

# How are its needs useful to move towards sustainability ?

---



First, When we try to reduce our contribution to impacts which also reduce the ability to meet the needs of other humans.

It is about following a process to guide our reflections. We can highlight our business, products and services by using Max Neef's Nine Fundamental Needs and how they are being met. Second, when we try to reduce an unsustainable practice, it allows us to take a step back on the product, namely its origin, to what need it meets, and to question whether we could meet the same needs in another way or with a less impactful product ? Is the product necessary to meet the need ?

For example, how can we rethink the organization of a festival, which should meet the need for participation, idleness, creation and identity. Would we have another way to meet its needs by reducing CO2 impacts, the use of resources and with less impact on local ecosystems ?

Asking this questions would make it possible to explore different solutions that are more compatible with socio-ecological challenges.

Can we develop new ways of meeting the needs for freedom, identity without overconsuming our resources, producing and consuming so many products and services. Can we meet the needs of idleness and freedom without going to the other side of the world ?

And if we find sustainable ways to meet our need, can we improve it to meet other needs synergistically and using fewer resources ?

In other words, being sustainable is our ability to meet our needs (by redefining the means to meet them) within planetary boundaries.

The 9 fundamentals needs of Max Neef can be very helpful in finding ways to meet them, using fewer resources and having a holistic view of the system. It allows us to give a new look at the system we are trying to change. This is essential to stimulate innovation and avoid superficial solutions.

It is important to link human needs and ecological economy. See the video : Ecological foundation of basic human needs - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLediULP24s>

## **Satisfaction of needs through goods ? (Economic theory)**

In the thought of the economic classical school, the needs are supposed to be known by the individual consumer and the producer, who is even rational to him.

In a supply and demand model, we imagine that the individual has defined his need. But the needs are shaped by the market.

In economics, the difference between natural need and artificial need does not arise. The economy is concerned with the way in which human activity will allow the satisfaction of needs through the production of goods.

There are several classifications of "goods". (In design for sustainability goods are defined as products, systems, services and infrastructures).

## **Classification according to rarity**

Free goods : available in large quantities and which do not need human labor (air)

Rare goods : economic goods that need human intervention to produce them

### **Classification according to nature**

Material goods: physical aspect

Intangible goods : service, benefit

### **Classification according to their use**

Produced goods : machines used to produce

Intermediate goods : raw materials

Final consumer goods: final products

### **Classification according to service life**

Perishable goods: will disappear after the first consumption

Semi-durable goods : will gradually wear out

Durable goods : long use (housing)

Carl Menger 1840-1921 helps identify the conditions that transform needs into material good. He identified four main ones :

1. Humans must be aware of a current or future need
2. The object or the service must have objective characteristics which make it possible to satisfy the need.
3. The human must have knowledge of the objective characteristics of the object
4. The object must be available

The " economic " good exists when it is insufficient and causes scarcity is at the heart of the value of this good. The value is the importance that the individual attributes to this good according to the needs (Water in a mountain context and water in the middle of the desert)

"The word VALUE, it should be noted, has two different meanings [...] One can be called 'use value', the other 'exchange value'. use frequently have little or no exchange value; conversely, those with the greatest exchange value frequently have little or no use value. water, but it acquires almost nothing: one can hardly get anything in exchange for it. A diamond, on the contrary, has almost no use value; but one can often obtain a very large quantity. other goods in exchange "(Smith 1776).

According to Karl Max, the exchange value of a good is the amount of labor socially necessary for its production: "living labor" and "dead labor" (embodied in the means of production). By paying a salary, the capitalist becomes the owner of the labor-power, for the duration for which he bought it. The source of exploitation: the worker devotes more hours of labor to the service of the capitalist than is necessary to reproduce his labor power. Current dynamics predicted by Karl Max.

"If our values are fair, everything else (price, pollution, etc.) is fair" Georgescu- Roegen

In this context, it is important to quantify the intensity of our needs and the value that can be attributed to a tangible or intangible ( knowledge, partnership, innovations..) asset. Here we will quantify the level of utility of an asset. Here we will talk about assets to include any element that would allow to have a value of the tangible (environmental impacts, etc) or intangible ( knowledge, partnership, innovations, patrimonies,..) flows exchanged. To this, it is important to promote the distribution of assets for social justice. The surplus of a good or an asset is not visible (since it is abundant) for some individuals but it is essential for others (since it is rare in this community).

The question that can be asked is the following : **Objects, nature, people only have values because they are useful ? Exchangeable? Difficult to produce?**

### **Questioning the need by value would be a way to lead towards sustainability ?**

What need are we trying to satisfy through the product? What desire? What ambition? What action should we take (and how much does it consume or emit) ? What transformation of the world is desirable? What will it be used for? Whose ? What absolute finality?

How are its needs useful to move towards sustainability ?

Any need must be judged on the basis of the means implemented to meet it.

Current products tend to be integrated into “super-systems” forming “technical eco-systems” or even a single “technical system” in which the user (and the designer) loses his autonomy.