	12/ Privacy, intimacy, home, spaces of togetherness
Understanding	13/ Critical conscience, receptiveness, curiosity, astonishment, discipline, intuition, rationality	14/ Literature, teachers, method, educational policies, communication policies	15/ Investigate, study, experiment, educate, analyse, meditate	16/ Settings of formative interaction, schools, universities, academies, groups, communities, family

	BEING	HAVING	DOING	INTERACTING
Participation	17/ Adaptability, receptiveness, solidarity, willingness, determination, dedication, respect, passion, sense of humour	18/ Rights, responsibilities, duties, privileges, work	19/ Become affiliated, co-operate, propose, share, dissent, obey, interact, agree on, express opinions	20/ Settings of participative interaction, parties, associations, churches, communities, neighbourhoods, family
Leisure	21/ Curiosity, receptiveness, imagination, recklessness, sense of humour, tranquility, sensuality	22/ Games, spectacles, clubs, parties, peace of mind	23/ Day-dream, brood, dream, recall old times, give way to fantasies, remember, relax, have fun, play	24/ Privacy, intimacy, spaces of closeness, free time, surroundings, landscapes
Creation	25/ Passion, determination, intuition, imagination, boldness, rationality, autonomy, inventiveness, curiosity	26/ Abilities, skills, method, work	27/ Work, invent, build, design, compose, interpret	28/ Productive and feedback settings, workshops, cultural groups, audiences, spaces for expression, temporal freedom
Identity	29/ Sense of belonging, consistency, differentiation, self-esteem, assertiveness	30/ Symbols, language, religions, habits, customs, reference groups, sexuality, values, norms, historical memory, work	31/ Commit oneself, integrate onself, confront, decide on, get to know oneself, recognize onself, actualize oneself, grow	32/ Social rhythms, everyday settings, settings which one belongs to, maturation stages
Freedom	33/ Autonomy, self-esteem, determination, passion, assertiveness, open-mindedness, boldness, rebelliousness, tolerance	34/ Equal rights	35/ Dissent, choose, be different from, run risks, develop awareness, commit oneself, disobey	36/ Temporal/spatial plasticity

* The column of BEING registers *attributes*, personal or collective, that are expressed as nouns. The column of HAVING registers *institutions, norms, mechanisms, tools* (not in a material sense), *laws*, etc. that can be expressed in one or more words. The column of DOING registers *actions*, personal or collective, that can be expressed as verbs. The column of INTERACTING registers *locations* and *milieus* (as times and spaces). It stands for the Spanish ESTAR or the German BEFINDEN, in the sense of time and space. Since there is no corresponding word in English, INTERACTING was chosen *à faut de mieux*.

Table 7.2 Violators and destructors*

Supposed satisfier	Need to be supposedly satisfied	Needs whose satisfaction it impairs
1. Arms race	Protection	Subsistence, Affection, Participation, Freedom
2. Exile	Protection	Affection, Participation, Identity, Freedom
3. National security doctrine	Protection	Subsistence, Identity, Affection, Understanding, Participation, Freedom
4. Censorship	Protection	Understanding, Participation, Leisure, Creation, Identity, Freedom
5. Bureaucracy	Protection	Understanding, Affection, Participation, Creation, Identity, Freedom
6. Authoritarianism	Protection	Affection, Understanding, Participation, Creation, Identity, Freedom

* Violators or destructors are elements of a paradoxical effect. Applied under the pretext of satisfying a given need, they not only annihilate the possibility of its satisfaction, but they also render the adequate satisfaction of other needs impossible. They seem to be especially related to the need for protection.

Table 7.3 Pseudo-satisfiers*

Satisfier	Need which it seemingly satisfies
1. Mechanistic medicine: 'A pill for every ill'	Protection
2. Over-exploitation of natural resources	Subsistence
3. Chauvinistic nationalism	Identity
4. Formal democracy	Participation
5. Stereotypes	Understanding
6. Aggregate economic indicators	Understanding
7. Cultural control	Creation
8. Prostitution	Affection
9. Status symbols	Identity
10. Obsessive productivity with a bias to efficiency	Subsistence
11. Indoctrination	Understanding
12. Charity	Subsistence
13. Fashions and fads	Identity

* Pseudo-satisfiers are elements which stimulate a false sensation of satisfying a given need. Though they lack the aggressiveness of violators, they may, on occasion, annul, in the medium term, the possibility of satisfying the need they were originally aimed at.

