

choose, reflect on and sometimes reject the artefacts due to their cultural value or cultural relations. A problem with this perspective today is that it often repeats myths and that food culture is a question of objects, e.g. that food cultures spread like prairie fires ("the west Asian farming system was spread to Europe", Frølich, p. 58). Or that dishes and food products travel on their own (e.g. "when the potato came at the beginning of the 19th century", Meltzer, p. 75). This decorative or fictional writing style overshadows such a simple fact as that culture is manmade and is carried (by people). It also overshadows the fact that cultures are values, choices and the result of reflective thinking among individuals. I would like to finish in an appreciative way, since the book points at new perspectives, with a quote from Amilien (p. 33): "Food culture arises and is changed in a meeting situation between people and their mutual effect on each other." Yes, food culture is all about humans!

Richard Tellström, Grythyttan

Home to McDonald's

Helene Brembeck, Hem till McDonald's. Carlsson Bokförlag, Stockholm 2007. 189 pp. Ill. ISBN 978-91-7331-058-1.

■ In the old days people ate either at home or out. In both cases they ate indoors. Either in their own kitchen or the dining room – or in a restaurant. Only "The Man on the Grating" ate outdoors, and he did not get bird food. This changed after the Second World War, when hot-dog stands became popular. In some cases these were motor-powered, and one could see the hot-dog man driving off in them late at night. Eating out began to take on a new meaning. People did not necessarily go to an expensive restaurant if they wanted to eat out, instead just grabbing "one grilled with everything". It was not easy for those who ate at the hot-dog stands. They always stood turned away as they ate, bending over the hot dogs as if to conceal the fact that they had fallen to this: "aha, you're out of meat today too..." It was as if they were ashamed and wanted to hide their vices.

The start of the 1970s saw the coming of the pizzeria; eating out was no longer synonymous with style, special occasions, and expensive habits – or shameful hot-dog stands. Pizzas didn't cost an arm and a leg, and the service was rather informal. In a pizzeria in Trondhjem in 1974 I was informed by the

waiter, who was Swedish, that "they've imported me to do the talking". In the meantime McDonald's had also reached Sweden. This took place in 1973 and contributed to further democratization and leveling, with local globalization – glocalization – as a consequence. McDonald's has always adapted to suit the circumstances, so that the local here, as in most other places, has proved stronger than the global. On the other hand, it is not part of the accepted repertoire of clichés to declare that we live in a local age. The old grocery was also very local; it was either on the corner of some small street or on the main street in the station towns. In other words, exactly where there now is either a Seven Eleven or some other kiosk with "coffee to go" for ten kroner. But McDonald's did bring something new: the big windows. You could be watched as you ate. You enjoyed your food and enjoyed other people seeing that you enjoyed it. Dining became a public spectacle. Exactly like a pavement café in Paris, right? Just not quite as fashionable.

This is the subject of a splendid book by Helene Brembeck, with an apt title meaning "Home to McDonald's". It is one of the better books in the long sequence now written about the relationship between the global and the local, and about how we learn, through the routinization of everyday life, to handle the global. The topic of the book is thus the encounter between a global corporation and a local context. In this connection the author correctly points out that the Swedish consumer does not swallow McDonald's whole. On the contrary, there is an effort – on the part of both the consumers and McDonald's – to let the hamburger chain become a part of everyday Swedish life, so that this encounter will be as free of friction as possible. It is a valid historiographical point that Brembeck also gets an opportunity here to distance herself from the rather crude perception that McDonald's and other commercial actors are trying to take over people's lives. Instead she shows, through a number of field studies, that although McDonald's has influenced and changed everyday Sweden life, the company has had to show consideration for Swedish values and ways of thinking.

