

twentieth-century planning, planners regularly tended to gravitate towards physical attributes of cities and regions because these were more easily managed than social processes. Taylor (1998: 4) likewise explains that, until the middle years of the twentieth century, it was generally assumed that urban planning was an 'exercise in the physical planning and design of human settlements'. In his view, this 'physicalism' had three interrelated components:

1. urban planning was seen as the management of natural and physical processes;
2. design was a central aspect of such planning and this design-led approach tended to focus attention on physical form; and
3. urban planning necessarily involved the production of 'blueprints' or 'masterplans'.

Together, these three aspects of early twentieth century planning reveal a spatial imagination that focuses firmly upon the physical and objective properties of spatial formations (Abercrombie's 'natural planning').

The selective character of this spatial focus owes much to the technical resources that were being harnessed to the conduct of planning during the early phases of its development. Planning envisaged space in the form of a map. It therefore tended to demarcate and distribute activities in ways that accorded with the rationality of this mode of visualization (notably in the form of physically demarcated cells or containers). The map was complemented by the urban or regional survey, which provided a topographical overview of urban structures, processes and entities. However, the survey was again rendered into mappable form so that the physical attributes of cities and other spatial locations inevitably came to the fore. Finally, the survey heralded the plan, a summary statement on the area to be planned and the policies that would be introduced to facilitate planned outcomes. The plan served to integrate all the other technical devices into one coherent approach. It also utilized these devices in order to conjure up a technological zone (as Barry, 2001 might put it) in which governmentalities of the well-ordered space were brought to bear. Through the technologies of planning, a topographical zone comprised of physical entities was brought into being.

Planning systems

As planning gained full political powers in the post-war period, the physical zoning of space became central to governmental interventions in processes of development. However, concerns about the orientation of the new planning systems soon began to be expressed. As Taylor (1998: 14) points out, this 'tidy

to develop differing patterns and concentrations of urban functions'. The very idea that 'neighbourhoods' existed or functioned as distinct entities 'was itself a design idea which had not been subjected to critical examination and, when it was [...] it was found to be "suspect"'. Taylor thus concludes that 'physicalist' planning worked simply on a series of *assumptions* about the best way to regulate complex social processes: 'the idea that the complex teeming metropolis itself might be a desirable living environment did not really come into the picture' (1998: 36).

Processes of spatial emergence, however, could not be kept completely at bay and a series of critics emerged who complained about the formality of urban planning during its formative years. Perhaps the best known was Jane Jacobs (1961), who, in her seminal study of urban contemporary life, delivered a penetrating critique of the physicalist approach. In her view, planning theory had failed to apprehend the complex and unpredictable interactions that occur between differing activities *across* urban space. In particular, planning had become disconnected from urban space:

Cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city building and city design. This is the laboratory in which city planning should have been learning, forming and testing its theories. Instead the practitioners and teachers of this discipline (if such it can be called) have ignored the study of success and failure in real life, have been incurious about the reasons for unexpected success, and are guided instead by principles derived from the behaviour and appearance of towns, suburbs, tuberculosis, sanatoria, fairs and imaginary dream cities – from anything but cities themselves. (Jacobs, 1961: 16).

Jacobs suggested that if planning theorists were to look more closely at the city, they would see 'an intricate and close-grained diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and socially' (1961: 24). Thus,

when city designers and planners try to find a design device that will express, in clear and easy fashion, the 'skeleton' of city structure [...] they are on fundamentally the wrong track. A city is not put together like a mammal or a steel-frame building, or even like a honeycomb or a coral. A city's very structure consists of a mixture of uses, and we get closest to its structural secrets when we deal with the conditions that generate diversity. (1961: 390)

In order to apprehend urban diversity, Jacobs proposed that planning theory should learn from the life sciences, in particular from the concern for 'organized complexity' in dynamic systems. In Jacobs's view this concern has three main aspects:

1. a need to analyse processes and their catalysts;
2. a requirement to work inductively, 'reasoning from particulars to the general rather than the reverse' (1961: 454); and

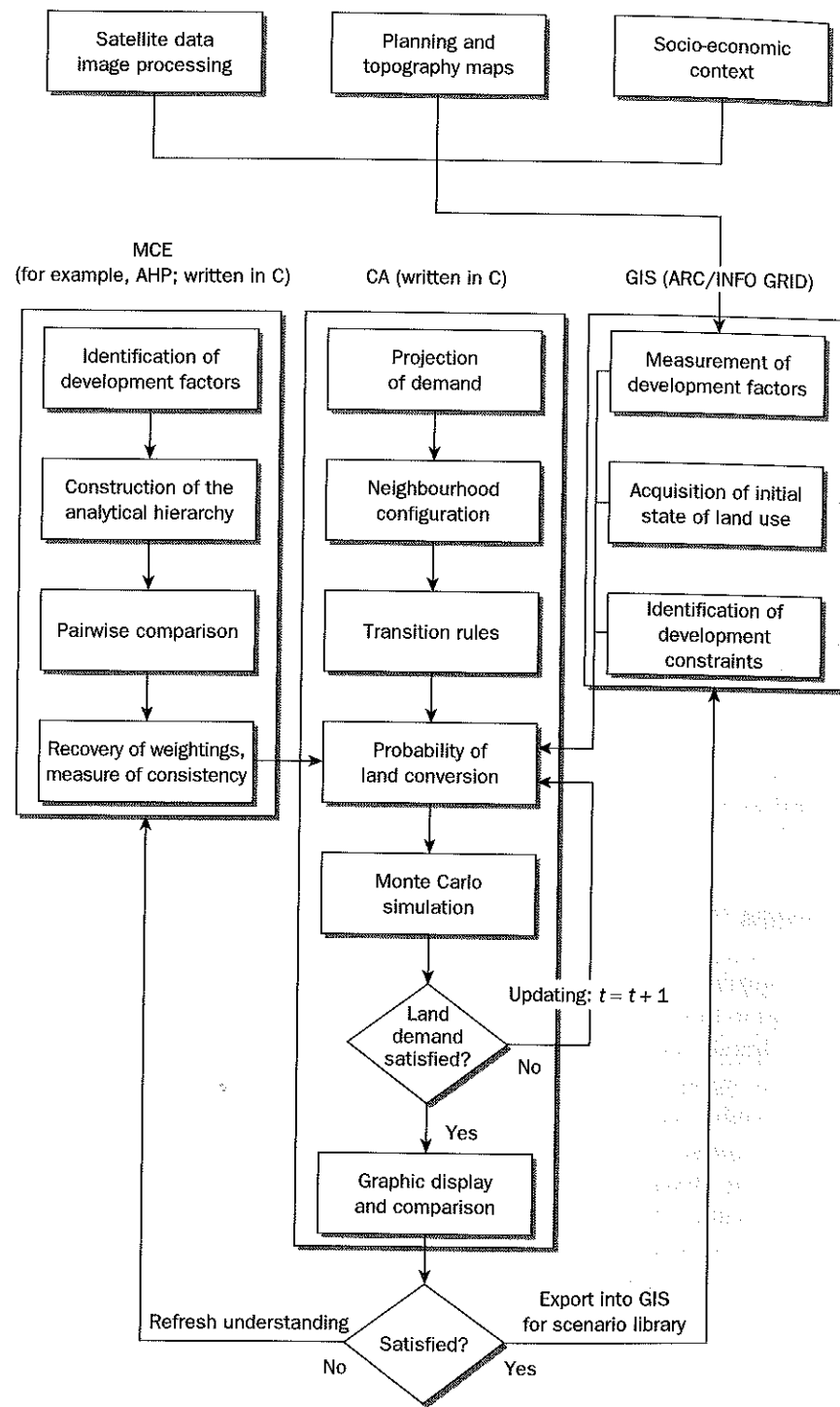
Using these three interrelated ways of seeing cities, the complex but functional ordering of life in cities would be revealed.

BOX 6.2

The new interest in urban systems led to:

- A concern for the dynamic and emergent qualities of cities. These qualities were revealed most clearly by Jane Jacobs (1961). She showed the way social processes unfold across urban space in unpredictable ways. In her view, such processes were simply being ignored by mainstream planning which still focused on the physical and formal properties of cities.
- An interest in modelling urban systems using the new computing technologies that were then becoming available. These technologies held out the hope that the complexities identified by Jacobs might be incorporated into more formal planning models.
- Increasingly formalized planning models that used a great deal of quasi-scientific data to reveal the nature of urban process but still failed to apprehend socio-economic diversity in the city.
- A form of planning that seemed to hold strong continuities with early forms of technological and physical planning. Thus, the social complexities revealed by Jacobs still remained beyond planning's reach.

The *Death and Life of Great American Cities* (Jacobs, 1961) provided a sustained critique of the 'physicalist' planning practiced by Unwin, Abercrombie and others. But more than this, it opened up a new means of understanding cities based on an appreciation of complexity and diversity. This latter insight was subsequently adopted by a new generation of planning theorists who had become interested in systems theory (McLoughlin, 1969). Like Jacobs, the systems analysts believed that cities should no longer be seen as simple zones on a map but should instead be viewed as complex clusters of interacting processes (Chadwick, 1971). While the systems approach effectively built upon the earlier idea of the urban survey, it specified that the various economic, social and environmental processes incorporated into any urban overview should be formally assessed in systemic models. It thus adopted a seemingly dynamic perspective on urban process.



particular, the new technology of computer modelling seemed to hold out the hope that the city could be represented as a complex set of dynamic and interconnected processes. However, as computational methods were developed they tended to become formalized so that 'bulky plans, previously spruced up with photographs, sketches, designs and land-use maps, became even bulkier 'scientific' studies replete with statistical and mathematical appendices and technocratic jargon' (Rodwin, 2000: 16). The increasingly technical character of the models generated some amount of unease amongst planning practitioners. There were two main sets of concerns. First, despite the computing power then becoming available, the models still seemed simplistic; that is, they were only able to capture a limited number of urban processes, in part because key data sets associated with economic and social entities in the city were still unobtainable (for instance, data on incomes, rents and ownership were notoriously difficult to get hold of but were crucial to the functioning of the models) (see Batty, 1985). Thus, the predictions derived from the models proved inherently unreliable. Second, the models failed to adequately account not only for the socio-economic aspects of urban development but also for the likely impact of any planning interventions on these aspects. In short, computers, like the earlier technical devices used in the planning process, tended to create 'technological zones' in which entities were arranged not in ways that reflected topological complexity but in ways that reflected the topographical simplicities enshrined in the planning models themselves (Faludi, 1973). In other words, while the new technologies allowed more entities to be drawn into the planner's line of sight, they still tended to produce physical and geometrical spatial perspectives.