Table 7.4 Inhibiting satisfiers*

Satisfier	Need	Needs, whose satisfaction is inhibited
1. Paternalism	Protection	Understanding, Participation, Freedom, Identity
2. Over-protective family	Protection	Affection, Understanding, Participation, Leisure, Identity, Freedom
3. Taylorist-type of production	Subsistence	Understanding, Participation, Creation, Identity, Freedom
4. Authoritarian classroom	Understanding	Participation, Creation, Identity, Freedom
5. Messianisms (Millennarisms)	Identity·	Protection, Understanding, Participation, Freedom
6. Unlimited permissiveness	Freedom	Protection, Affection, Identity, Participation
7. Obsessive economic competitiveness	Freedom	Subsistence, Protection, Affection, Participation, Leisure
8. Commercial television	Leisure	Understanding, Creation, Identity

* Inhibiting satisfiers are those which by the way in which they satisfy (generally over-satisfy) a given need seriously impair the possibility of satisfying other needs.

Table 7.5 Singular satisfiers*

Satisfier	Need which it satisfies
1. Programmes to provide food	Subsistence
2. Welfare programmes to provide dwelling	Subsistence
3. Curative medicine	Subsistence
4. Insurance systems	Protection
5. Professional armies	Protection
6. Ballot	Participation
7. Sports spectacles	Leisure
8. Nationality	Identity
9. Guided tours	Leisure
10. Gifts	Affection

* Singular satisfiers are those which aim at the satisfaction of a single need and are, therefore, neutral as regards the satisfaction of other needs. They are very characteristic of development and co-operation schemes and programmes.

Table 7.6 Synergic satisfiers*

Satisfier	Need	Needs, whose satisfaction it stimulates
1. Breast-feeding	Subsistence	Protection, Affection, Identity
2. Self-managed production	Subsistence	Understanding, Participation, Creation, Identity, Freedom
3. Popular education	Understanding	Protection, Participation, Creation, Identity, Freedom
4. Democratic community organizations	Participation	Protection, Affection, Leisure, Creation, Identity, Freedom
5. Barefoot medicine	Protection	Subsistence, Understanding, Participation
6. Barefoot banking	Protection	Subsistence, Participation, Creation, Freedom
7. Democratic trade unions	Protection	Understanding, Participation, Identity
8. Direct democracy	Participation	Protection, Understanding, Identity, Freedom
9. Educational games	Leisure	Understanding, Creation
10. Self-managed house-building programmes	Subsistence	Understanding, Participation
11. Preventive medicine	Protection	Understanding, Participation, Subsistence
12. Meditation	Understanding	Leisure, Creation, Identity
13. Cultural television	Leisure	Understanding

* Synergic satisfiers are those which, by the way in which they satisfy a given need, stimulate and contribute to the simultaneous satisfaction of other needs.

fields. A method of accomplishing this is described in some detail elsewhere (Max-Neef *et al.* 1989: 40–3).

The outcome of the exercise will enable the group to become aware of both its deprivations and potentialities. After diagnosing its current reality, it may repeat the exercise in propositional terms; that is, identifying which satisfiers would be required to fully meet the fundamental needs of the group. As the satisfiers are selected with increasing levels of specificity, they should be discussed critically by the group in terms of their characteristics and attributes, in order to determine if they are – or should be – generated exogenously or endogenously, that is by the community itself. Such an analysis will demonstrate the potential capacity for local self-reliance. The same analysis of proposed satisfiers will enable the group to assess not only whether their positive effects are singular or synergic, but also whether the negative effects are violators, inhibiting satisfiers, or pseudo-satisfiers. The next stage of

reflection of the group is to determine whether access exists to the necessary economic goods and material resources.

The proposed exercise has a twofold value. First, it makes it possible to identify at a local level a strategy for development aimed at the actualization of human needs. Second, it is an educational, creative and participatory exercise that brings about a state of deep critical awareness; that is to say, the method is, in itself, a generator of synergic effects.

The technique described is not restricted only to an analysis of local spaces. It is likewise applicable at regional and national levels. In local spaces it can be a broad based participation process where those representing the interest of the economic, political and social domains of the community may express their ideas.

At a regional level the exercise should be undertaken by a carefully chosen team which *not only represents the different domains of endeavour, but also,* by virtue of its representative nature, combines both public and private interests. At the national level it is essential that the task should be approached in a transdisciplinary manner because of the complexity of the issues.

