

SCHULDt, Jürgen, 2012, *Desarrollo a escala humana y de la naturaleza*, Lima, Universidad del Pacífico. 228 pp.

In this book, Jürgen Schuldt presents a fascinating, attractive and flexible analysis of an important topic for developmental economics – one that has become especially relevant at the beginning of the 21st century. I have no doubt that this book will be useful to everyone working in any type of organization, especially in the private sector or government.

The author starts with an analysis of classical economists' philosophical concepts of waste. He points out that in economic analyses based on a modern neoclassical microeconomic approach, such as have prevailed since the 1940s, there is no way to analyze the discontent that results from squandering money and wasting merchandise because it is assumed by simple axiomatic construction that consumers use what they acquire to the full extent possible, technically speaking. Schuldt has already demonstrated that this is not the case in the course of daily life, when things are wasted in surprising quantities (Schuldts 2012: chapter 3).

Alfred Marshall made a distinction between «necessities» and «luxuries». The former are essential so that workers can store «efficient levels of effort», which he called «productive consumption». The fast food industry uses oils, fats, sugar and other addictive ingredients to create an unhealthy dependence on foods that contribute to obesity. A third of the population of the U.S. is obese. Mass publicity contributes to many other consumer addictions that do not imply large costs for public health, including: excessive time in front of the television, gambling, drug use, smoking and alcoholism.

It is possible to reverse this social phenomenon. To do so, economists should follow these tenets or guidelines: a) the economy should serve individuals and not the other way around; b) development is for individuals and not for material things; c) growth is not the same as development and development does not necessarily require growth; and d) the economy is a subsystem of a large and finite system: the biosphere.

Consequently, permanent growth is impossible and the essential principle for sustaining a new economy should be that economic interest should not, under any circumstances, be prioritized ahead of «reverence for life». The author proposes that production should be at the service of real necessities and not only the demands of the economic system; in addition, mutual antagonisms should be replaced and sentiments of solidarity and cooperation should be stimulated; and the goal of social arrangements should be human

welfare and the prevention of discontent. In other words, as Wolfensohn says, «without parallel social development there can be no satisfactory economic development».

Schuldt also talks about the fetishism of economic growth and the wasteful consumerist culture, citing Eduardo Galeano, *Lessons from Consumer Society*, 1998 (New York: Picador, p.250): «the right to waste, privilege of a few, masquerades as freedom for all. Tell me how much you consume and I'll tell you what you're worth. This civilization won't let flowers or chickens or people sleep. In greenhouses, flowers are subjected to twenty-four hour lighting so they'll grow faster. In egg factories, night is denied to the hens. And people, too, are condemned to insomnia, kept up by the anxiety of buying and the anguish of paying».

In the final analysis, as can be easily understood, the capitalist market economy only survives, grows and «progresses» as a result of the recurring pressure of the expansion in the supply of goods, a consequence of the increasingly intense inter-corporate competition which has escalated even more as a result of «globalization».

Fifty years ago, John K. Galbraith pointed out that in the United States more people died from eating too much than from malnutrition. Thus, on the one hand, the abundance of consumer goods which are acquired and then thrown away constitutes a problem; on the other hand, and of much greater concern, the overconsumption of goods not only leads to obesity but also generates other health problems. In addition, there are far-reaching repercussions that derive from the production of these goods, such as the excessive use of nonrenewable natural resources and the impact that their exploitation and transformation has on the environment and the potential standard of living of future generations.

It is notable that the countries that waste the most food in terms of volume – in the different stages of extraction, transformation, transportation, and delivery – are labeled as «developed» because of their high levels of income and their increasing negligence and lack of concern about expenditures and utilization of acquired goods. Surprisingly, Latin America wastes more food per capita in the phase prior to consumption than all the other regions.

Thus, waste, in the two groups of countries to which the author refers, is much greater during the preconsumption phase than in the production, distribution and commercial phases (extraction, storage, wholesale and retail sales), resulting in surprising per year and per person figures. Thus, the problem of waste in consumption is effectively less severe than that of waste in production and, as such, becomes – and not only in the case of food – the foremost problem worldwide when it comes to tackling the tragedy of mass hunger on a global scale, which currently affects a billion people; one-seventh of the world's population.

Finally, Schuldt's book invites us to reflect on the unsuitability of the model of development that is centered only on classic capital structures and, instead, proposes that we replace a one-dimensional vision of economicism with a proposal of integral and sustainable development: this is the defining challenge of the 21st century. The author's contribution is his appeal to forge a new approach to the practice of development, learning from the past but seeking new challenges to resolve the concrete problems of humanity. As a sociologist, I thank the author for having systematically developed his topic, justly recognizing the contributions of those who conduct research in many fields, not only economics.

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