Planning the social

The formalistic character of the new computer-aided models was of particular concern to those theorists who concerned themselves with planning as a social and political process (see, for instance, Breheny and Hooper, 1985). These new theorists argued that planning had become increasingly politicized following the establishment of state planning agencies in the post-war period. Thus, while planners could use rational and sophisticated technologies in order to initiate appropriate development patterns, they were ultimately immersed in some form of political bargaining (Friedmann, 1987). And as planning settled into its governmental role, any hard and fast distinction between planning as a technical activity and planning as a political activity began to dissolve. Charles Hoch summarizes the implications of this:

Professional planners face a serious problem in our liberal democratic society. Their

specific attachments that make them feel as if they are experts on the practical matter at hand [...] Many planners understand this dilemma and work hard to solicit and include in their professional advice the ideas and opinions of the citizens involved. However, the pursuit of widespread consensus through compromise and negotiation often seems to undermine the integrity of expert judgement. If people can figure out what they want and how to get it on their own, who needs professional planners? (1994: 1)

Thus, once planning achieves legislative status, planners must link their specialized knowledges to the demands of politicians, developers, environmental and amenity groups and other planning participants. In the view of many planning theorists, this linking cannot be achieved using formal and rational models; rather, it requires a reflexive approach that somehow incorporates both technical and political perspectives within a new form of social engagement. The American planning theorist, John Forester, identifies the importance of such engagement when he says:

In cities and regions, neighbourhoods and towns, planners typically have to shuttle back and forth between public agency staff and privately interested parties, between neighbourhood and corporate representatives, between elected officials and civil service bureaucrats. They do not just shuttle back and forth though. Trying to listen carefully and argue persuasively they do much more. They work to encourage practical public deliberation – public listening, learning and beginning to act on innovative agreements too – as they move project and policy proposals forward to viable implementation or decisive rejection. (1999: 3)

As Forester indicates, the recognition that planners are immersed in complex political sub-fields shifts the emphasis away from the achievement of rational outcomes towards the management of processes of decision-making. The planner is no longer seen as the neutral facilitator of expert interventions but as the orchestrator of political processes, processes that comprise multiple actors and multiple viewpoints. As Hoch (1994: 105) puts it: 'planners do not uncover facts like geologists do, but rather, like lawyers, they organise facts as evidence within different arguments [...] all engage in persuasive rational arguments [...] focused and attached to value objectives'. In other words, planners do not stand outside political processes but play a full part as interested participants. Thus,

the planner could serve not only as a designer and coordinator but as advocate, negotiator, or coalition builder. It was equally respectable to characterise the planner as knowledgeable not only about the problems of urban land use and environmental policy but as someone with generic skills in policy and analysis, the processes of communication and negotiation, as well as implementation and public management. (Rodwin, 2000: 16)

In thinking through the implications of the planner's role as a coalition builder or negotiator planning theorists began to turn to alternative technologies of

analyses of urban life. In the 1920s and 1930s, the so-called 'Chicago School' of urban sociology had established the importance of qualitative research for the study of social groupings while, during the same period, anthropologists such as Boas, Mead and Malinowski had shown how detailed ethnographic studies might be employed to understand 'alien' cultures (see Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). All these qualitative approaches delved into the lifeworlds of participants and brought multiple social perspectives to the surface. They allowed social complexity (for example, the differences *between* urban lifeworlds) to be more easily appreciated than had been the case in the formal models and surveys. In short, their use brought the 'social' into view and rendered it amenable to processes of planning governance.

The sociological perspective was 'governmentalized' through 'communicative' or 'collaborative' planning. The basic idea here is that planners should aspire to giving all participants ('stakeholders') a voice in planning processes (Bryson and Crosby, 1992). According to Healey (1998: 312), a leading exponent of the collaborative approach, 'those involved as experts in [planning] processes should have an ethical duty to attend to all stakeholders as the interactive process develops'. In order to draw stakeholders into decision-making procedures, planners need to engage in such activities as:

1. listening hard to a variety of participants;
2. cultivating community networks;
3. finding ways of involving uninterested but affected social groups;
4. educating citizens about planning choices; and
5. encouraging community groups to develop their own planning proposals (see Forester, 1989, 1999).

The reform of planning processes along communicative or collaborative lines also requires the consolidation of an institutional structure that helps to build the potential for genuine participation. Such a structure would assist collaboration,

by its role in informing political communities about the range of stakeholders and about how they would like to discuss issues; by helping to shape arenas where stakeholders can meet; and by helping those involved work out what it means to build new collective ways of thinking and acting, to reframe and re-structure their ways of proceeding. (Healey, 1998: 312)

A key part of such institutional reform involves the making of plans. No longer can plans be seen as detached overviews ('*masterplans*') of sharply delineated spaces; rather they become 'processes of interaction' between participants (Healey, 1993: 83). Plan preparation itself is renewed as a 'process of "making story lines"' so that all participants should be permitted to see their interests

struggles between the community and other communities, but between the diverse cultures and systems of meaning within a community' (1993: 103). This amounts to a 'socialization' of planning's technologies.

BOX 6.3

Graham and Healey (1999) propose that communicative and collaborative planning might be thought of as 'relational planning'. The approach has four main components:

- First, planning should consider relations and processes rather than objects and forms. In practice this means that 'the extent to which a proposed form [...] will lead to particular social, economic, and cultural behaviours needs to be demonstrated in terms of the relational dynamics of specific instances, not assumed as a universal generalisation' (1999: 642).
- Second, planning should stress the multiple meanings of space and place associated with differing social groups and differing social identities. This requires 'careful assessment of the many spatial and temporal experiences of a city, and how these flow across and into each other in shaping a place and filling it with value' (1999: 642).
- Third, planning needs to consider specific spaces as 'layers of relations'. In identifying such layers, planners should recognize that privileging one experience of space and time may necessarily undermine others.
- Finally, planning should promote communication between differing social groups and networks in order to reduce social exclusion. Planners thus need to facilitate the recognition of these and should also help mediate inevitable conflicts 'without allowing one-dimensional viewpoints to regain their dominance' (1999: 642-3).

The emergence of communicative and collaborative discourses indicates that planning is moving away from a prescriptive and rational ordering of space (using technical models and plans) towards a more social process of decision-making based on understandings of cultural, political and ethical differences. This move implies a concern not for the smooth and uniform spaces of the map, but an interest in the undulating and varied spaces associated with social entities as they move through the city. Thus, communicative and collaborative theorists work to produce new planning technologies that encompass diverse social entities. As Leonie Sandercock (2003: 76) observes, the development of such technologies entails an engagement with an 'epistemology of multi-

'new models of planning practice which expand the language of planning beyond the realm of instrumental rationality' (2003: 76). In her view, a transformed language would usher in a new spatial imagination so that plans and other planning interventions would be based on an engagement with the spaces of 'lived experience' rather than the (dead) spaces of maps and models. Planners would then be open to the 'emotional breadth and depth of cities [...] cities of desire, cities of memory, cities of play and celebration, cities of fear and paranoia, cities of struggle' (2003: 227). As space becomes socialized, a zone of multiplicity and relationality inevitably comes into view.

Planning politics

The above discussion indicates that planning theory moved some considerable distance over the course of the twentieth century, from the physical planning of Euclidean or topographical space to the planning of social or topological diversity. This move was driven, in part, by a normative concern to build up the scope for social inclusion and consensus generation so that planning processes could represent the full range of urban stakeholders. This culminates in an 'epistemology of multiplicity' in which differences in the life-worlds of urban inhabitants are recognized by planners in both their plan-making activities and in the decisions they make on specific developments. Planning therefore becomes a process of 'orchestration', in which the planner endeavours to encourage both an open dialogue and the achievement of some form of consensus between involved stakeholders. Yet, while the assertion of this socially reflexive form of planning has generally met with a great deal of support from planning theorists and practitioners, it has also aroused the suspicions of those who see planning as inevitably dominated by politics and power (for example, Richardson, 1996; Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998; Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002). This latter group is sceptical of any claim that planning can somehow 'exceed' the powers that 'produce' planning decisions (as Foucaultian theorists might put it). Thus, any move to construct a planning consensus needs to be taken in the full knowledge that it may simply involve yet another imposition of power relations, culminating in new spaces of domination and subjection.

The leading exponent of this 'political' perspective is Bent Flyvbjerg. In a detailed and nuanced study of 'planning in action', Flyvbjerg (1998) shows that planning is a political activity through and through. In particular, he argues that any (technical) rationality asserted by planners is *always* set within relations of power ('rationality is context-dependent and [...] the context of rationality is power', 1998: 2). In outlining this broadly Foucaultian perspective, Flyvbjerg presents a detailed case study set in Aalborg, a medium-sized city located in the

for planning to recast itself as an 'immanent' rather than normative process of spatial regulation.

Flyvbjerg begins his evaluation of planning in Aalborg by examining the arguments that unfold around the siting of a new bus terminal as part of a reorganization of the city's transportation system. He notices that as the decision on the location of the terminal begins to take shape, political rather than technical considerations come to the fore (it seems the bus company favours one particular site and uses its political influence in the project task force to ensure this site is chosen, irrespective of its technical merits). Once a decision has been reached, however, some justification is required. Flyvbjerg summarizes the sequence of events thus:

it transpires that even before the technical evaluations of placement options for the terminal have been completed, the Aalborg Project's Task Force decides to locate the terminal at Nytorv [...] What happens, then, is that the decision regarding the location of the bus terminal is made simultaneously with a decision about elaborating the technical basis for the decision. (1998: 21).

In short, technical expertise is employed to 'rationalize' a decision that has already been taken on political grounds. Flyvbjerg is therefore able to suggest that 'the rationality produced is actively formed by the power relations which are themselves grounded and expressed in processes that are social-structural, conjunctural, organisational and actor-related. Conversely, these power relations are supported by the rationality generated' (1998: 27).

The decision on the siting of Aalborg bus terminal is only the first in a whole series of negotiations around the city's transportation system that are documented by Flyvbjerg. In these negotiations, the main aim of the planning authority is to achieve some reduction in the impact of automobiles on the city's environment. In order to restrict the number of cars entering Aalborg, the planners formulate a 'traffic zoning solution' – that is, they divide the central area of the city into four discrete areas, which are all separated by barriers (to be reached via a ring road). In each area, a balance is created between the supply and demand for parking, with the streets made accessible to other modes of transport, notably buses, bikes, pedestrians. The planners argue that this zoning of traffic will lead to fewer injuries and deaths, less traffic noise, and reduced air pollution.

The planners thus use a form of spatial zoning in order to control key socio-technical processes such as the flow of traffic through the city. In this regard, they strive to align topographical and topological perspectives – that is, areas can be zoned so that the flow of cars is effectively regulated. However, they believe that this alignment will only be successfully achieved if the plan is implemented in its entirety, all at once; they worry that if the negotiations become too protracted the scheme will begin to fall apart. Their concerns seem justified for politics soon enters the picture again in the form of the Aalborg Chamber

the need to look in more detail at the impacts of the proposals on retailing. According to Flyvbjerg, the staff in the Technical Department of the City Council believe that the Chamber's opposition to the project is based on very weak (technical) arguments (for instance, the Chamber simply has no evidence to back up its claims about the negative impacts of the zoning scheme). Yet, the city's technical staff is not allowed to argue with the Chamber over the substantive details of the latter's objections; rather, a negotiation is conducted between leading members of the business community and key politicians. Following this negotiation, the scheme is amended: now the implementation process will not be 'once and for all' (it will take place in stages) and the zoning scheme will only be partially installed. Flyvbjerg suggests that at this juncture the project begins to fall apart.

the functional coherence of the project becomes [...] more and more neglected. An integrated plan becomes a fragmented reality. In more general terms, the problem can be expressed like this: that which ought to be a rationality-to-power relation, if the relevant technical functional linkages in the project are to be ensured, instead becomes a power-to-power relation, where functional considerations become subordinated to tactical ones. (1998: 81)

However, even this diminished scheme meets further political opposition once it gets close to implementation. Again, the Chamber argues for the lifting of almost all restrictions on traffic. After yet further rounds of negotiation, the project finally reaches the City Council for ratification. But by now, Flyvbjerg argues, years of obstruction and argument have left it in a fragile and diminished state – the original plans for a traffic-free Aalborg have given way to a set of disjointed and denuded proposals that will seemingly fail to make any significant impact on the amount of traffic in the city centre (during the period in question, the amount of traffic in Aalborg rises by 8 per cent). In other words, the simplicities of the zoning system have largely been abandoned in favour of uninhibited (traffic) flows.

