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Social Economy of Thrift

This paper addresses the tension between the image of the global city as a hub of footloose international capital, and the everyday economic tactics of urban consumers. The debates about the recent financial crisis have recorded a growing awareness of the need to revise theoretical economic models and social practices based on the high rate of consumer spending. Many prominent economists have lauded the *homo economicus* as the creation of a past era, with less consumption and saving coming to the fore in the new post-recession times. Money-saving choices have re-emerged in popular culture as something positive, pertaining to the everyday experience of economically vulnerable populations and fashionable and environmentally-conscious demographics alike. This paper presents preliminary material from a cultural study into the social economy of thrift. It uses a case study of Melbourne-based thrift shops to identify major players and issues, linking them to theoretical discussions about second-hand markets and everyday consumption.