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Modernisation and the practices of contemporary food shopping

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Abstract. This paper examines the relationship between modernisation, consumption, and society, challenging received ideas about the distinction between 'modern' and 'premodern' geographies of food consumption. While conventional accounts posit a historical progression from premodern to modern forms of consumption, associated with the rise of the supermarket and the demise of the corner store, we argue that such distinctions may, in fact, refer less to a historical process of transition than to a contrast between different forms of contemporary sociality, experienced simultaneously in different sites of consumption. By drawing critically on the work of Augé and his contrast between places and nonplaces, these ideas are then put to work empirically in an examination of contemporary food shopping in Germany, focusing particularly on notions of consumer trust. A practice-based and ethnographically informed account of food shopping in Germany shows how distinctions between 'traditional' and 'modern' forms of consumption involve historicised accounts of contemporary consumption spaces and their associated socialities rather than referring to historical differences per se.

Introduction

There has been growing recent interest in the practices of consumption, whether in relation to the choice, purchase, use, or disposal of goods and whether expressed in terms of structures, networks, dispositions, knowledge, or relationships. A body of concepts already exists which covers most of the practices concerned.[1] However, as Mansvelt argues, "the performative work of such understandings ... seems less clear" (2008, page 114). In this paper we attempt to track the performative work of the concept of modernisation through an analysis of the everyday practices of shopping for food.

Our paper explores how the ways particular consumption places are understood have a decisive impact on how they are enacted, how place-specific consumption practices emerge and are tied to specific historical understandings. We are particularly concerned with the impact of notions of modernisation and how they frame our understandings of apparently 'traditional' shopping places such as the small grocery store as opposed to the supermarket. Later, we draw on ethnographic research on small grocery stores in Germany which suggests that a residual, 'traditional' sociality can be experienced in these places. However, we want to interrogate the seemingly obvious conclusions from this evidence further: how is this residual sociality inscribed into these places? What historical understandings are held responsible for the particular enactments of shopping practices found in these places?

We suspect that academic as well as colloquial notions of modernisation play a vital role. We will explain this by looking first at the connections between modernisation theories and the concept of the consumer society and the historical shifts in sociality implied. As we

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[1] On practices of shopping see Miller (1998; 2001); on acts of choice and purchase see Jackson et al (2006) and Zukin (2005); and on use and disposal see Gregson and Crewe (2003), Shove (2003), and Shove et al (2007). For an overview of the concepts of modernity and postmodernity in relation to the geographies of consumption see Jayne (2006).

will show, there has been substantial research into the changing sociality of consumer cultures, relying on the history of changing places of consumption. One of the latest of these changes identified relates to shopping for food, and consists of the transition from small shops to retail consolidation through the invention of the supermarket. The supermarket has been identified by many as a paradigmatic and thoroughly 'modern' project engendering different modes of sociality. As such, it is no surprise that changing places of consumption are related to changing social practices. Shopping for food in supermarkets can easily be related to Giddens's conception of modernity based on changing forms of trust relations. In this view, small grocery stores represent a residual form of retailing based on 'facework commitments', a traditional sociality that is vanishing. This claim is corroborated by the empirical evidence from Germany. But our research suggests that these distinctions involve historicised accounts of the present rather than referring directly to historical changes in the practices of food retailing. As a critical engagement with Augé's concept of nonplaces will show, 'tradition' and 'modernity' can be experienced at the same time in different sites of consumption, and contemporary understandings of places as traditional versus modern, regardless of their actual histories, are associated with different forms of sociality that superficially corroborate the claims of modernisation theories.

To be clear, we do not deny that the dominant form of grocery shopping changed with the onset of modernity as the preponderance of local independent stores gave way to the hegemony of large-scale corporate supermarkets. But we contest the tendency to 'map' these distinctions in simple historical terms, as involving a transition from 'premodern' to 'modern'. Indeed, our research indicates an important disjunction between the *experience* and the *discourse* of shopping, where the discursive distinction between modern and premodern is upheld despite the complex historical changes that have affected the meaning and practice of shopping. So, for example, the meaning of 'local' shopping at independent grocery stores may have changed with the rise of corporate retailing, no longer regarded as a taken-for-granted norm but representing, for some consumers at least, a self-consciously 'alternative' form of shopping to the dominance of the supermarket. To pursue this argument further would need detailed historical evidence regarding the popular experience of shopping at different kinds of stores, which is not readily available. But the distinction between discourse and experience is entirely consistent with the argument we are making which suggests that the contrast between 'modern' and 'premodern' retail forms is a discursive construction rather than a simple description of historical changes in consumer practices.