Flyvbjerg describes the Aalborg Project in detail because he believes it shows how planning, as a rational and technical activity, is deeply implicated in power relations. In this sense he follows in Foucault's footsteps. He claims the Aalborg study reveals 'rationality to be a discourse of power [...] Rationality is penetrated by power, and it becomes meaningless, or misleading – for politicians, administrators and researchers alike – to operate with a concept of rationality in which power is absent' (1998: 227). Moreover, rationality is enmeshed within relatively stable and enduring power relations. For instance, Flyvbjerg notices that the influence of the Chamber of Commerce over city planning is not unique to the Aalborg project but is a routine aspect of the planning process. As he says, 'through decades and centuries of careful maintenance, cultivation and

BOX 6.4

Flyvbjerg (1998) proposes a political perspective on planning processes. This perspective shows:

- That planning is saturated with power relations, in much the way that Foucault would lead us to believe.
- These power relations can be seen as two main types: straightforward political power and power that derives from technical rationalities.
- In Flyvbjerg's study, political power constantly seems to have the upper hand against technical forms of power.
- Political power is exercised by local politicians and local business owners; technical power is exercised by the planners.
- Flyvbjerg's findings mean that we must pay particular attention to (political) power relations when assessing scope for collaborative or communicative planning.

In the main, Flyvbjerg is concerned to show that the assertion of any normative agenda within land-use planning must engage with the reality of planning's power – that is, with the routine assertion of power relations in planning processes. So while the communicative or collaborative planning theorists may wish to open up space for multiplicity in the making of planning decisions, the likelihood is that such efforts will routinely encounter strategies of exclusion and manipulation. Flyvbjerg therefore suggests that instead of seeing revised planning processes as a means of dissolving power, 'we need to see them as practical attempts at regulating power and domination' (1998: 236). In other words, the best that can be achieved is the enhancement of alternative planning powers, powers that give voice to currently marginalized groupings. We see here, then, that planning opens up a political space, one that is striated by power relations of various kinds.

Flyvbjerg's study clearly shows how difficult it is to separate the technical and political dimensions of planning – the two become inextricably bound into one another. In short, it indicates that planning is deeply embedded in a fully politicized space. It also infers that planning must be seen not as some normative ideal (as in the communicative and collaborative planning approaches) but as 'immanently' enmeshed (as in Foucaultian and Deleuzian approaches) in the socio-political processes it seeks to challenge. Flyvbjerg seems to believe that a recognition of planning's 'immanence' will allow both planning theorists and planning practitioners to more easily appreciate the need for planning norms that somehow incorporate modes of critique (for

The losers in the struggle over the Aalborg Project are those citizens who live, work, walk, ride their bikes, drive their cars, and use public transportation in downtown Aalborg, that is, virtually all of the city's and the region's half million inhabitants. Every single day residents and communities in downtown Aalborg are exposed to increased risk of traffic accidents, higher levels of noise and air pollution, and deteriorating physical and social environment. (1998: 223)

We begin to get a glimpse here of what might be termed the 'Aalborg assemblage', the complex mix of entities that ultimately form part of the planning and political networks that Flyvbjerg so assiduously documents in the offices and meetings of the city council and the Chamber of Commerce. Rationality may ultimately be enmeshed in politics, but politics is ultimately enmeshed in materialities of various kinds. So we can suggest that the assertion of rationality and power in Aalborg has real material impacts in the city itself: the outcomes ultimately take shape on the ground, in the form of streets cluttered with cars, high levels of noise, decreased sociability, rising levels of air pollution and increased consumerism. The Aalborg transportation project as described by Flyvbjerg defines a very particular type of urban space: not a space of open, inclusive multiplicity but a space of narrow closed self-interest in which economic definitions of spatial utility (for example, retailing) win out over all others to the detriment of the wider Aalborg environment.

Environmental planning

Flyvbjerg's study shows how planning can remain relatively detached from the material environment: it exists mainly in the world of political and economic calculation. It also reveals how planning decisions affect (or fail to affect) complex urban assemblages. It might therefore be assumed that while planning incorporates spatial imaginaries (as governmentalities) it fails to incorporate space itself (as a complex set of interacting entities). Yet, this assumption would seem a little premature, for in recent years considerable effort has been expended in embedding planning more fully in heterogeneous environments. Perhaps the most successful of these efforts has been 'planning for sustainability', a mode of planning that can be traced back to the World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland. The Commission produced a report in 1987 entitled *Our Common Future*, which identified the urgent nature of the environmental problems facing the world. The solution to these problems was proposed as 'sustainable development', a notion that was defined in rather abstract terms as 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED, 1987: 43). All decision-makers in all tiers of government were urged to take this principle on board. As Luke (1999: 142) puts it (after Foucault),

in the policing of ecological spaces'. This new form of 'environmentality' would focus on 'establishing the right disposition of things between humans and the environment' (1999: 146). Planners were thought to have a key role to play in enforcing this disposition: as Susan Owens (1994: 440) puts it, 'planning and sustainability share two fundamental perspectives – the temporal and the spatial. Both are concerned with future impacts on and of particular localities'. In short, planning for sustainability can not only conserve land and other natural assets for future generations, but can also ensure that any development that does take place will have a diminished impact on the overall environment (for instance, in terms of pollution and waste) (Blowers, 1993). Planning is thus a key form of 'green' governmentality.

In an era of sustainable development, planning is forced to confront more than just socio-economic relations – it must somehow encompass the 'wider environment', including 'ecological' resources and processes. Owens and Cowell (2002), in a detailed study of planning for sustainability in the UK, consider how planning authorities have attempted to bring these resources into their decision-making processes. The authors identify a number of techniques – environmental appraisal, cost-benefit analysis, environmental forums – that have been employed to 'give voice' to natural entities. They suggest that perhaps the most effective technique for drawing environmental factors into planning decisions is the environmental capacity study. The concept of environmental capacity effectively rests on the idea that 'there are some absolute constraints to development in a locality, beyond which one cannot go without unacceptable change occurring' (Rydin, 1998: 749–50). As Rydin notes, this notion draws heavily on 'the concept of carrying capacity as used in ecology and biological sciences, in which a relationship is posited between the ability of an ecosystem to support a species and the size of the species population' (1998: 750).

For planning to adopt such an ecologically inflected approach would seem to indicate that there is now a firm commitment to linking planning processes more fully to the heterogeneous materiality of space. However, Rydin suggests caution in any such interpretation, for,

it is clearly not the case that a locality in Britain has a finite capacity for supporting a human population in the same sense that an area of open land has a capacity of a given population of rabbits, say. Extremely high densities are possible for human populations; technological investment, evolving modes of social organisation and the ability to import many of the necessary resources and export much of the resulting waste all render urban development potentially unaffected by local capacity constraints. (1998: 750)

Given the absence of any *absolute* limits or capacities, decisions need to be made about the spatial entities that should be protected in line with principles of sustainable development – 'hence the emphasis on identifying these elements

such decisions is likely to be fraught with problems. Owens cites two main sets of difficulties:

First in the politics of development nothing is sacrosanct whatever might be theorised about the need for stringent protection of critical environmental capital. A second difficulty is that the delineation of environmental capacity will never (and should never) be purely an exercise in technical rationality. Deciding what is sufficiently important to be left intact for future generations or for its own sake, or what aspects of environmental quality should be maintained, involves judgement and makes the resultant interpretations of sustainable development particularly vulnerable to critique. (1997: 296)

Thus, we are back once again in socio-political decision-making in which environmental entities are either protected from, or sacrificed to, development. Although some commentators have sought to set limits to any trading away of the environment – by, for instance, suggesting that ‘critical natural stocks’ be excluded from any bargaining process (see Jacobs, 1997) – in practice, capacity studies, like all the other techniques of planning for sustainability, ultimately take their place in the ‘to and fro’ of planning politics. Owens and Cowell conclude that,

to conceive of these approaches as instruments in promoting some preformed, consensual concept of sustainability is profoundly misleading. In practice, all are bound into power struggles in which conceptions of what is sustainable are actively constructed and negotiated. And since these struggles are invariably unequal, no assessment of the role of appraisal, or participations, or integration, is likely to be adequate if it is divorced from fundamental questions of agency and leverage over the political process [...] what emerges as ‘sustainable’ depends on the arrangement of actors, opportunities and constraints in any given setting. (2002: 70)

We return here, then, to the Foucaultian assumption that planning is also an exercise of governmental power and that those able to stabilize the most coherent and robust sets of power relations are those that are most likely to prevail in defining the significance of environmental capacity and other such environmental designations.⁵

BOX 6.5

The introduction of sustainable development policies has led to the emergence of environmental planning:

- This form of planning works to draw natural entities into planning processes, so planning consists not just of calculations concerned with economic, social and political criteria but with environmental or ecological criteria as well.

- Planning has developed a number of mechanisms to draw environmental entities into the process of calculation: environmental appraisal, cost-benefit analysis, capacity studies and so forth.
- However, it still remains the case that planning privileges economic, social and political criteria. Thus planning fails to engage with the heterogeneous materiality of space. It also fails to recognize the processes of ‘becoming’ that emerge from heterogeneous materialities.
- Thus, planning needs to become more ‘ecological in focus’; it needs to find ways to bring natural and social phenomena within manageable collectives. It needs to find ways of building robust relationships between entities of different types so all can be sustained over time and through space.

Ecologizing planning

The case of planning for sustainable development shows that although efforts are currently underway to press planning authorities into a fuller recognition of the value of environmental entities, ultimately these efforts end up becoming subject to political and social negotiation. The environment becomes a ‘tradable good’, simply one more factor to be weighed in the balance as decisions are made on the composition of plans and on the benefits of specific developments to differing social groupings. Planning thus continues to adhere to a ‘social’ rather than a ‘natural’ contract (Serres, 1995). Moreover, planning will only establish a ‘natural contract’ once it finds a better balance between physical, social, political and environmental factors in its decision-making processes (as we have seen above, planning theory seems to be able to focus on only one of these factors at a time). In short, there is a need for planning to become more fully ecological in scope.⁶

Some clues as to how planning might be made more ‘ecological’ are provided in Bruno Latour’s (2004) book *The Politics of Nature*. In this work, Latour encourages those interested in the heterogeneous complexity of space to rethink the fundamental relationship between politics and ecology. He argues that the aim of political ecology is not to root politics in nature but rather to ‘convoke a single collective’ (2004: 29), made up of ‘associations of humans and nonhumans’, associations in which humans and nonhumans ‘exchange properties’ (2004: 61). All that matters, in this ecological approach ‘is the production of a common world, one that [...] is offered to the rest of the collective as an occasion to unite’ (2004: 141). We can see here that Latour is implicitly invoking Deleuze’s notion of ‘a line of force’ as something that can orchestrate heterogeneous entities into an alignment that produces a common world. Importantly, Latour identifies the need for both technical (scientific) procedures and political strategies in the production of a common world.

Politicians and scientists all work on the same propositions, the same chains of humans and nonhumans. All endeavour to represent them as faithfully as possible [...] both callings delight in the art of transformations, the [scientists and technicians] to obtain reliable information on the basis of the continual work of the instruments, and the [politicians] to obtain the unheard-of metamorphosis of enraged or stifled voices into a single voice. (Latour, 2004: 148)

Through the use of technical procedures, Latour believes scientists and technologists can draw nonhumans into the collective, while through the use of political procedures politicians can establish the linkages that build a single collective. He summarizes the significance of the new perspective by saying: 'it was thought that political ecology had to bring humans and nature together, whereas it actually has to bring together the scientific [technical] and political ways of intermingling humans and nonhumans' (2004: 148).

BOX 6.6

Fitzsimmons (2004) follows Latour (1999) in assessing the means by which ecology as a scientific discipline succeeds in enrolling nature into its networks:

- First, it *mobilizes* nature using field observation, methods of measurement, means of conceptual categorization and so forth. As entities are mobilized so they take their place in the world of ecologists.
- Second, it determines its own ability to speak 'for' nature through processes of *autonomization* – that is, the development of institutional structures and their associated knowledge systems.
- Third, ecology must build *alliances* with other groups and bodies in order that it may garner, resources, recognition and influence.
- Fourth, it must seek to gain *public representation* in the wider social field so that programmes for action are widely disseminated.
- We see in these four manoeuvres some of the means that planning might use to draw nature into its field of action. In particular, we see that planning needs to find more efficient and effective means of mobilizing nature as well as enhanced strategies for the construction of alliances that might sustain nature.

