

The Economy of Cities

Studying the economy of cities is relevant for a number of reasons. First of all, because most of the planet's population is grouped in them. Secondly, because they concentrate the main social problems that humanity has and, finally, because they are also the greatest source of creativity, innovation and development opportunities to solve those problems. Cities group companies and people who interact with each other both within their scope and with their peers in other cities. The general framework in which the current economy operates is, in general, the city and if the latter does not create the conditions for the economic activity to be sustainable, not only the city, but the country itself will suffer the consequences.

The title of this issue of *Cultura Económica* is inspired by the homonymous work by Jane Jacobs, an influential urban planner who tried to advocate for a human-scale city as the center of public policy. Born in 1916 in Scranton, Pennsylvania (USA), her best known work is *Death and Life of the Great American Cities* (1961, Random House), which she wrote while living in New York, until her transfer to Toronto where he continued the rest of his work, including *The Economy of Cities* (1969, Random House).

This text provided a comprehensive view of the development of cities seen from an economic perspective. With her own characteristic epistemology, based on the observation of social phenomena, Jacobs sought, above all, to better understand the behavior of human beings and thus take advantage of each city's potential development. Different from the mechanistic, rationalist and deterministic conception that many cities of the time followed as a model, Jacobs' vision of urbanism implied a more human vision of the economy of cities.

Throughout the cited book, Jacobs also presented some cross-cutting concepts such as creating new jobs from old jobs, the division of labor, and the importance of innovation, diversification, and differentiation. To these concepts she added specific issues such as financing and growth opportunities and multipliers, seeking to avoid urban economic stagnation. Comparing Manchester with Birmingham, Jacobs pointed out how both cities had generated multiple new small businesses that grew, disappeared or transformed. However, in the general aggregate, it was Birmingham that expanded the division of labor

and the supply of goods and services, becoming a vigorous city. Thus, argued Jacobs, cities that manage to have diversity in land use, create value from a more efficient production, offer an environment conducive to the birth of new companies, involve the population in the decision-making process, and provide resilience to the most vulnerable, will be the most developed and sustainable over time.

Almost all these questions are dealt with by the authors who collaborate in this 100 issue of *Cultura Económica*. The first article by Micaela Camacho is focused on urban competitiveness. The author reviews the contributions of different studies and models based on the idea that urban activities are today the central basis of prosperity, unlike the ancient logic that only conceived of land and mineral resources as the main source of wealth. Her review of the profuse literature on the subject, as well as the author's own analysis, invite the reader to delve into the studies presented that allow analyzing the particularities of each city and their economy, also proposing a new line of investigation of urban competitiveness models.

Bibiana María Guerra de los Ríos's article presents a concept that is currently very much in vogue, such as smart cities, but from a not exclusively technological perspective. Like Camacho, she recognizes the importance of the local solution to global problems as a central value. In this sense, the author mentions the emerging model of the city of 15 minutes away as a solution to pandemic scenarios and restriction of personal mobility. Along the same lines, she also raises other concepts such as the circular economy in the environmental management of urban conglomerates; the use of the night-time idle capacity to give 24-hour use to the city's infrastructure; the inclusion of citizens in decision-making through organized participation; and transparent governance. In short, the use of technology makes cities smarter, but there are also other vitally important tools.

Closing the *Articles* section of the Journal, we publish the work of Juan Carlos Neri Guzmán, José Luis Santos Morales and Mildreth Guadalupe Arriaga Alemán on social responsibility and ecological footprint, analyzing the case of the Polytechnic University of San Luis Potosí (Mexico). The authors measure the impact that the University generates on the environment through the measurement of CO₂ emissions (carbon dioxide) and propose social responsibility actions to offset the negative effect of the institution's activities on employees, the

community and the environment. It is a very interesting example of how measuring the impact of a certain activity, taken to other sectors, industries or organizations, could raise awareness about the importance it has on the environment and provide examples of various ways of reducing, mitigating or compensating for its negative externalities and enhancement of positive ones.

In the *Essays* section, we offer the contribution of Francesco Maria Chiodi regarding the special program launched by the European Union called Next Generation EU (NGEU) in response to the great economic decline suffered by all the countries of the bloc in the face of the lockdown due to the COVID pandemic -19. The author explains in detail how this program seeks to recover and strengthen the economy, but without neglecting the ambitious green and digital transformation policy that the region had embarked on before the pandemic, as part of its new model of development. For this, the NGEU has independent financing from the rest of the block's projects, taking joint debt for the first time and offering the Union's own multi-year budget as a guarantee. An unprecedented initiative that could lay the foundations for a unified fiscal policy in the coming decades.

In the second of the essays, José Eduardo Moreno, María Eugenia Prestofelippo and Jéscica Verónica Favara start from the conception that the interaction between the world economy, the global society and the physical environment of the Earth are closely related to sustainable development. To understand part of that interaction, they conducted a survey in the cities of Paraná and Oro Verde in the Province of Entre Ríos (Argentina). Through this study they seek to know the environmental awareness in adults and how predisposed they are to carry out pro-environmental activities in order to formulate development policies.

This edition of *Cultura Económica* also includes a document prepared by Florencia Almansi, Jorge Martín Motta and Jorgelina Hardoy, originally published in *Environment & Urbanization* and specially translated for our Review. The text describes the participatory improvement process of Villa 20 in the City of Buenos Aires (Argentina). Emphasizing the incorporation of the resilience approach in the social and urban transformation carried out in a precarious but consolidated settlement, the document describes how to apply a planning model that includes the simultaneous participation of technicians and beneficiaries. Based on citizen participation and governance schemes, greater resilience

to climate change was generated in the population due to their involvement in the process, and conditions for development were improved, making the implementation of public policies that sought to improve the neighborhood more effective.

We hope that this number 100 of *Cultura Económica*, in addition to awakening interest in the urban economy, an indispensable discipline to face a hyper-urbanized 21st century with multiple social, environmental and health dilemmas (such as the current pandemic), will collaborate in generating awareness on the need for cities with a more human face as the engine of sustainable development. In this sense, and in line with the quote made by Jane Jacobs in the aforementioned famous work, we believe that the thought of Alcaeus of Mytilene (600 BC) is still fully valid today: “Neither houses with thin roofs, nor stone walls, no channels or ports make a city, but the opportunities that men can make use of”.

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