To summarise, our research questions the distinction between 'modern' and 'premodern' forms of consumption where these labels have been applied to distinct phases in the history of consumption. Instead, we propose that these historicised distinctions may be better thought of in terms of a contrast between different contemporary forms of sociality, experienced simultaneously in different consumption spaces.

Modernisation and consumer society

Modernisation theories[2] tend to claim a historical shift in the makeup of social relations, mainly triggered by the forces identified by Marx and Weber including

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[2] In this paper, we understand as modernisation theories all theoretical accounts that depict the history of social life as a transition from rural, small-scale, and traditional life to urban, complex, and modern life. This includes nearly every social theorist of the 20th century from Weber to Parsons, Foucault, Giddens, and Latour. We are not engaging here with the Modernisation theory, which was a major theoretical movement in the 1950s and 1960s, especially in the USA, and was pronounced dead in the 1970s (Gilman, 2003). However, the notion of societies in transition as a process of modernisation with the inevitable outcome of becoming irreversibly modern permeates the literature that is concerned with the 'Western' world.

technological progress, an increased division of labour and rationalisation of production cycles, the domestication of nature, and the establishment of work discipline, as well as an increasing overall mobility of people, goods, and information. The associated social change has been described as a process of individualisation which, according to Beck (1992), and depending on the perspective, accompanies, is caused by, or results from the changes outlined above. The transformation of gender roles (Tilly and Scott, 1978) and of the relationship between humans and nature (Latour, 1993) have also been identified as key features of modernisation. According to Giddens (1990), modernisation has led to a different form of sociality that substitutes personal relationships with impersonal relations within abstract systems whereby individuals perform merely functional roles but are stripped of their personal traits.

Regarding contemporary geographies of consumption, modernisation has been linked to similar processes of increasing abstraction such as large increases in the production of commodities, a steep rise in global trade and consumption expenditure, and the ongoing consolidation of production and trade (König, 2000; McKendrick et al, 1982). Thus, the usual diagnosis that we are living in a 'consumer society' links the emergence of mass consumption with the emergence of increasingly abstract social relationships.

There has, however, been widespread criticism of the idea of a single, homogeneous and undifferentiated 'consumer society'. Reservations about the usefulness of the terms 'consumer' and 'consumer society' were part of the inspiration for Warde's advocacy of theories of practice, where tangible notions of consumer practice were prioritised over essentialist notions of 'the consumer' and ideological constructions such as 'consumer society'. In Warde's practice-based approach, consumption is identified as "a moment in almost every practice" (2005, page 137). Nonetheless, as will become clear, the simplifying notion of an evolving consumer society as a linear historical process embedded in the broader drive of modernisation has already had a deep impact on the field and continues to shape both popular and academic understandings of the everyday practices of consumption. As we will show, there is a constant risk of theorising empirical evidence in the light of dichotomous notions that accompany modernisation theories and of treating contemporary forms of consumption as residual of 'older' and more 'traditional' practices. We argue that complex academic accounts of modernisation as well as general notions within public discourse are responsible for this because they suggest that we live in a constantly modernising world that is increasingly abandoning 'traditional' ways of life. We do not question the existence of deep changes that are often summarised as modernisation. But we want to draw attention to the consequences of conceiving the history of the social world in terms of 'traditional' versus 'modern' rather than asking what 'traditional' and 'modern' or similar terms express in a given context and what is conveyed by deploying notions of modernisation. In order to highlight the possible pitfalls of unconsciously deploying such notions within the studies of consumption cultures, it is important to depict some of the processes that drive commonsense constructions of an emergent 'consumer society'.

A historiography of modern consumption

The notion of a modern consumer society implies a premodern nonconsumer society, based on personal relationships, as a starting point for subsequent research on the histories and geographies of modern consumption. Recent historical research has shed new light on the contested origins of complex consumer cultures and sought to trace its subsequent development to the present day (see, for example, Brewer and Trentmann, 2006; Trentmann, 2006). Despite various accounts, many commentators agree to a periodisation which places the beginning of 'consumer society' in the early rise of the

bourgeoisie in the 17th and 18th century in England and the Netherlands and possibly even further back to the court society of the 16th century (Glennie and Thrift, 1992; 1993; McCracken, 1988; McKendrick et al, 1982).