These various aspects of the ecological approach allow us to usefully reflect upon the resources open to planning – itself a techno-political enterprise – in

seeking to superimpose these various factors one upon the other, planners should attempt to rethink the distinctions between the physical, the social, the political and the environmental. Now they should recognize 'there are no clear boundaries, no well-defined essences, no sharp separation[s]'; there are instead 'tangled beings [...] rhizomes and networks' (Latour, 2004: 24). Thus, planning needs to draw diverse entities and processes into heterogeneous collectives in which new, more complex relations are established between all participants. In drawing these aspects together, planning needs to harness both technical and political resources: the technical to visualize and demarcate the many heterogeneous features of the spaces to be planned (perhaps in the style of Abercrombie's 'natural plan'), and the political to ensure that these heterogeneous features are brought into some kind of regulatory alignment (perhaps in the style of communicative or collaborative planning).

Moreover, in undertaking this task, planning needs to employ more than simply 'foresight'; it must also be prepared to engage with uncertainty for no one can say for sure what form these collectives will take or where the processes of collective development ('becoming') will lead. As Latour puts it:

Political ecology does not shift attention from the human pole to the pole of nature; it shifts from *certainty* about the production of risk-free objects (with all their clear separations between things and people) to *uncertainty* about the relations whose unintended consequences threaten to disrupt all orderings, all plans, all impacts. (2004: 25)

Working with uncertainty is a new challenge for planning but it flows inexorably from the engagement with heterogeneous materialities and all their complex and unpredictable interrelations. Thus, plans need to be recast in order to foresee perhaps multiple trajectories of change, with the proviso that even this more complicated form of foresight is hedged with ambiguity and doubt.

We can see then, that the planning of heterogeneous or ecological relations requires some considerable modification in planning's *modus operandi*. It implies that a new round of innovation in planning theory and practice is required so as to straddle technical-socio-political divisions. As Latour (2004: 69, original emphasis) indicates, planning needs to 'traverse the now-dismantled border between science and politics, in order to add in a series of new voices to the discussion, voices that have been inaudible up to now [...] *the voices of non-humans*'. The importance of this widening of planning's franchise stems from the fact that planning, as a mode of 'green' governmentality, can only be seen as truly legitimate once all the entities affected by its interventions are included in the relevant decision-making processes. Extending the franchise to non-humans, however, requires attention to two processes simultaneously: an enlargement of planning procedures through the employment of techniques that 'give voice' to nonhumans (the environmental capacity study is perhaps an early illustration of this), and the development of a political capacity to

a stable collective comes into view (using perhaps political techniques of consensus building but now broadened to include non-human participants). If these two aspects can be sympathetically combined then planning might at last succeed in opening up a truly ecological, that is, heterogeneous spatial realm. Within this realm new heterogeneous alignments will be brought progressively into view and, once seen, they will be acted upon in ways that sustain their collective properties. The purpose of any planning action should not, therefore, be the simple ordering of (ecological) spaces but rather should comprise the nurturing of new assemblages in ways that allow orders and disorders to coexist. This requires, in turn, the development of a new spatial imagination for, as Latour (2004: 165) reminds us, we are now no longer dealing with 'closed, concentrated spaces' but rather with 'flowing basins, as multiple as rivers'. This new spatial imagination will thus need to acknowledge the 'flowing' and 'multiple' character of topological space.

Conclusion

As a form of applied geography, planning plays an important role in formulating ideas about space. Moreover, as a part of the state, planning has the opportunity to put these ideas into practice. It thus comprises a key means by which spatial imaginaries are 'performed' or 'enacted' (Law and Urry, 2004). Through its land-use plans and the decisions it makes about specific developments, planning plays a key role in ordering space. It sets out a vision of space in maps, surveys and plans, and then develops policies in order to shape trajectories of spatial development over time. The conceptualizations of space used within planning thus have important and tangible effects; they frequently appear *in space* as a result of political interventions in the development process. Planning shapes given spatial locations in line with its own views of what the 'well-ordered' zone should look like.

We have seen in this chapter some of the spatial imaginaries that have been used to conceptualize 'well-ordered space'. These extend from the Euclidean notion of spatial containers, in which socio-economic processes can be encased, through social perspectives on the multiple lifeworlds that co-exist within urban areas, to the heterogeneous materialities of environmental and ecological spaces. These varied spatial imaginaries indicate that planning holds a variable relationship *with* space. It views space through technological and political mechanisms that *select* the spatial attributes thought to be of most significance and intervenes *in* space on the basis of this selection. Planning therefore holds very partial spatial linkages and fails, in the main, to engage with the full range of entities to be found within discrete spatial locations. In Michels Serres's (1995) terms, it relates to space through a 'social' rather than a 'natural' contract.

with the nonhuman realm too. By broadening out the very partial views of space that have predominated in planning circles, it has been argued that planning can immerse itself more fully in the heterogeneous materialities of ecological space. It can become *immanent* to the places and spaces being planned. In so doing, planning might re-invent itself as a form of ecological 'steering' in which multiple trajectories of development are defined simultaneously. The goal of planning then becomes sustaining the collective or the assemblage, ensuring that the rich sets of linkages that bind humans and nonhumans together are allowed to develop in ways best suited to the entities and their alignments – that is, the planner no longer 'knows best'; s/he learns from the collective what is in the best interests of the collective. This form of planning would no longer be seen as *masterplanning* – rather it would involve such activities as 'collecting', 'mixing' and 'sustaining'. Some of these activities are already undertaken by planners but the way they are conducted needs to be rethought in the light of the new ecological requirements. In short, planning must face up to heterogeneity, to the full range of entities now included in the collectives.

While these suggestions appear to chart a new course for planning – a course that simultaneously involves a new relationship with space – there are few signposts available showing how planning might reach its new destination. For instance, Latour's (2004) work on political ecology is strong on *re-conceptualizations* of science and politics in the wake of political ecology but is weak on the specific steps that might be taken to shift scientific and political *practices* in the desired direction. Thus, the means by which planning might reconfigure its relationship with space in order to engage with heterogeneous materiality remain hard to discern. While in this chapter we have identified the need for a new spatial imaginary we have been unable to suggest how this might be developed. In the next chapter, we hope to overcome this weakness by turning to examine a little more closely how new spatial relations might be brought into being not just in theory but also in practice. In so doing, we look closely at the network forms that might be required if a new interaction between conceptualizations of space and the implementation of those conceptualizations in actual, material spaces is to be achieved. The example provided, however, concerns not planning but food.

SUMMARY

This chapter has given an overview on the spatial imaginaries at work in planning. It has been argued that planning, as an arm of modern government is in a position to bring certain geographies into being – that is, planning can 'perform' space in the decisions it makes about development. Various spatial imaginaries were identified. The

focus on the management of inclusive processes. This inclusion has only recently been extended to nonhumans, however, mainly because planning remains a site for the play of (Foucaultian) power relations. In conclusion, it was suggested a new approach, derived from political ecology, should be adopted so that planning might engage more wholeheartedly with heterogeneous complexity.

FURTHER READING

Flyvbjerg's (1998) book, *Rationality and Power*, discussed at length above, remains the best treatment of power in planning. For an alternative view, from a communicative planning standpoint, see John Forester's (1989) book, *Planning in the Face of Power*. For some thoughts on relationalism in planning, see Ole Jensen and Tim Richardson's (2004) book, *Making European Space: Mobility, Power and Territorial Identity*. For some more general thoughts on relationalism and governance see Andrew Barry's (2001) book, *Political Machines: Governing a Technological Society*. On environmental planning, Susan Owens and Richard Cowell's (2002) book, *Land and Limits*, is pretty comprehensive.

Notes

1. The material used in this chapter is derived, in the main, from the arena of planning theory. The decision to use theoretical reflections on planning process and practice rather than primary analyses of specific planning systems has been made so that the background assumptions that guide planning can be ascertained and analysed. It is in theoretical accounts that we can arguably see most clearly the spatial imaginaries at work in planning. Moreover, the virtue of using theoretical resources is that we do not need to confine the analysis to any specific national planning system: the following arguments can be applied to most national planning contexts; they concern the grounding principles of planning rather than any specific aspect of planning practice.
2. We see here evidence of the 'representing' and 'intervening' described by Hacking (1983) in the case of the laboratory sciences.
3. In many respects, Abercrombie's attachment to survey and plan is derived from the earlier work of Patrick Geddes. However, as Dehaene (2004) points out, the main distinction between the two is that Geddes sees survey and plan proceeding simultaneously while in Abercrombie's planning documents, survey and plan are normally organized in discrete stages.
4. As Daniel Smith (2003: 309) explains, an immanent process must function as 'a principle of critique as well as of creation [...] what "must" always remain normative is the ability to critique and transform existing norms, that is, to create something *new*'.

5. Following Flyvbjerg's (1998) analysis, outlined above, we need only think of the potential problems that would arise were the planners of Aalborg to introduce such a notion as environmental capacity into their city plans. It seems likely it would inevitably fall victim to the Chamber of Commerce's political manoeuvring.
6. I am here aligning 'ecological' with 'immanent', following comments in Thrift (1996: 28). The argument presented below suggests that were planning to fully engage with political ecology it would necessarily become more deeply immersed in heterogeneous relations of various kinds. It would become truly 'immanent' to the places being planned.

Dis/Ordering space III: the case of food

It is never simply a matter of speed [...] but of speed and slowness. There can be no acceleration without a parallel deceleration, no convergence without divergence, and no compression without decompression. (Doel, 1999)

Introduction

In the previous chapter, we examined the emergence of particular governmentalities in the arena of land-use planning. These governmentalities had developed on the basis of distinct spatial imaginaries, conceptions of the spatial realm that define legitimate planning actions and interventions. Two main spatial imaginaries were identified: first, topographical conceptions of well-ordered spaces in which entities are arranged by powerful technologies of planning (the map, the survey, the computer package and so forth); second, topological conceptions in which social, economic and technological processes are given free play so that discrete spaces emerge from the complex interplay of varied entity types. We saw that while planning often seeks to balance topographical and topological modes of ordering, it usually allows one spatial imaginary to dominate the other. We also observed that planning remains 'semi-detached' from space – that is, it fails to fully engage with the heterogeneous nature of relational space (as outlined in Chapters 2 and 3). In particular, it struggles to fully engage with the environmental and natural relations that remain so central to the spatial domain. We concluded that planning perhaps needs to develop a new spatial imaginary derived from political ecology, so that any planning interventions in spatial formations can be based upon the full range of entities normally found within such formations. The objective of planning should thus be to achieve a full integration of natural and social entities in the form of collectives.

In this chapter, we will focus more fully upon political ecologies of space by examining a spatial arena in which heterogeneous complexity is fully foregrounded: the food sector. Food is necessarily a mixture of the organic and the inorganic, the material and the symbolic, the social and the natural. Moreover, the

food sector is also an arena in which vigorous efforts are being made to protect the natural components of foods against industrial 'substitution' (Goodman et al., 1987). Thus, numerous non-governmental groupings now strive to ban genetically modified foods, to promote organic foods and to support animal-friendly foods. In other words, ecological issues in the food sector are already politicized.