A central place in the book is occupied by Bruno Latour's ideas about networks and labile condensations. This is an interesting approach, and it is indirectly visible in the book that the network theories are weak in their treatment of boundary drawing and epistemological problematization of universality – but they are strong tools when it comes to the analysis of

exchange, interaction, and cultural transfer. We are nevertheless left with one major question: do networks have no boundaries? All in all one may wonder how necessary it is to bring in these theories. Brembeck is such a well-read and capable ethnologist that she can do it herself. This is shown by her use of field observations and interviews, with a necklace of good analyses on both micro and macro levels. There is also a multitude of entertaining examples. Perhaps the most amusing is the study of children's parties at McDonald's, where the kids forget about the strictly planned programme and follow their own inclinations with play and mischief. The analyses seem to have been performed with a considerable amount of tongue in cheek, but the cultural analysis hits the target accurately. Here as elsewhere in the book we see that McDonald's has been Swedified, and that it is necessary to consider local preferences and their fluctuations and counter-currents. On the other hand, the author also avoids the trap of believing that Swedishness is subversive and all-controlling. Instead, as she points out, what we find is cultural pragmatism and realpolitik. Although McDonald's shows consideration for local conditions, so that a Big Mac is smaller in Sweden than in the USA, Swedish children and adults are trained to become familiar with the subjectivities of the consumer society, resulting in reciprocal transformations with no clear winners or losers, as Brembeck says in the closing chapter.

This book is one of the best that has been written in a long time about modern food culture and the conditions for globalization in a mutable world. It is definitely on a level with the otherwise so dominant English-language research in the field, to which too much importance is often attached simply because it is written in English. We should not let ourselves be impressed by that. That much is evident from this piece of research, which displays both creative originality and solid craftsmanship.

Niels Kayser Nielsen, Aarhus

The Modern Danish City

Den moderne by. Danske bystudier 3. Søren Bitsch Christensen (ed.) Aarhus universitetsforlag, Aarhus 2006. 402 pp. Ill. English Summaries. ISBN 87-7934-151-9.

■ *Den moderne by* ("The Modern City") is the third part of a series of Danish urban studies published by

the Danish Centre for Urban History at Aarhus University. Two works have previously appeared in the series, one about the medieval town (2004) and one about the classical market town (2005). The editor of all three volumes is Søren Bitsch Christensen.

This book presents the Danish towns and their history in the period 1840–2000. It has an interdisciplinary approach. Among the authors of the twelve articles there are historians, geographers, ethnologists, and one art historian. The book has a very pleasing design. It is richly illustrated, partly in colour, with diagrams, tables, maps, plans, reproductions of posters, and numerous photographs. Despite the accessible appearance, the book has a decidedly scholarly orientation; each article is accompanied by an English summary and extensive notes and references. The articles were originally written for seminars at the Danish Centre for Urban History at Aarhus University, on two main themes: urbanism/town life and town system/urbanization.

The first and by far the longest article is by the editor of the book, the historian Mette Ladegaard Thøgersen. The article is a survey of the development of Danish towns in the period 1840–2000. The first part describes and analyses the development of the Danish urban structure against the background of other research and theories about systems of central places. It is striking that there is such a dominance for Copenhagen, but the reason is that the city was once the capital of a much larger kingdom which also comprised Norway, parts of northern Germany and southern Sweden. The time up to 1960 is regarded by the authors as a continuous phase in urban development. There was vigorous urban growth in Denmark then. The urban structure changed as industry developed and communications were expanded. After 1960 the picture changed: increased commuting to work, new systems of communications and traffic, the decreasing significance of agriculture, and tighter control of urban development through planning. The time after 1960 is illuminated by the authors' demonstration of the growth of knowledge regions, the significance of urban identities and the marketing of towns. The second part of the article deals with Danish town life or urbanism. This gives interesting glimpses into Danish theoretical and empirical research in a number of different fields. Various examples are cited to illustrate how towns have changed over the years, for instance the great increase from the 1870s to the 1920s in the number

of buildings where people could meet and where the new urban population tried to find answers to the challenges of the time. Today urban life is as attractive as it has ever been. A modern café culture, extensive urban renewal, and the revitalization of city centres have given new life to Danish towns.

