

BOOK REVIEW**Phoenix Cities: The Fall and Rise of Great Industrial Cities****By Anne Power, Jörg Plöger, and Astrid Winkler****Bristol: The Policy Press, 2010**

Reviewed by Michael B. Teitz

The total damage to human lives and property caused by deindustrialization in U.S. and European cities over the past forty years has never been fully assessed. What we know and see is that major cities were devastated by the loss of employment and income that accompanied the movement of manufacturing to offshore locations with lower labor costs. Policy makers and planners in cities such as Detroit and Pittsburgh struggled to respond to the crises that they faced, but researchers have tended to be more bemused by new industrial growth, exemplified by Silicon Valley, or by the search for nostrums such as the creative class. Thus, *Phoenix Cities* comes as a welcome effort to document both the scale of industrial decline and the efforts to alleviate it.

The book presents the results of a collaborative effort to show how decline occurred and was addressed in seven European cities—Leipzig, Bremen, Sheffield, Belfast, Bilbao, Torino, and Saint-Étienne—together with a short section that looks at U.S. cities, based on work at the Brookings Institution. The book's approach might best be described as descriptive empiricism. It comprises case studies of each of the cities, summarizing what happened, what responses were tried, and how effective they were. Each case is constructed in a similar way, describing the history of decline and response in terms of the city's historical context, crisis, and recovery efforts, with many brief examples and numerous charts and pictures. But failing cities are like old people—all are similar in some respects, but each has its own personality and history—so the comparisons can only take us so far. In addition, the authors present three summary chapters, one comparing the case cities' histories, the second summarizing neighborhood interventions, and the third attempting to measure and evaluate the cities' recovery.

Overall, this is useful stuff; one can learn a lot if one has the tenacity to wade through the prose and text boxes. Nonetheless, the work has some significant deficiencies. Foremost is the absence of a coherent theoretical framework. Perhaps the authors have one, but it is not in evidence here. As a result, the book feels like a compilation of observations. This

is reinforced by the way in which material is presented. The chapters are peppered with pictures and text boxes, the latter replete with summary descriptions of the cities' actions. However, they are essentially unreadable. This raises the question of the book's audience. Is it intended to be a text book for a course in urban regeneration, which its style suggests? Or is it aimed at practitioners, in which case the information is not presented in sufficient detail or clarity? Or is it an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the cities' regeneration strategies, as one chapter tries to do? That effort combines quantitative and qualitative measures, but the small number of cases essentially defeats the attempt.

Despite these caveats, the authors deserve praise for throwing light on an important and under-researched issue. For all its faults, the book is a brave try at understanding both the plights and the struggles of cities that their countries would just as soon ignore.