



The Right Livelihood Award

for outstanding vision and work on behalf of our planet and its people

Manfred Max-Neef (Chile)

(1983)



for revitalising small and medium-sized communities through Barefoot Economics .

Photo: Wolfgang Schmidt

Manfred Max-Neef is a Chilean economist who has gained an international reputation for his work and writing on development alternatives. In addition to a long academic career, Max-Neef achieved an impressive minority vote when he stood as candidate in the Chilean Presidential election of 1993. He was subsequently appointed Rector of the Universidad Austral de Chile in Valdivia.

After teaching economics at the University of California (Berkeley) in the 1960s, he served as a Visiting Professor at a number of US and Latin American universities. He has worked on development projects in Latin America for the Pan-American Union, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the International Labour Office.

In 1981 he wrote the book for which he is best known, *From the Outside Looking In: Experiences in Barefoot Economics*, published by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation, Sweden. It describes his experiences as an economist attempting to practise 'economics as if people matter' among the poor in South America. In the same year he set up in Chile the organisation CEPAUR (Centre for Development Alternatives).

CEPAUR is largely dedicated to the reorientation of development in terms of stimulating local self-reliance and satisfying fundamental human needs. More generally, it advocates a return to the human scale. CEPAUR acts as a clearing-house for information on the revitalisation and development of small and medium-sized urban and rural communities; it researches new tools, strategies and evaluative techniques for such development, assists with projects aiming at greater local self-reliance and disseminates the results of its research and experience.

In *Human Scale Development*, published in 1987 in Spanish and later in English, Max-Neef and his colleagues at CEPANUR outline a new development paradigm based on a reevaluation of human needs. Needs are described as existential (having, doing, being) and as axiological (values) and the things needed to satisfy them are not necessarily dependent upon, or commensurate with, the kinds or quantities of economic goods available in any given society. The book seeks to counter the logic of economics with the ethics of well-being.

He received the National Prize for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights, Chile, and the Kenneth Boulding Award from the International Society for Ecological Economics in 2008. The Soka University, Japan, bestowed on him the University Award of Highest Honour. He received honorary degrees of the University of Jordan and the Saint Francis University (Loretto, Pennsylvania).

Quotation

"There are two separate languages now - the language of economics and the language of ecology, and they do not converge. The language of economics is attractive, and remains so, because it is politically appealing. It offers promises. It is precise, authoritative, aesthetically pleasing. Policy-makers apply the models, and if they don't work there is a tendency to conclude that it is reality that is playing tricks. The assumption is not that the models are wrong but that they must be applied with greater rigour... While the many deficiencies and limitations of the theory that supports the old paradigm must be overcome (mechanistic interpretations and inadequate indicators of well-being, among others), a theoretical body for the new paradigm must still be constructed."

Manfred Max-Neef

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