

engaging and edifying read. Historians of slavery, nineteenth-century social movements, African American politics, and American politics will do well to consult this study. Its conciseness also makes it well suited for the classroom where it will offer a great deal to students and professors alike.

Stephanie M. H. Camp
University of Washington, Seattle

Ray Hudson, *Producing Places* (New York: The Guildford Press, 2001).

We live in a time when most urgent political questions relate to boundaries of one sort or another. Globalization, of course, is reconfiguring the shape and meaning of those at the national level. Related pressures have pushed back the institutional frontiers of the welfare state, rearranging communities and families to make room for market forces. A wide-ranging assault on civil society is now being conducted in the name of national security, using measures that only recently were considered beyond the pale. Those who oppose such intrusions find themselves grappling with the limits of solidarity, for inclusiveness and diversity demand attention to borders, if not respect for them. And any consideration of who is “us” and who is “them” is likely to be entangled – at least metaphorically – with spatial boundaries. The distinction between “core” and “peripheral” workers is illustrative here.

In this context it seems reasonable to consult geographers on the changing meaning of space and place. And economic geographers seem to be well positioned to comment on the global extension and domestic intensification of work. In *Producing Places*, Ray Hudson examines both “places in which production occurs” and “the production of places” where “the realms of use values and exchange values” intersect (v-vi).

Much of the book is an attempt to rehabilitate traditional Marxist economic theory by melding in regulationist approaches and highlighting the spatial dimensions of production (especially uneven development). This argument seems to be aimed at mainstream geographers who neglect or obscure the pervasive impact of capitalism on their objects of study. By focusing on production, Hudson is able to synthesize a wide range of theoretical material, covering production’s relationship with states, labour markets, corporate strategies, worker organizing, places, spaces, and nature. He therefore makes a very comprehensive case for the relevance of Marxist theory in a geographic context.

Those familiar with similar debates elsewhere may find little that is novel in this strand of the book beyond a useful synthesis of existing material. And at times they may be put off by Hudson’s dry, abstract, and

heavily qualified style of writing. Although he occasionally uses concrete examples, the breadth of Hudson's project seems to prevent him from situating them in depth. As a result, the book is often strangely devoid of any real sense of place, and human motivations tend to be portrayed in awkward, stylized terms. Hudson does try to approach a lower level of abstraction, but the results are often tentative, and sometimes frustrating (on page 267, the word "complex" appears five times in one paragraph).

Nevertheless, the sheer scope of Hudson's coverage is impressive, and he manages to include a number of very useful observations in the course of his travels. One of these is his portrayal of some business strategies as "spatial fixes" to problems of profitability and worker resistance. Firms able to access cheap labour abroad may be using a spatial fix to deal with union wages at home, for example (102). Another sort of spatial fix occurs when those engaged in "strong" competition strategies smash open new markets, creating more economic space, rather than simply aiming for success in the old spaces (147).

Workers organizing community resistance to relocation, or merely trying to provide for their lives outside work, are engaged in "spatial praxis," on the other hand (223). Hudson focuses on the defensive features of this activity, and presents (in a rather cursory way) non-class identities based on gender and ethnicity primarily as divisions that complicate "labour's spatial fix" (230-37).

Although this is pitched as an example of agency on the part of "knowledgeable subjects with their own projects" (223), there is surprisingly little discussion of projects that aspire to more than survival. Workers are depicted for the most part as objects to be acted upon, and although capital can create new spaces (via strong competition strategies), workers' capacity for similar endeavours is not treated here. This is unfortunate because, as James Scott has shown, major regime changes are often preceded by a proliferation of secret oppositional spaces where "hidden transcripts" of resistance are developed and rehearsed (see his *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*). The failure to take seriously this facet of worker agency may help explain why Hudson reaches rather tepid conclusions about "what is to be done." Toward the end of the book he seems to endorse "eco-Keynesianism" because "such reformism is as much as is currently possible" (322).

While he is unable to muster much enthusiasm for progress through worker action, Hudson is refreshingly optimistic about the potential for contradictions within capital's newer economic strategies. And it is here that geographic perspective seems to have made the difference. Dissecting lean production and "just in time" sourcing, he hints that they rely on social constructions like "trust" (among businesses) that are

markedly easier to maintain over short distances (199). It turns out that such trust and a “shared sense of purpose” are also crucial elements of regional development projects (203).

So by this point Hudson seems to be edging toward the claim that even capital needs some sort of bounded space that is smaller than a totally globalized market. Conversely, for workers, “...looking for comradeship abroad may be the only possible strategy for fighting successfully at home” (257, citing J. Wills). Both trajectories pass through the creation of community – a (notional?) social place that receives scant attention in this work. This neglect is unfortunate because one gets the impression that community is very important to the author. One passage dealing with plant closings speaks with a kind of restrained passion: “Devalorization is always necessarily place-specific. Nonetheless devalORIZED places remain meaningful for people who live and learn there, embedded in social networks of family, friends, and relations” (282). Linking such feelings to popular conceptions of community, and exploring the changing meaning of this term would have extended this point in useful directions.

It should be noted that Hudson is remarkably lucid in a chapter that deals with topics perhaps most foreign to readers schooled in the social sciences. Discussing the relationship between production and nature as a process of “materials transformation,” Hudson applies the laws of thermodynamics in a cogent and evocative way (287-89). His elaboration of the distinction between “first” (precapitalist) nature and “second” nature (as remade by capital) then provides a very useful segue into an examination of environmental disasters and strategies (295-96). And he incidentally notes the influence of accounting cycles on the rate at which nature is transformed (295). One wonders how different history might have been had accountants tracked the rate of profit by fiscal months or fiscal decades rather than fiscal years.

Despite its occasional frustrations, *Producing Places* is a thoughtful and provocative book that deserves to be read by a wide audience. In the end it does tackle some of the fundamental questions of our time, and it does so in a way that leaves space for progressive solutions.

Greg McElligott
McMaster University