The politics of food takes on a necessarily spatialized character. Food is generally grown across extensive spatial areas. Likewise, food consumption takes places in differentiated cultural spaces. Thus, efforts to either industrialize or deindustrialize food must be played out in spatial terms. In general terms, then, we can trace the emergence of two contrasting food spaces: on the one hand, industrialized and standardized spaces that are subject to processes of continuous technological innovation in line with principles of economic efficiency; on the other hand, diverse local food spaces that are sustained by adherence to long-standing processes of production and consumption, processes that are deeply rooted in local cultures and natures. By differentiating these distinct food spaces – one broadly topographical, the other broadly topological – it is possible to see that patterns of development in the food sector are diverse and multiple rather than singular and uniform. However, we need to question whether the industrial and artisanal spaces that help to define 'foodspace' can easily co-exist. Although the contemporary food market may be able to accommodate (at least temporarily) the various commodities emerging from differing food networks, it is likely that contradictions between the production of large volumes and the production of distinctive and high-value foods will become ever more pronounced. For instance, industrialized foods challenge the conventional notions of quality that have long been established around traditional and 'natural' methods of production, while the reassertion of alternative foods implies a turning away from industrial technologies and a rediscovery of more typical or authentic production processes. In short, differing parts of the food sector appear to be heading off on opposing trajectories of development, some towards a more refined or intensive application of science and technology (for example, genetically modified foods), others towards a re-engagement with natural or traditional production methods (for example, organic and traditional foods). These divergent trajectories allow us to directly compare what we might call 'topographical spatial strategies' against what we might define as 'topological spatial strategies'. We can discern both in the food sector to the extent that a profound conflict between them is now becoming evident.

In this chapter we will examine the contested nature of food through the analysis of two contrasting food networks, chosen to represent the two food spaces identified above. The first is an archetypal illustration of industrialization and standardization: McDonald's. We show that this food chain is based upon a highly prescriptive set of relations that works to disseminate a uniform product, using a tightly controlled food delivery system. As we shall see, the prescriptive nature of the McDonald's system is derived in large part from the alignments of materials that connect food production and processing to the final consumption

of the product. These materials facilitate the flow of a 'McDonaldized' cuisine into many diverse locales, allowing a truly globalized food network to emerge. We then turn to examine a second case study – Slow Food – which displays a markedly divergent set of connections between network and space. The Slow Food movement aims to reassert the value of the diverse local foods that can still be found in many local areas. Slow Food emphasizes that cuisines should reflect differentiated norms, practices and ecologies rather than some standardized model of food delivery. For Slow Food cuisine variation goes hand in hand with spatial variation. The network therefore works to strengthen the cultures and environments associated with local production and consumption practices. Thus, rather than binding local areas into a prescriptive set of uniform spatial relations, Slow Food promotes autonomy, fluidity and complexity within its own network spaces.

Having outlined these two contrasting food networks (one 'fast', the other 'slow'), and having shown that contemporary landscapes of food gain shape through differentiated network activity, we then move on to consider how distinct network spaces come to be constructed in line with specific conceptualizations of consumer practice. We consider two main approaches, loosely described as 'distraction' and 'engagement'. The process of 'distraction' ensures that the attention of consumers is drawn away from food towards other aspects of the food consumption 'experience', including the cost of food, the speed with which it can be prepared and consumed, and the eating environment. 'Engagement' can be seen as a reaction against such 'distracted' consumerism. It entails the consumer becoming strongly linked not just to the food itself but to the spatial contexts of food production. This linking can be achieved by the cultivation of 'taste' – that is, the physical ability to savour the various properties of food – as well as by the acquisition of knowledge about the cultural and ecological associations surrounding food production. The significance of this process of engagement encourages us to speculate that many consumers are now entering into a new commitment to food. This commitment apparently involves a heightened awareness of the ecological relations in which food is inevitably embedded. It is argued that a new concern for 'embeddedness' may indicate that a form of 'relational reflexivity' is emerging amongst discerning consumers. This form of reflexive consumption inevitably brings the relational nature of food to the forefront of consumer concern. Moreover, it shows how the assertion of spatial relations might become a key part of political strategies oriented to countering industrialization and standardization in the food chain. In short, it puts into action the politics of ecology identified by Latour (2004).

Spaces of fast food

We begin with perhaps the premier example of a globalized food network – McDonald's. While this company has long been emblematic of an industrialized

and standardized food system, it nevertheless emerges at a particular time and place – the suburban US of the 1940s and 1950s – a place of rising wages, a boom in the birth rate, mass ownership of the motor car and increased leisure time. As Fine (1996) shows, this was a period when eating out became a standard pastime, with hamburgers and other fast foods increasing in popularity. Such foods, Rifkin (1992: 260) argues, met the new suburban requirement for 'convenience, efficiency and predictability in [...] food preparation and consumption'. The hamburger, in particular, came to reflect prevailing cultural aspirations, its 'capacity for speedy preparation with uniformly satisfactory results [...] meshing well with [...] demands of consumer and entrepreneur alike' (Jakle and Sculle, 1999: 144). As Schlosser (2001: 60) summarizes it, 'a hamburger and french fries became the quintessential American meal in the 1950s'.

It was in this context that the McDonald brothers, Maurice and Richard, opened their first restaurant in Pasadena, California. The first McDonald's 'drive-in' sold mainly hot dogs to the new car-bound customers. After the success of this venture, the brothers moved to San Bernadino where they opened a bigger 'drive-in', which was even more successful than the first. However, the business was beset with problems, notably high labour turnover, so that in a tight labour market the brothers experienced recurring difficulties in recruiting new workers. In the late 1940s, they therefore closed the 'drive-in' and opened a new type of restaurant, one that was based on a less labour-intensive system of food delivery – what they came to call the 'Speedee Service System'. Under this 'System' the brothers,

got rid of everything that had to be eaten with a knife, spoon, or fork [...] [They] got rid of their dishes and glassware, replacing them with paper cups, paper bags, and paper plates. They divided the food preparation into separate tasks performed by different workers. To fill a typical order, one person grilled the hamburger; another 'dressed' and wrapped it; another prepared the milk shake; another made the fries; another worked the counter. For the first time, the guiding principles of a factory assembly line were applied to a commercial kitchen. (Schlosser, 2001: 20)

By employing an 'assembly-line' process, the McDonald brothers were able to diminish their labour requirements but could still deliver large quantities of burgers at low cost: 'a 1.6-ounce hamburger, 3.9 inches in diameter, on a 3.5 inch bun with .25 ounces of onion sold for 15 cents – a standardised product of high quality but also low price' (Jakle and Sculle, 1999: 141).

The popularity of this first McDonald's restaurant meant it attracted a great deal of attention, none more so than from a travelling milkshake mixer salesperson named Ray Kroc. On visiting the restaurant Kroc was immediately impressed by the efficiency of the operation. Ritzer (1993: 32) quotes him as saying: 'I was fascinated by the simplicity and effectiveness of the system [...] each step in producing the limited menu was stripped down to its essence and accomplished with a minimum of effort. They sold hamburgers and cheeseburgers only. The burgers were all fried the same way'. After entering into

negotiations with the McDonald brothers, Kroc took control of the McDonald's trademark in 1955 (the brothers had no desire to extend the system beyond the one restaurant). He then set about expanding the number of McDonald's restaurants across the US.¹ He opened his first restaurant in De Plaines, Illinois, close to the commuter station where he took the train to work. It was his hope that the new McDonald's would draw in a 'youthful, growing, and home-bound trade' – that is, the new suburbanites (Jakle and Sculle, 1999: 146).² In the following years, the number of restaurants increased rapidly, reaching 200 by 1960, making it the leading fast-food chain in the US.

Once the company was listed on the US Stock Exchange in 1965, profits had to be maintained through a relentless increase in the numbers of new restaurants. McDonald's thus moved away from its suburban roots and opened outlets in all the major US cities. This move was supplemented by expansion overseas as the company sought to maintain earnings growth. By the mid-1990s, it had 25,000 restaurants and operated in almost 120 countries (global earnings at this time stood at around \$11 billion).³ A key contributory factor to the growth of the chain was the introduction of franchising arrangements. Franchising is a system by which one firm sells the rights to distribute its products to a number of smaller firms. Kroc introduced this system into the McDonald's network in the late 1950s so that a large minority of the new restaurants became independently owned. In theory, this meant that the network comprised large numbers of autonomous restaurant spaces. However, at the same time as the franchising system was introduced Kroc acted to maintain central control. For instance, in 1958 he produced an operations manual to guide practices in all McDonald's restaurants. This manual was highly prescriptive, as the following comment makes clear:

It told operators exactly how to draw milk shakes, grill hamburgers, and fry potatoes. It specified precise cooking times for all products and temperature settings for all equipment. It fixed standard portions on every food item, down to the quarter ounce of onions placed on each hamburger patty and the thirty-two slices per pound of cheese. It specified that French fries be cut at nine thirty-seconds of an inch thick. And it defined quality controls that were unique to food service, including the disposal of meat and potato products that were held more than ten minutes in a serving bin. (Love, 1986: 141–2).

The concern for uniformity led also to the creation of the 'Hamburger University' in 1961. The 'graduates' from this University (which by 2004 numbered around 65,000 persons (Ritzer, 2004: 41)) were expected to manage 'their' McDonald's restaurants in line with centrally formulated principles and practices. Thus, Kroc attempted to retain Panoptical oversight despite the increasing numbers of apparently autonomous spaces in the form of franchised restaurants.

According to Ritzer (2004, 40), it is the standardized character of McDonald's that has guaranteed its success: 'This uniformity allowed McDonald's to differentiate itself from its competitors, whose food was typically inconsistent'. In his

influential book, *The McDonaldization of Society* (1993), Ritzer goes on to examine in some detail how McDonald's engineered standardized and uniform outcomes. For instance, he sees prescriptive mechanism at work in almost every aspect of the McDonald's food service system. He argues that these mechanisms are constructed out of nonhuman technologies that serve both to deliver food at a rapid pace and to regulate the actions of McDonald's workers. Schlosser also draws attention to such technologies in the following description of a McDonald's restaurant in Colorado Springs:

Robotic drink machines selected the proper cups, filled them with ice, and then filled them with soda. Dispensers powered by compressed carbon dioxide shot out uniform spurts of ketchup and mustard. An elaborate unit emptied frozen french fries from a white plastic bin into wire mesh baskets for frying, lowered the baskets into hot oil, lifted them a few minutes later and gave them a brief shake, put them back into the oil until the fries were perfectly cooked, and then dumped the fries underneath heat lamps, crisp and ready to be served. Television monitors in the kitchen instantly displayed the customer's order. And advanced computer software essentially ran the kitchen, assigning tasks to various workers for maximum efficiency, predicting future orders on the basis of ongoing customer flow. (2001: 66)

The use of nonhuman technologies ensures that food preparation is simple and standardized: as the food arrives at the restaurant 'pre-formed, pre-cut, pre-sliced and "prepared" [so there is] usually no need [for the workers] to form the burgers, cut the potatoes, slice the rolls, or prepare the apple pie. All they need to do is, where necessary, cook, or often merely heat the food and pass it on to the customer' (Ritzer, 1993: 103).⁴ Even the cash register has a simplified set of keys with labels such as 'Big Mac' or 'large fries' written on them. It is, therefore, 'not necessary for the cashier to know the actual price of any item, and the machines are programmed to "suggestive sell", so that dessert items, for example, will light up automatically to remind workers to suggest dessert to the customer who has not ordered it' (Fantasia, 1995: 208).

In the McDonald's system, then, highly prescriptive mechanisms work to regulate the system of food delivery. These mechanisms can also be found in the restaurants themselves, which are designed to exact specifications, wherever they might be. In fact, McDonald's goes out of its way to make the consumption experience as repetitive as possible, with symbols, signs, colours, layouts all repeating the basic formula: 'each McDonald's presents a series of predictable elements – counter, menu posted above it, "kitchen" visible in the background, tables and uncomfortable seats, prominent trash bins, drive through windows and so on' (Ritzer, 1993: 81). In other words, the various elements are drawn together to comprise a topographical space in which behaviour is rendered routine and predictable. The customer is expected to walk into the restaurant, queue, order, pay, wait a short time, take the tray, find a table, eat, put the rubbish in the trash can and (usually) leave. There may be some scope for lounging but, in the main, the restaurant is designed to speed the customer through

a series of strictly co-ordinated interactions. As Ritzer (2004: 15) observes: 'lines, limited menus, few options and uncomfortable seats all lead diners to do what management wants them to do – eat quickly and leave'.