Development geared to the satisfaction of fundamental human needs cannot, by definition, be structured from the top downwards. It cannot be imposed either by law or by decree. It can only emanate directly from the actions, expectations and creative and critical awareness of the protagonists themselves. Instead of being the traditional objects of development, people must take a leading role in development. The anti-authoritarian nature of Human Scale Development does not involve making the conflict between state and civil society more acute. On the contrary, it attempts to prove, through the method proposed, that the state can assume a role which encourages synergic processes at the local, regional and national levels.

Implications for development

From the linear to the systemic approach

Fundamental human needs must be understood as a system, the dynamics of which does not obey hierarchical linearities. This means that, on the one hand, no need is *per se* more important than any other; and, on the other hand, that there is no fixed order of precedence in the actualization of needs (that need B, for instance, can only be met after need A has been satisfied). Simultaneities, complementarities and trade-offs are characteristic of the system's behaviour. There are, however, limits to this generalization. A pre-systemic threshold must be recognized, below which the feeling of a certain deprivation may be so severe, that the urge to satisfy the given need may paralyse and overshadow any other impulse or alternative.

The case of subsistence may serve to illustrate this clearly. When the possibilities of satisfying this need are severely impaired, all other needs remain blocked and a single and intense drive prevails. But such a situation does

not hold true only in the case of subsistence. It is equally relevant in the case of other needs. Suffice it to say, that total lack of affection, or the loss of identity, may lead people to extremes of self-destruction.

Whether to follow the assumptions of linearity or the systemic assumptions is such an important choice that it will determine the resulting style of development.

If linearity is favoured, the development strategy will most probably establish its priorities according to the observed poverty of subsistence. Programmes of social assistance will be implemented as a means of tackling poverty as it is conventionally understood. Needs will be interpreted exclusively as deprivations and, at best, the satisfiers that the system may generate will correspond to those identified here as singular. Last, but not least, linear assumptions will stimulate accumulation regardless of people's human development. Paradoxically this option results in a circular cumulative causation (in the sense of Myrdal) and, thus, the poor remain poor inasmuch as their dependence on exogenously generated satisfiers increases.

If one opts for the systemic assumptions, the development strategy will favour endogenously generated synergic satisfiers. Needs will be understood simultaneously as deprivations and potentials, thus allowing for the elimination of the vicious circle of poverty.

It follows from the above that the way in which needs are understood, and the role and attributes ascribed to the possible satisfiers, *are absolutely definitive*, in determining a development strategy.

From efficiency to synergy

To interpret development as here proposed, implies a change in the prevailing economic rationale. It compels us, among other things, to undertake a critical and rigorous revision of the concept of efficiency. This concept is often associated with notions such as the maximization of productivity and of profits, the ambiguity of both terms notwithstanding. If we stretch economic criteria to the most alienated extreme of instrumental reasoning, productivity appears quite inefficient. In fact, by overemphasizing the need for Subsistence, it sacrifices other needs and so ends up threatening Subsistence itself.

The dominant development discourses also associate efficiency with the conversion of labour into capital, with the formalization of economic activities, with the indiscriminate absorption of the newest technologies and, of course, with the maximization of growth rates. In the eyes of many, development consists of achieving the material living standards of the most industrialized countries, in order for people to have access to a growing array of goods (artifacts) which become increasingly more diversified.

Human Scale Development does not exclude conventional goals such as economic growth, so that all persons may have access to required goods and services. However, the difference with respect to the prevailing development styles lies in considering the aims of development not only as points of arrival,

but as components of the process itself. In other words, fundamental human needs can and must be realized from the outset and throughout the entire process of development. In this manner the realization of needs becomes, instead of a goal, the motor of development itself. This is possible only inasmuch as the development strategy proves to be capable of stimulating the permanent generation of synergic satisfiers.

To integrate the harmonious realization of human needs into the process of development gives everyone the possibility of experiencing that development from its very outset. This may give rise to a healthy, self-reliant and partici-pative development, capable of creating the foundations for a social order within which economic growth, solidarity and the growth of all men and women as whole persons can be reconciled.


