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## ARTICLE

### **The New Economy of the Inner City: Restructuring, Regeneration and Dislocation in the Twenty-First-Century Metropolis** **by Thomas A. Hutton, Routledge, New York and Abingdon, 2010,** **xiv + 333pp., Paper \$39.99 (ISBN 978-0-415-56932-3)**

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In *The New Economy of the Inner City*, Thomas Hutton engages the changing economic and social dynamics of the contemporary central city, presenting an incipient theoretical intervention based on a program of field research since 1993. Following Allen Scott, Hutton restates the centrality of industrial production within metropolitan urbanization, stressing both the need for theoretical engagement with the dynamic nature of industrial enterprise in the metropolitan core, and the “persistent saliency” of the inner city “as a critical terrain of metropolitan transformation” (p.4). In doing so, he contends the “reassertion of production” in the inner city – centered on the cultural and knowledge production of the New Economy – challenges postindustrial theory with “sufficient evidence of novelty” to suggest we may be entering a new stage of after-postindustrial urbanism (p.2).

Hutton contextualizes his central thesis firstly through a synthetic review of the diverse factors influencing the formation of new inner city industrial sites; questioning accounts of the postindustrial center city’s essentially monocultural downtown office economy and marginalized fringe. The sweeping discussion incorporates property markets and the reconstructed production landscape; human, social and cultural capital; the metropolitan context; and exogenous factors of globalization, industrial restructuring and competition, into a schematic model of the production economy of the inner city (p.36). Secondly, drawing from secondary cases, Hutton constructs a dynamic understanding of inner city industrial sites as “zones of experimentation, creativity, and innovation,” shaped within the contingencies of place and pre-existing “old” economic regimes (p.65).

The majority of the book details adaptive New Economy reindustrialization through case studies of select inner city spaces in four global-cities (London, Singapore, San Francisco and Vancouver). Over five chapters, Hutton draws from impressive empirical data – including interviews, media and policy analysis, and varied illustrations (although many of the photographs are superfluous) – to illustrate the diverse, often precarious, paths of inner city reindustrialization. However, his tendency to present descriptive vignettes leaves the task of extrapolating the cases studies’ conceptual significance to a concluding “essay in theoretical synthesis”. Here, Hutton sketches out the components of a *recombinant economy*, engaging the complex manner in which industrial regimes (pre-Fordist, Fordist, post-Fordist) coexist, collaborate and compete. The concept of “recombination” usefully illuminates the “complex synergies, syntheses, and interdependencies” shaping contemporary urban economies (p.279) and provides a cautionary counter-narrative to “creative” urban boosterism through highlighting the limited regenerative capacity of the New Economy.

In asking the book's central question, "In what ways does new industry formation, together with related social dynamics, contribute to the respatialization of the inner city and the reconstruction of the postindustrial landscape?" (p.11), Hutton ambitiously attempts to synthesize economic geographic research on reindustrialization and the region with literature addressing interactions between processes of industrial change, space, and place in the city (pp.11-12). His project though, is only partially successful. When focusing on the dynamics of industry formation, the analysis is assured and insightful, but when Hutton looks to connect with wider issues in urban scholarship, socio-cultural and political dynamics are often problematically unelaborated or under-theorized. A more comprehensive examination of "dislocation," incorporating wider issues of displacement and social polarization, would be welcome, as would a systematic comparative analysis across the study sites, particularly regarding: (1) the globalizing-universalizing elements of the recombinant economy within broader contours of economic restructuring; and (2) the (neglected) role of multi-scalar state and regulatory regimes.

The "reassertion of production" poses provocative questions for contemporary urban scholarship and as a prolegomenon to future research, Hutton concludes: "we are perhaps approaching a vantage point upon which a more robust retheorization process which takes in the restructuring episodes of the last two decades might be feasible" (p.293). The formative conceptualization of the after-postindustrial city presented in *The New Economy of the Inner City* includes many constructive avenues for such a project; however, it notably suffers the limitations of a "one-sided love for the historical city"; uncritically reproducing the primacy of the metropolitan core and repressing "the challenge presented by unloved suburbia" (Sieverts, 2003, p.17). If the inner city and its space-economy are no longer what they used to be – as Hutton argues – can we assume the same of the suburbs? The selective reindustrialization of the inner city does internalize wider processes of industrial and urban change, but Hutton does not adequately address the *metropolitan* frame of inquiry or the dialectical processes co-constituting *city-regional* space. What possibilities can be gleaned by de-centering the privileged position of the inner city as a critical site of metropolitan transformation for both urban and industrial geographic theory, and the twenty-first-century metropolis?

Sieverts, T. (2003). *Cities without cities: An interpretation of the zwischenstadt*. London: Spon Press