BOX 7.1

Spaces of fast food are:

- Configured by conventions of speed and efficiency, the need to ensure a constant flow of food through the preparation process and into the customer's mouth.
- Highly regulated according to some simplified but widely disseminated standards, notably in the structure of the food preparation process and in the layout of the restaurant spaces.
- Places where narrow ranges of food tastes are catered for as the standardized products are tailored to a mass market.
- Underpinned by heterogeneous networks in which nonhuman technologies are used to stabilize the conventions and regulations.
- Strongly prescriptive so that the behaviours of human actors are circumscribed by the alignments of materials. Prescription applies both to the employees in the restaurants who must 'fit in' to the standardized food delivery process, and to customers, who must abide by the main principles of fast food consumption ('eat and go').

Despite (or perhaps because of) its highly prescriptive character, McDonald's has been extremely successful in defining spaces of food consumption in many different places around the world. At the same time, the expansion of McDonald's has inspired a number of critical reactions, as in the case of the Hampstead residents in north London who sought to prevent McDonald's opening a restaurant in their up-market high street. Beyond this 'elitistic' criticism of McDonald's (which is largely based on the populist image of the restaurant chain) more substantive challenges have been mounted to the spread of the network. For instance, it is accused of producing food that is rich in sugar and salt, a dietary mix that is seen as contributing to obesity (Vidal, 1997; Critser, 2004). This has led to challenges in the courts in the US, on the grounds that consumers have received no warnings from the company on the likely health consequences of eating too much fast food. As *The Times* newspaper reported on 29 June 2004:

A new litigation craze is sweeping America. Producers and sellers of food and drink are facing lawsuits claiming that they are responsible for obesity. The new growth industry is... for cost the tobacco

industry more than \$250 billion [...] In the case of Pelman versus McDonald's Corporation (2002), a class action brought in New York state, consumers alleged that their obesity and diabetes were caused by eating McDonald's meals. The judge dismissed the case saying that the sale of food high in salt, fat and sugar could not be said to be inherently dangerous, given that such qualities were well known to the public. There was, however, a veiled warning to the food industry with the judge indicating that for such an action to be likely to succeed it would be necessary to show that the food was harmful in a way not known to the consumer. (Mullins and James, 2004: 6)

Although McDonald's has yet to lose a court case of this kind, it has already begun to respond to consumer concerns about obesity. For instance, it has recently announced the phasing out of its supersize range of meals and has begun to provide salads and other such 'health' foods in its restaurants.

While the obesity epidemic has the potential to change the composition of fast food, critics claim the main problem with the chain is the way it acts as an agent of standardization throughout the *entire* food chain. A number of commentators claim this has highly damaging side-effects:

Behind the front counters of the fast food chains, the familiar menus and logos of McDonald's [...] lie other assembly-line operations, ownership of which is concentrated in ever fewer hands, allowing even greater economies of scale. Thirteen large slaughter-houses, or meat packing houses in US terminology, now supply most of America's beef. Three companies, Simplot, McCain and Lamb Weston (which is owned by the even larger conglomerate ConAgra), control 80 per cent of the US market for frozen french fries. In the wake of the launch of the Chicken McNugget – made from constituted chicken, flavoured with beef additives and containing twice as much fat for its weight as hamburgers – eight chicken processors ended up with about two-thirds of the US market. (Meek, 2001: 3; see also Taney and D'Silva, 1999; Schlosser, 2001)

The same process also affects the ecological realm, as Ritzer points out:

McDonaldization has produced a wide array of adverse effects on the environment. One is a side effect of the need to grow uniform potatoes from which to create predictable French fries. The huge farms of the Pacific Northwest that now produce such potatoes rely on the extensive use of chemicals. In addition, the need to produce a perfect fry means that much of the potato is wasted, with the remnants either fed to cattle or used as fertilizer. The underground water supply in the area is now showing high levels of nitrates, which may be traceable to the fertilizer and animal wastes. Many other ecological problems are associated with the McDonaldization of the fast food industry: the forests felled to produce paper wrappings, the damage caused by packaging materials, the enormous amount of food needed to produce cattle feed and so on. (2004: 17)

For its critics, McDonald's represents an extreme case of what we might call the 'will to simplify'. It has honed a number of procedures and techniques in the pursuit of a very narrow and particular set of aims (the most salient of which is 'to dominate the global foodservice industry' (McDonald's, 1996)). These procedures and techniques rely upon both human and nonhuman resources for their enactment. In short, McDonald's skilfully aligns heterogeneous elements to deliver a standardized cuisine (albeit with some limited variation to

cater for local sensibilities; an arrangement that ensures predictable outcomes in diverse local circumstances. As Barry Smart (1994: 34) puts it, in the McDonald's network, 'irregularities of space and time are smoothed out under the market pressure of a remunerative uniformity'. Topology is subsumed within topography.

Spaces of slow food

As mentioned above, opposition to McDonald's is extensive and takes a variety of forms, including direct attacks on restaurants during anti-globalization demonstrations. However, our second case study represents a more long-standing and constructive form of opposition to McDonaldization in the food sector. It concerns Slow Food, a consumer movement that was established in Italy during the mid-1980s in direct response to the opening of a McDonald's restaurant in the famous Piazza d'Esperia in Rome (see Resca and Gianola, 1998, for a full account of this controversy). The opening of a McDonald's in this prestigious location raised the possibility that traditional Italian eating habits might be under renewed threat from 'Americanized' fast food. As part of the ensuing protest, the food writer Carlo Petrini initiated a meeting of chefs, authors, journalists and other intellectuals to discuss the most effective means of protecting traditional Italian cuisines from foreign invasion. This first meeting gave birth to a new consumer movement – Slow Food – which was to be devoted to the promotion of an 'anti-fast food' culture. As Renato Sardo, the director of Slow Food International, puts it:

There was a lot of public debate at the time about standardisation, the McDonaldisation, if you will, of the world. Up until then, any opposition was split in two. On the one hand there were the gastronomes, whose focus was fixed entirely on the pleasure of food. The other tradition was a Marxist one, which was about the methods of food production and their social and historical implications. Carlo Petrini, Slow Food's president, wanted to merge the two debates to provide a way forward. (quoted in *The Observer*, Food Monthly, 11 November 2001)

In meshing these two sets of concerns, Slow Food sought to bring discerning 'gastronomes' to the rescue of traditional foods (the middle class would come to the aid of the peasantry). This would involve the targetting of discriminating consumers in order to heighten awareness of 'forgotten' cuisines. By this means, it was hoped that a new market for traditional local foods could be created.

The main device for reaching potential consumers of 'slow' products was to be a new publishing house (Slow Food Editore), which would disseminate informed, interesting and accessible material on previously unknown or neglected foods. It was also intended that a network of local groups would be established in order to identify foods that are central to local cuisines. According to Carlo Petrini (2003: 12–13) the groups would base their activities on four major

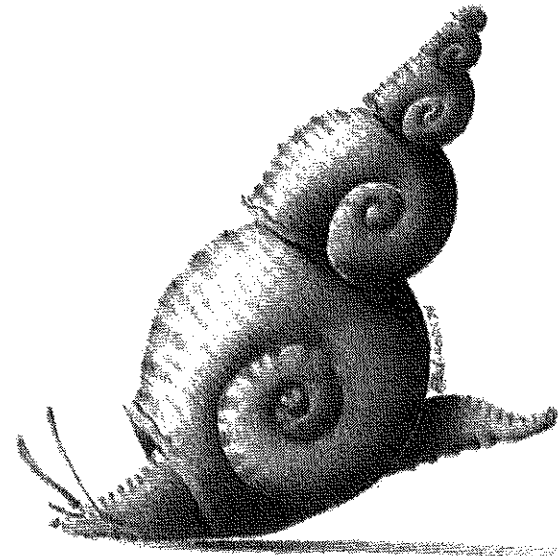


FIGURE 7.1 Slow Food's symbol of 'slowness'. Illustrator Andrea Pedrazzini. (Source: Slow Food, 1999)

1. The study of material culture: 'This is the movement's principal theoretical and behavioural guideline: namely, that it is pointless to sing the praises of fine wine or the smell of good bread if you don't know how they are produced'.
2. Preservation of the agricultural and alimentary heritage from environmental degradation: 'the organoleptic profile of the food we eat (in other words, how it strikes our sensory organs) is being constantly impoverished. If that doesn't deserve high quality production what does?'.
3. Protection of consumers and producers: 'letting people know, without rhetoric or bombast, where to find the right combination of quality and price, neither praising things that are good but expensive nor those that are cheap but substandard'.
4. Promotion of the pleasures of gastronomy: to be conducted 'in a genial and tolerant manner that encourages an approach to food based on the hedonistic advantages of deeper knowledge, the education of the senses, and harmony around the table'.

The first edition of the movement's magazine, *Slow*, upheld these aspirations but also showed that Slow Food was explicitly seeking to oppose the spread of McDonald's and the other fast-food chains. Slow claimed that the organization stands in opposition to the 'folly of fast life' (Petrini, 1986); it proclaimed the need to nurture 'gentleness, pleasure, knowledge, care, tolerance, hedonism, balsamic calm, lasting enjoyment [...] culinary traditions' (Petrini, 1986). The symbol of the snail was adopted as the movement's logo. For Carlo Petrini:

it seemed [...] that a creature so unaffected by the temptations of the modern world had something new to reveal, like a sort of amulet against exasperation, against the malpractice of those who are too impatient to feel and taste, too greedy to remember what they had just devoured. (1986: 1)

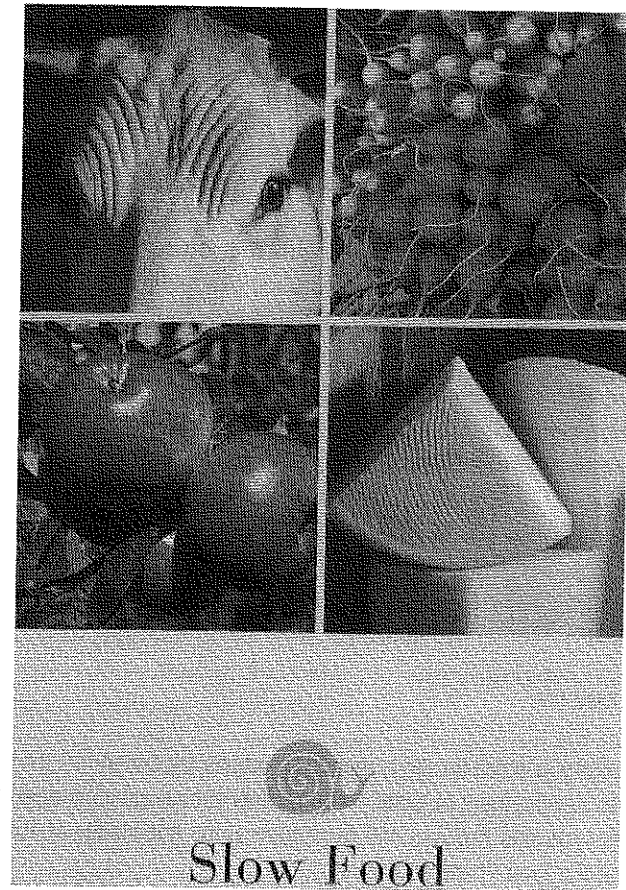
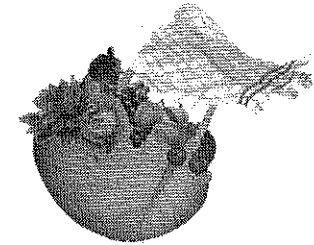
As the adoption of this symbol suggests, the emphasis in Slow Food is on *time* and on the need to decelerate the food consumption experience so that new (or, perhaps more accurately, *old*) forms of taste can be re-acquired. As Alberto Capatti (1999), a leading member of the movement, puts it: Slow Food 'is profoundly linked to the values of the land and the past. The preservation of typical products, the protection of species from genetic manipulation, the cultivation of memory and taste education – these are all aspects of this passion of ours for time'. However, Slow Food also has spatial significance: the movement is concerned by the rupture that has been effected between spaces of production and spaces of consumption, and it seeks to close the gap between the two by bringing consumers to spatially embedded foods. It also wishes to reassert the natural bases of food production (seasonality, ecological content, etc.) and the role of cultural context (tacit knowledge, culinary skills, etc.). In short, it wishes to re-embed food in topological complexity.