The exercise described here has, as already stated, received an enthusiastic response from hundreds of different communities in Latin America, from local grass-roots groups working in a specified locality (the majority), to seminars of academics, to meetings of government officials. For the grass-roots especially the process permits a clarification of the realities of their socio-economic-cultural situation. It gives an opportunity to free the creative imagination, similar to the 'Future Workshops' devised by Robert Jungk (Jungk and Mullert 1988). Thence the required bridges between the (negative) present and (positive) future can be identified. Finally the group, which will by then have engendered a considerable degree of self-knowledge, can proceed to a consideration of specific self-reliant development strategies and projects, resources that can be mobilized and outside support that can be enlisted. Although the HSD exercise was developed with a Third World context in mind, there is nothing that invalidates it for use in any society. In an industrial context the need of subsistence will be less pressing, of course, and one can expect many other differences across different cultures and situations. However, because the 'development crisis' is perceived as most acute in the Third World, one can expect the methodology to be most employed there, as indeed is the case with the take-up in Latin America. Most importantly, it defines a frame within which the relatively recent explosion of self-organized community action in Third World countries, as identified in, for example, Schneider (1988) or Pradervand (1989), can orient itself towards holistic, need-satisfying endeavour.

However, as Max-Neef, Elizalde and Hopenhayn recognize, 'grass-roots self-mobilisation is not enough', and the second half of their document is devoted to discussion as to how this can be related constructively to macro-social processes, which is also one of the subjects in the final part of this book. There is a need for all actors in the formal development process, from inter-governmental institutions to national governments to municipal authorities and all the economists, planners and officials whom they employ, and irrespective of whether their prime focus is environment, development or

employment, to recognize the primacy of local wishes and realities and to find ways of helping them to be realized. This applies especially when the needs are being articulated by those whom development professionals characterize as 'poor'.

The foregoing is from *Real-Life Economics: Understanding Wealth Creation,* ed. Paul Ekins & Manfred Max-Neef, Routledge, London, 1992, pp. 197-213. An expanded version is at: www.max-neef.cl/download/Max-neef_Human_Scale_development.pdf

The Wheel of Fundamental Human Needs
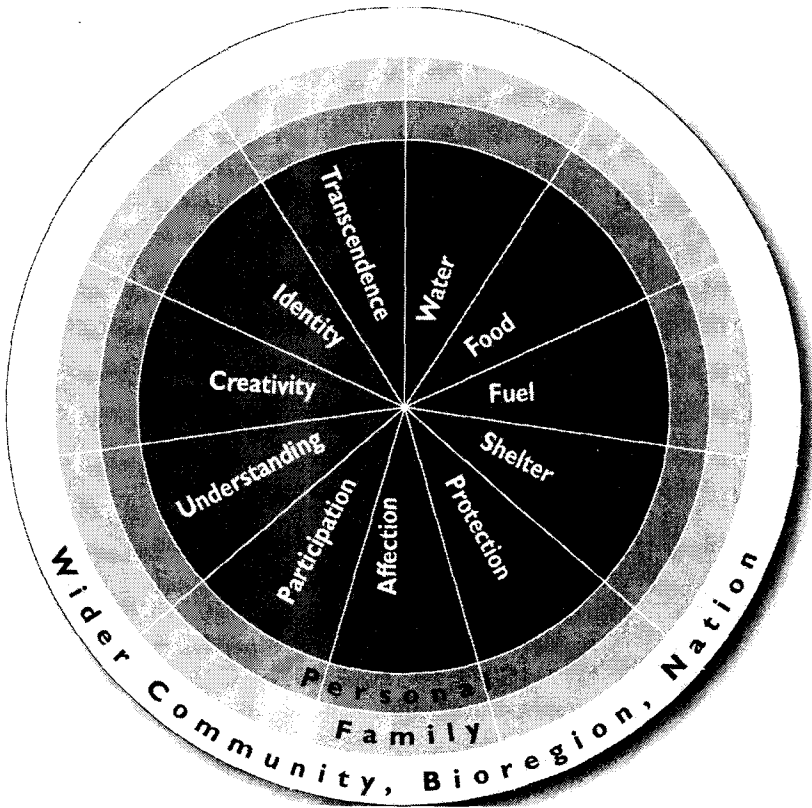
This wheel version of Max-Neef's matrix has been developed by us, Vérène Nicolas and Alastair McIntosh, of Scotland's Centre for Human Ecology – feel free to use it. We modify Max-Neef's categories and include "transcendence" (values/spirituality). Alastair and Max-Neef discussed this in the early 1990s and he himself was unsure whether to include it. The wheel version draws influence from Dr John Roughan of the Solomon Islands Development Trust and *Training for Transformation*. We use it to help people/groups reflect at the 3 levels of identity shown at the bottom. The spokes may be given a qualitative score. People are invited to shade in the segments and ask, "If this was a bicycle wheel, what sort of a ride would it be?" We find it powerful in helping individuals/groups to profile & compare themes in their lives/communities.
www.che.ac.uk   www.VereneNicolas.org   www.AlastairMcIntosh.com