The historian Jan Toftgaard Jensen devotes a captivating article to town monuments in the period 1850–1920. A stage in the bourgeoisie's disciplining of the underclass was to influence them by providing the cityscape with great art, beautiful green areas, and reminders of the nation's history. The author shows how a large number of monuments to national heroes and important people were raised in the towns of Denmark. An amusing detail is that the monument to the man who defeated the Swedes, the naval hero Niels Juel, was inscribed with texts in the spirit of Scandinavianism so that it would not seem anti-Swedish. With the monument movement the bourgeoisie tried to set its ideological stamp on the urban space. After the turn of the century, other groups in society had an opportunity to create monuments reflecting other ideologies.

The now rather unknown town planner Charles Ambt is the subject of an article by the historian Ulla Tofte. As municipal engineer in Copenhagen, Ambt made considerable achievements in modernizing the city through new plans for Østerbro and other districts, and through a new sewer system in which all the sewage from the city was pumped into the Øresund—probably without any treatment, although this is not stated. Ambt's urban planning was influenced by German models, chiefly Joseph Stübber's *Der Städtebau* from 1890, which advocated a system with diagonal streets, concave streets, triangular plazas and roundabouts.

In the next article the historian Merete Bøge Pedersen writes about prostitution in provincial towns in the 19th century, with special reference to the statutory regulation introduced in 1874. According to this, the towns could impose special rules for the work of prostitutes, requiring medical examinations and the like. This had varying effects in the towns, as the author describes. The Prostitution Act was repealed in 1906.

The "battle arenas" of the labour movement are described by the historian Knud Knudsen. He describes the working-class neighbourhoods in the city, the labour movement's meeting places, the demonstrations and the labour conflicts in the big Danish towns.

The movement's buildings were often described as "the fortress" or "the camp", which shows the spirit of conflict that prevailed at this time. The importance of the banners is emphasized by the author. It was not until 1900 that it was permitted to carry banners in the May Day demonstration in Copenhagen.

The art historian Anne-Louise Sommer describes the design of cemeteries with three examples from Greater Copenhagen from different times. She reveals the early foreign influences of cemeteries in Paris (Père Lachaise) and Hamburg (Friedhof Ohlsdorf) and how the ideals of town planning, secularization, and attitudes to death affected the design. In the newest of the cemeteries described, Lyngby Parkkirkegaard, the cemetery was disguised as a park, thus expressing the rather ambivalent post-war relationship to death.

Copenhagen Town Hall is the topic of the ethnologist Naomi Hainau Pinholt's article, which is also the result of a study conducted by Copenhagen City Museum. People were interviewed to obtain a picture of life in the town hall and how it has changed up to today. We gain insight into the hierarchical division of the workplace, where the pay was low but employment was secure. The new market conditions now mean that being service-minded and able to adjust has become more important than loyalty and dedication to duty.

The local historian Mette Ladugaard Thøgersen writes about what she calls "rural towns", the communities built up in the Danish countryside in the period 1860–1960. They were mostly station towns along the new railways. The article, which will be elaborated into her doctoral dissertation, describes a comprehensive study of these communities on Fyn. A survey shows the existence of 70 "rural towns". Few of them have more than a thousand inhabitants. A precise definition has been drawn up, along with a typology and a description of the communities. It remains to be ascertained whether the results are relevant for the rest of Denmark, although some comparisons have already been made.

From the rural towns on Fyn we move to suburbia in the article by the ethnologist Peter Dragsbo, a detailed history of Danish suburbs. These arose in the early 19th century as the entrance roads to towns were lined with housing for workers and day labourers. The first real suburbs were bourgeois residential areas influenced by the ideals of romanticism. Until the start of the 20th century the suburbs were shaped by sharp class boundaries. Afterwards development was different,

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partly influenced by international models. Dragsbo describes the workers' building societies as being inspired by the idea of the garden city, the public utility housing companies, the allotment garden movement, and the new neighbourhoods with small houses. For a Swedish reader it is interesting to learn of the housing types that do not exist in Sweden—areas with detached multi-dwelling buildings from as early as around 1920, clear predecessors of functionalism, and the big "workers' fortresses", a parallel to Vienna's enclosed housing blocks. Development after the war seems to have been very much the same as in Sweden.