Slow Food's main concern is for 'typical' or 'traditional' foods. According to Torquati and Frascarelli (2000: 343), 'typicality' in the Italian context is determined by: 'historical memory (the product is associated with the history and with the traditions of the place of production), geographic localisation (influence of the pedoclimatic environment), [and the] quality of raw materials and techniques of preparation'. However, while it attempts to bolster these components of local cuisines, Slow Food recognizes that local and regional food products are disappearing because they are *too* embedded in local food cultures and ecologies; they are not easily extracted and sold into modern food markets (either for cultural or ecological reasons they often cannot travel the long distances covered by McDonald's burgers). So the movement works to attract consumers to these traditional products by emphasizing the foods' aesthetic qualities. For instance, Slow Food's quarterly magazine, *Slow*, promotes a highly aestheticized form of consumption in its lavishly illustrated articles. Slow Food Editore also produces a number of glossy food guides that give consumers information on 'slow food' outlets. The most well-known of these guides, *Osterie d'Italia*, identifies typical restaurants in all the Italian regions, thereby giving new consumers (for example, tourists) the opportunity to engage with previously hidden, but long established, local foods.⁵

While its roots are very firmly within Italian food cultures, Slow Food seeks to promote typicality much further afield. In line with this goal, in 1989 it formally launched itself as an international movement and has subsequently spread to around forty countries (at the time of writing, it has around 70,000 members world-wide and now maintains offices in New York, Paris and Hong Kong).

Local Slow Food groups are organized at the regional level into

L'Arca del Gusto e i Presidi



Slow Food

FIGURE 7.2 Slow Food's Ark of Taste (Source: Slow Food, 2000)

operating in such differing contexts as Australia, Brazil, India and the US. Essentially, a convivium is a consumer club made up of people who wish to 'cultivate common cultural and gastronomic interests' (Slow Food, 1999). The definition of the local convivium area is given by cultural and culinary distinctiveness so that each convivium is charged with promoting a particular local cuisine. The convivia usually undertake the following activities:

1. identifying restaurants that enshrine the principles of 'slowness' (mostly those offering a good selection of regional dishes and wines);
2. organizing tastings of typical foods and talks by speciality producers and others on gastronomic issues;
3. promoting an appreciation of local foods in schools and other public institutions; and
4. highlighting the culinary creativity and tacit knowledge that reside in local cuisines.

In short, Slow Food seeks to build up cultural diversity by establishing close associations between local cuisines and local systems of production. It therefore conjures up collectives in which the interactions between both people and nature are intense and close. In seeking to strengthen these close associations, the movement has come to recognize that many (ecologically-embedded) producers and processors are precariously connected to consumers. It has therefore decided to initiate more direct action in the production sector through a scheme called the Ark of Taste (Slow Food, 2000). Along with the usual activities oriented to the dissemination of knowledge about endangered products, the Ark project aims to set up another local group structure ('Praesidia'), which will encourage people to locate producers in need of support, identify the most appropriate support measures (for example, new marketing channels), and raise funds in order to put these measures in place. In giving such support to producers, Slow Food explicitly intends to promote ecological diversity in local food spaces.

BOX 7.2

Spaces of slow food are:

- Arenas of diversity in which locally-embedded products are supported and promoted.
- Oriented to the development of 'taste' – that is, they encourage consumers to investigate new flavours and textures and to acquire some knowledge about the local

- Comprised of interactions between the local and the non-local as consumers are drawn into discrete cultural contexts of consumption.
- Areas in which local ecological conditions are sustained by the production of locally-specific food products.

The Slow Food network thus provides a useful comparator to McDonald's. Where McDonald's imposes a standardized format upon each locality, Slow Food encourages and supports multiplicity; where McDonald's is based upon the dissemination of a simple formula ('The Speedee Service System'), Slow Food is built on an appreciation of diverse food production processes (often of an artisanal nature). But more than this, there is a recognition in Slow Food that local diversity cannot simply be asserted as an alternative: first, local cuisines and their constituent products must be rendered transparent and made available to a wide number of potential consumers (this is done through the Slow Food publishing house); second, these cuisines must be protected by creating links between producers and consumers (this activity takes place through the 'convivia'); and third, producers must be enabled to remain in existence (such enabling efforts are made under the 'Ark of Taste?'). All these activities require the construction of a network that extends from the local to the global, so that the varied cultures and ecologies found in Slow Food spaces can be both protected and supported.

Spaces of consumption

The previous section describes two contrasting but co-existing culinary networks: one is configured by the need to disseminate standardized food products in a mass-market; the other is shaped by the desire to enhance consumer access to the diverse products still to be found in many local areas around the world. Although these are both spatially extensive ('global') networks, they act to combine the local and global in very different ways: one attempts to make the local a mirror of the global (when you stand in one McDonald's, in a sense, you stand in them all); the other seeks to sweep up multiple localities into a loosely constructed and fluid global network, what Rajchman (2001: 55) calls (after Deleuze) a 'vagabond' set of relations.

In the preceding section, we assessed these networks from the perspective of the 'network builders' – that is, we examined how McDonald's and Slow Food work to extend their influence through space and time. However, in order to gain a better understanding of the interaction between each network and differing spaces of food, it is necessary to examine the relationship between

Thus, in this section, we will assess the kinds of consumers that are 'constructed' by the two networks. As we shall see, these constructions are important not only because they serve to further distinguish the two networks but also because they indicate the character of contemporary food consumption and its association with relational space.

To begin once again with McDonald's, we can suggest that the company attempts to recruit consumers by making itself both widely available and readily accessible. As the journalist Martin Plimmer notes: 'There are McDonald's everywhere. There's one near you, and there's one being built now even nearer to you' (quoted in Ritzer, 2004: 2). Not only is McDonald's readily available, it is also easily accessible, as this comment by Gottdiener indicates:

Fast food outlets are successful because they offer an easy solution to the method of purchasing food that depends little on spoken language, on the interpretation of the menu or personal relations with the waitress/waiter, as happens in other restaurants. These and other themed environments, with their over-endowed, instructive sign systems are fun places to be because they minimise the work we need to do for a successful interaction. (1997: 132)

Boym makes a similar point when he asks:

What is it about McDonald's that attracts children and immigrants alike? As a rule, immigrants, like children, are very sensitive creatures. In their desire to blend in, they are conscious of making the wrong gesture, looking funny or different, standing out in any conspicuous way. The simple experience of entering a restaurant, asking for a table, and talking to a waiter can be intimidating. In this respect, McDonald's is the ultimate populist place. No one can be excluded, you can come and go as you please. It's okay to bring your children and to make a mess. Toys are given away along with nutritional information: there is something for everyone. (2000: 1)

Availability and accessibility are buttressed by the relentless efforts that McDonald's puts in to branding the company and its products. Through advertising and other forms of publicity, consumers already feel some familiarity with the brand even before they step into a McDonald's restaurant.⁶ As Schlosser (2001: 5) notes: 'customers are drawn to familiar brands by an instinct to avoid the unknown. A brand offers a feeling of reassurance when its products are always and everywhere the same'. But more than this, the branding of McDonald's works to draw consumers into some form of symbolic relationship with the company. Elspeth Probyn (2000: 35) focuses on this aspect when she suggests that branding is aimed at constituting McDonald's consumers as a 'global family', where 'the Big Mac preceded the internet in bringing us all together [...] extending an ethics of care into the realm of global capitalism and creating its consumer as a globalised familial citizen'. This notion of the 'global family' works to consolidate a form of 'global relationalism', in which

are part of an on-going and intimate relationship between the company and its customers.

Yet, what is striking about the relational belonging fostered by McDonald's is that it pays so little attention to the food sold by the company. In fact, the effort McDonald's makes to 'personalize' itself may actually require the *suppression* of knowledge about the processes of production that lie behind the restaurants' food products. This point is well made by Kroker et al., who argue that,

[h]amburgers [...] have been aestheticized to such a point of frenzy and hysteria that the McDonald's hamburger has actually vanished into its own sign. Just watch the TV commercials. Hamburgers as *party time* for the kids [...] as *nostalgia time* for our senior citizens [...] as *community time* for small town America and, as always, hamburgers under the media sign of *friendship time* for America's teenagers. (quoted in Smart, 1999: 13, emphasis in the original)

In short, the typical McDonald's consumer is confronted by layers of symbolic artifice. These layers surround the presentation of food in the restaurants and work to distract attention from the nature of the food itself.⁷

For Slow Food, however, quite another role is envisaged for the consumer. The key requirement here is not distraction but 'attentiveness', as Carlo Petrini explains:

attentiveness to the selection of ingredients and the sequence of flavours, to show how the food is prepared and the sensory stimuli it gives as it is consumed, to the way it is prepared and the sensory stimuli it gives as it is consumed, to the way it is presented and the company with whom we share it. There are endless degrees of attentiveness, which in our view are just as important whenever and wherever we take nourishment, whether it is a meal at home or in a restaurant, a drink in an *osteria* or a sandwich at a bar, lunch in a school cafeteria or in an airplane. The real difference in quality among these experiences does not lie in how much time is devoted to them, but in the will and the capacity to experience them attentively. (2003: 33)

Importantly, the attention that Slow Food demands in the consumer extends beyond the meal into the cultures and ecologies of production. As Petrini (2003: 15) emphasizes, Slow Food requires 'an alert consumer, filled with curiosity, who [wants] to take part at first hand and learn'. This process of learning should ideally take the consumer into the heterogeneous relations that lie behind the product so that the cultural and environmental contexts of production are fully appreciated. As Petrini (2003: 69) puts it: 'we need to reconstruct the individual and collective heritage, the capacity to distinguish – in a word taste'. Here, taste is both a physical and a cultural attribute, it brings to the fore 'sensory experience', so that all the senses are working in the appreciation of food quality. As Petrini puts it: 'Pleasure is physiological' (quoted in

BOX 7.3

Differing food spaces 'construct' differing consumers:

- Fast-food spaces 'construct' distracted consumers, who know little about the (standardized) products and are drawn to the strongly aestheticized arenas of consumption through the brightly coloured restaurants and widespread marketing campaigns.
- Slow food spaces 'construct' attentive and engaged consumers, who are encouraged to build relationships of various kinds to the diverse arenas of food production and preparation. These relations are 'gastronomic' in the sense that they are built upon knowledge about products and practices as well as 'sensory' connections to the food and its ingredients.

We can thus speculate that Slow Food is aiming to open up spaces of taste in which the senses are linked, through the food, to key aspects of the local ecology. It forges 'lines of flight' which extend from the mouth to the field. Culinary space thus comprises a space of sensory interactions between the consumer's physical ability to savour food and the ability of the local food system to deliver savoury food products. These 'lines' are both physical and cultural: they require an alignment of knowledge and practice. Moreover, Slow Food suggests that by opening the senses to physical tastes, and by understanding a little more about the origins of those tastes in cultural and ecological terms, consumers can 'resist McDonaldization'. Thus, Slow Food is opposed to fast food but its strategy is 'not so much a question of fighting a fundamentalist war' as it is of 'informing, stimulating curiosity, giving everyone the opportunity to choose' (Petrini, 2003: 69).

In stimulating curiosity, Slow Food aims to immerse consumers in new worlds of belonging. It aims to build new sets of relations in the food sector, relations that tie consumers more intimately to the cultures and environments of production. These are not the globalized relations of the 'McDonald's family'; rather, they are localized relations, which vary in line with the differing cultural and ecological conditions found at the local level. Thus, in opposition to the single (global) space fabricated by the fast food chains, Slow Food conjures up a host of multiple and fluid spaces, all of which hold their own distinctive cultural and ecological characteristics. Ultimately, Slow Food asks that consumers take the time to (slowly) immerse themselves in these spaces so as to

food space 'pleasure, liminally situated between the symbolic and the biological, is considered liberating and disruptive, a primal force that can shake every structure to its base'.

Risk and relationality

In the previous section, we examined the way spaces of food are constructed as spaces of consumption. We suggested two main types of consumption – 'distracted' and 'engaged' – and demonstrated that these are promoted by the two networks identified earlier – McDonald's and Slow Food. Each network configures spaces of consumption in ways that promote the two forms of consumer behaviour. Thus, McDonald's constructs consumption spaces that are prescriptive in form but which come shrouded in symbols of various kinds. This leads to a 'personalization' of the food chain and even to the notion that McDonald's is a 'family' in which all consumers can be somehow related. Yet, the position of consumers in the McDonald's network is relatively fixed: once inside the restaurants they simply ingest the food quickly and then leave; the transaction between McDonald's and its users is simple and functional. Slow Food, on the other hand, endorses restaurants and other consumption spaces that enable consumers to expand their culinary knowledges and tastes. It thus works to consolidate food practices that are based upon diverse cuisines set within diverse cultural and ecological contexts. Here consumers can be shaped and modified by their immersion in 'slow' spaces. In this sense the network and its consumers co-evolve – tastes are developed and cuisines are strengthened as both come into some kind of alignment.

At this point, it is worth noting that the treatment of the two networks has so far been symmetrical – that is, we have characterized each as being a significant component of the contemporary food sector. However, the attentive reader might object that the symmetry between the two is misplaced for the 'distracted' consumers of the McDonald's network clearly outnumber by some considerable margin the 'engaged' consumers of Slow Food.⁸ It might, therefore, be suggested that pitching these two networks against each other simply distracts us from acknowledging that the consumption of fast food is of substantially greater importance than the consumption of slow food.⁹ While such observations are obviously well-founded, in this section, it will be argued that the significance of 'slow' consumption may be greater than the discussion of Slow Food has so far led us to believe. In particular, we will suggest that growing numbers of consumers are becoming more relational in their appreciation of food and that this relationality may ultimately lead to a significant reshaping of food space.

In part, the growing significance of 'slow' consumption can be attributed to food scares which alert even McDonaldized consumers to the product that

The new food scares did something which put into reverse one of the key characteristics of meat eating in modernity. They emphasised to the consumer, the connections between animals and meat, and underlined the process of animal-into-meat. These rationalised, intensive processes, so studiously hidden from the public gaze, were revealed to be the source of a new risk. In short, the new methods of meat production rendered all meat a potential health risk and it lost its innocence as a marker of modern progress. (1999: 164)

For Ulrich Beck (1992), this loss of innocence can be interpreted as symptomatic of a new modernity, one that he calls 'risk society'. Here, 'many things that were once considered universally certain and safe and vouched for by every conceivable authority turn [...] out to be deadly [for example, beef]' (Beck, in Slater and Ritzer, 2001: 293). Beck suggests that in this uncertain social context consumers are forced to become more 'reflexive' in their relationships with a whole range of goods, in part because they can no longer rely on expert institutions. In line with this view, Halkier (2001: 208) believes that individuals are currently being 'pulled between an increased insecurity about knowing what to do and an increased awareness of possessing agency, the capacity to do something'.

One means of resolving this tension between insecurity and capacity is through the conscious assessment of 'quality' (Harvey et al., 2004). As Slow Food emphasizes, if consumers are to make informed assessments of food, they require an awareness of the economic, social and ecological relations that underpin food production and manufacturing processes. Enhanced reflexivity around product quality may therefore prompt the emergence of a deeper understanding of the complex associations that inevitably surround food commodities. In the view of some commentators, there are good reasons for believing such an understanding may be emerging at the present time. David Goodman (1999), for instance, suggests that the food sector has now entered an 'Age of Ecology' wherein the complex 'metabolic reciprocities' that link production and consumption have come more fully into view (see also FitzSimmons and Goodman, 1998). This 'Age of Ecology' can be discerned, Goodman suggests, in the popularity of organic foods, which are held to retain key natural qualities, and in the consumption of typical and traditional foods, which are believed to carry cultural qualities associated with long-established cuisines. In their different ways, he argues, these food types challenge the instrumental rationalities of the industrialized food sector and imply the need for more relationally embedded forms of production and consumption.

Goodman's account seems to imply that consumers, in assembling food preferences, choices and tastes, are entering into a changed relationship with the objects of these preferences, choices and tastes. And in this changed relationship, they not only 'reflect' upon the qualities of food goods but express a desire to genuinely immerse themselves in natural and socio-cultural relations. Thus,

space or time. By consuming such foods, consumers seem to aspire to a greater sense of connectedness in the hope that this connectedness will keep at bay the risks associated with industrialized foods (Nygard and Storstad, 1998).

BOX 7.4

Relational consumption arises:

- Because the advent of modern food scares (such as BSE) leads consumers into a greater awareness of the processes of production that 'lie behind' the products.
- This coincides with a 'turn to quality' amongst certain (discerning) consumers, so that locally embedded foods – organic foods, typical foods, fairly traded foods – become more popular. These foods promise a closer relationship between the consumer and the economic, social and ecological contexts of food production. They therefore promote relationalism.
- This move into relational consumption requires the consumer to exercise some critical judgement when buying products (what to buy and what not to buy) and also requires new connections to be made to particular 'lines of flight' out of the product – that is, the organic, typical, fairly traded pathways that link the product to its arena of production. This might be termed 'relational reflexivity'.

In assessing these two aspects of 'embedded consumption' – 'reflection', on the one hand, and 'immersion', on the other – we might follow Scott Lash (1998) in proposing that consumers need to balance 'experience' and 'judgement': that is, they need to apply an instrumental rationality (concerned, for instance, with risk or economic calculation) at the same time as they attempt to deal with indeterminacy and uncertainty in both the knowledge systems that underpin this rationality and in the goods themselves. Lash argues that the need to combine these two aspects of consumption practice will lead consumers to rely upon a new form of 'aesthetic judgement', one that involves both intellectual reflection (in order to establish a rule, something to guide the act of consumption) and imagination, understanding and feeling (in order to establish an aesthetic relationship with the commodity).

The concept of 'aesthetic judgement' proposed by Lash has something in common with Crang's (1996) notion of 'aesthetic reflexivity'. Crang suggests that such reflexivity entails tracing the emergence of food commodities as they move through spaces of production, processing and consumption. In Crang's

association that necessarily compose food products (see also Bell and Valentine, 1997). An illustration of such aesthetic reflexivity is provided by Probyn (2000: 14) when she writes that a reflection on eating 'can be a mundane exposition of the visceral nature of our connectedness and distance from each other, and from our social environment'. It allows us to consider 'what and who we are, to ourselves and to others, and can reveal new ways of thinking about those relations [...] In eating, the diverse nature of where and how different parts of ourselves attach to different aspects of the social comes to the fore and becomes the stuff of reflection'. Probyn's discussion of McDonald's, vegetarianism, eating disorders and other aspects of the consumption process can be read as an attempt to reflect upon connectedness. It might therefore be seen as an attempt to utilize the notion of aesthetic judgement outlined by Lash and others. In Probyn's account, this aesthetic appears to have a dualistic quality. On the one hand, consumers must assess risks and other dimensions of the act of consumption in reflexive terms. Such reflexivity requires that a 'critical distance' is established between the subject and object of consumption so that an objective evaluation can be carried out. On the other hand, it requires a new aesthetic relationship of some kind so that a sensual connection, something that lies outside formal systems of calculation, can be established. By combining these two aspects, we can suggest that a form of 'relational reflexivity' comes into being (Murdoch and Miele, 2004) and that this provokes consumers into a new awareness of themselves as the subject and food as the object of the act of consumption.¹⁰

Conclusion

In the previous sections we have shown the landscape of food is constructed and consolidated by networks of differing kinds. We examined two such networks in some detail. First, McDonald's, as a global restaurant chain, distributes a standardized and ubiquitous product via an industrial system in which non-human technologies play a key role in both prescribing the actions of workers and in delivering food to the mouths of consumers. While it is willing, to a limited degree, to tailor its products to local circumstances (for example, selling pizzas in Italy, few meat products in Muslim countries, luxurious restaurant fittings in Monte Carlo), its strength is based on a standardized mode of food delivery. This extends throughout the McDonald's chain and beyond, to its many suppliers around the world. Second, Slow Food is a consumer network that works to promote diversity in food production and consumption processes in order to safeguard local cuisines. It therefore seeks to highlight the connections that link cuisines to local natures and cultures, and works to strengthen

These two networks give rise to contrasting spaces of food. McDonald's applies a uniform set of principles and seeks to turn all its network spaces into an expression of the same thing ... 'McDonald's'. This standardized space is engineered using Panoptical principles which are enshrined in management practices, work routines, physical arrangements, nonhuman technologies and so forth. Space in the McDonald's network is thus primarily topographical in character. Alternatively, Slow Food ties together a whole host of cuisines within sets of relations that give aesthetic expression to spatial diversity. It links local areas within a loosely consolidated assemblage. These local areas retain distinctive socio-material relations that are sensitively 'globalized' in the Slow Food network. Thus, Slow Food reminds us that, as Massey puts it,

local places are not simply always the victims of the global [...] places are also the moments through which the global is constituted, invented, coordinated and produced [...] this fact of the inevitably local production of the global means that there is potentially some purchase through 'local' politics on wider global mechanisms. Not merely defending the local against the global, but seeking to alter the very mechanisms of the global itself. A local politics with a wider reach; a local politics on the global. (2004: 11)

Enhanced understanding of the differing relations between global and local spaces in McDonald's and Slow Food gives rise to a need to critically evaluate the networks one against the other. Clearly any evaluation could begin to think about their differential impacts on landscapes, cultures and ecologies. It might, for instance, point out that McDonald's seems to 'externalize' many of the most significant interactions between food and environment by drawing producers, processors and consumers together within narrowly defined instrumental relationships that are dominated by industrial and market conventions (Murdoch and Miele, 2004). As a consequence, Schlosser (2001: 261) claims 'the low price of the fast food hamburger does not reflect its real cost', while other aspects of production/consumption are displaced by McDonald's (notably the health effects of the fast diet (see Vidal, 1997; Critser, 2004), so that 'the profits of the fast food chains have been made possible by the losses imposed on the rest of society' (Schlosser, 2001: 261). Slow Food, on the other hand, appears to encourage some 'internalization' of these costs within economic processes. In this network, the full range of spatial consequences of production and consumption are assessed. But this 'internalization' of cost means that many of the 'slowest' foods are relatively expensive. Thus, the Slow Food approach requires an 'aestheticization' of typical foods in order to attract those consumers who are willing to look beyond price to a much broader set of criteria. The apparent success of Slow Food in establishing an extensive global network based on an aestheticized food culture seems to indicate that, at present, a growing number of consumers are disposed to assessing food in this fashion. The increased significance of 'slow food' may therefore point to an enhanced relational awareness in food