Another very much on a decidedly macro level is the article by the geographer Bue Nielsen about Danish towns 1960–2000. He describes the urban structure on the basis of statistics on population and growth, commuting, the different functions and regional ties of towns, and the increasingly important international dependence. It is interesting to read the four different future scenarios that the planning authority in Denmark has presented for the country's towns. Two of the alternatives are geared to strengthening the country internationally, either through a concentration on the Copenhagen/Malmö region or through a chain of big towns running through Jutland, from Ålborg to the German border.

The historian Mikkel Thelle's article about the planning of Copenhagen's suburbs along the Køge Bay combines macro and micro perspectives in an interesting and fruitful way. Thelle begins by describing the overall planning of Copenhagen with the so-called "finger plan" from 1947. This became an international model and served as a basis for later planning. The built-up fingers were separated by green areas. With concrete examples, Thelle illustrates the consequences of the expansion for the original population and those who moved in, showing how a Danish garden city grew up and the quick tempo and optimism of the sixties propelled large-scale construction projects. Thelle's study contains some justified criticism which seems to me to be relevant for Sweden as well.

The geographer Hans Thor Andersen has written an important article about the development of towns since 1960, based on urban policies and various legal regulations. The most interesting part of the article, in my view, is the description of the transformation of central Copenhagen. Andersen shows here how different political outlooks, economic circumstances, and citizens' opinions interacted to ensure that the

clearance of central Copenhagen took such a gentle course. The majority of the older environments were preserved. The open conflicts around 1980 in connection with the planned clearance of Nørrebro were something of a turning point in the outlook on older buildings. For a Swedish reader it is striking and simultaneously saddening that the renewal of Copenhagen was so different and so much better than in Stockholm. An expansive economy and an ambition for large-scale solutions in Stockholm led to the destruction of much of the city centre in the 1950s and 1960s. The reconstruction of Stockholm came earlier than the renewal of Copenhagen. In Stockholm the battle of the elms in Kungsträdgården in 1971 turned the tide towards more prudent urban construction.

This book is accessible, rich, and pleasing in many ways. The beautiful and lavish design enhances the readability. The book is not a coherent description of modern Danish towns, but a heterogeneous collection of articles written from very different viewpoints. Each author has been allowed to write about his or her specialist field and is thus able to communicate important new knowledge. Perhaps it is this arrangement that makes the book so stimulating to read. Also contributing to this is the varied and often surprising perspectives on towns and urban life, for example, the work of a town planner, the monument movement, and the cemeteries. A great merit of the book is that it gives interesting insight into different spheres of Danish urban studies, with many notes and references for those who want to learn more. An interdisciplinary work like *Den moderne by*, naturally, cannot cover all aspects of the city. A complete account would not have fitted between the covers. There is undoubtedly material for yet another book. I could mention some things that it would have been interesting to see. There is no study of modern large-scale multi-family dwellings, even though suburbia is described in two chapters. Nor is much space devoted to the multicultural society. The transformation of disused harbours and industrial areas, Danish architecture, the new city life and alternative oppositional movements are other topics that might have deserved separate chapters.

To sum up, this is an interesting and valuable book. It has been highly rewarding to read and has taught me a great deal about Denmark.

Ulf Stahre, Gothenburg

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Illustration: Postman number 126, Edvard Sandström. Watercolour study by the painter Carl Wilhelmson (1928). Done for the monumental painting "Skeppsbron, Stockholm" in the public hall of post office number 1, situated in the General Post Office. The painting was completed in 1907. Object in Stockholm Museum collections (PM 14410). Photo: Yngve Hellström/Postmuseum (neg. 249z).

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