Recent research on the history of consumption has challenged the chronology and conceptualisation of modernity. As Summers writes in an editorial on the culture and politics of postwar consumption: "Many of the characteristics of consumer culture which have been thought specific to the era of large-scale urbanization and industrialized mass production are equally discernible in fifteenth-century Florence, or seventeenth-century Amsterdam, or eighteenth-century London" (1994, page iv). Studies have documented the rapid expansion in the number of consumers and commodities from the late 17th-century, pushing back our understanding of the origins of 'consumer society' and demonstrating that consumption is a lynchpin in our conceptualisation of modernity (Brewer and Porter, 1993; McKendrick et al, 1982). Research on specific forms of consumption, such as window shopping, have challenged the distinction between the consumption of luxuries by social elites and what Carrier calls "the anonymous window-shopping of the mass market", where a socially heterogeneous set of people enjoyed not only the display of goods but also each others' company and chance encounters with friends and acquaintances (1994, pages 78–79; see also Berg and Clifford, 1999). Recent studies have extended our understanding of the link between specific sites of consumption and the creation of modern gendered subjectivities, not just focusing on the 19th-century department store and shopping arcade but also examining how women were both captured by and empowered through images and practices of consumption in the 18th century (Kowaleski-Wallace, 1996; see also Bowlby, 2001). Finally, studies have shown how retail change had penetrated all parts of the urban hierarchy in England by the end of the 18th century but that the extent of the 'retail revolution' was patchy, the pace of change varied, and the gap between large and small towns had widened by the early 19th century (Stobart and Hann, 2004). These studies all confirm the cumulative changes in consumption that were taking place during the 18th and 19th centuries rather than pointing to the kind of sharp break that is frequently associated with a decisive shift from 'tradition' to 'modernity'.

Towards the end of the 19th century, civil consumer society unfolded at an unprecedented rate accompanied by a significant decrease in subsistence farming and the expansion of the market to lower income groups, enabling more and more people for the first time to emulate bourgeois lifestyles by means of consumption. Contemporary theory and critique were provided by Veblen and Simmel.

The retail historian Spiekermann (1999) discerns three stages that cover the period of pre mass consumption from 1800 to the First World War. In his work on the rise of the German retail trade he depicts the first half of the 1800s as the general rise of the small retail sector. From the 1860s to 1890s diversification (chain stores, mail order companies) and an increase in scale (department stores) took place while the remaining time until the First World War saw an impressive rise in the range of commodities available (eg bicycles, pharmaceuticals, gramophones) and the start of the first phase of retail consolidation.

The next step in the evolution of the 'consumer society' is most often labelled as the time of mass consumption and Fordism and is roughly pinned to a period ranging from the 1920s to the 1960s. Critics included the figureheads of the Frankfurt School, Adorno and Horkheimer. From the 1960s onwards this chronology culminates in the period referred to as post-Fordism or postmodernism, characterised by the diversification of production and new patterns of consumption, dissolving traditional forms of class

loyalties and creating new loyalty groups based on consumer lifestyles (Harvey, 1989; Jayne, 2006).

Modernisation theories and historical accounts of consumption share the notion both of the beginning of modernisation and the consumer society between the 16th and 18th centuries, and of distinct forms of sociality separating the two eras. The German historian Wehler noted as early as 1975 the existence of a 'dichotomy alphabet' which serves as a way of conceiving the gap between premodern and modern times (1975, pages 14 – 15). The dichotomies Wehler discovered in the writings of modernisation theorists include such features of society as literacy being traditionally low and in modern times high, social control once direct and personal, now indirect and bureaucratic, and mobility, income, and productivity previously low, now high. Further, traditional modes of settlement have been rural and became urban, homogeneous and stable local communities became heterogeneous and mobile, whereas the economy, once based on rural subsistence, is in modern times driven by industrial technology. These features sound familiar to anyone who has engaged with the various accounts of emergent consumer societies.

Depending on one's perspective, the historic 'pre-' (ie before the consumer society) was either shaped by social constraints and suppression that were overcome through consumption (the optimistic view) or it was shaped by local loyalties and communities which allowed people to live a self-determined life in a small-scale world that has been destroyed since by, or at least severely disturbed by, consumerism (the pessimistic view) (Lee, 2000; Schor and Holt, 2000). The notion of societal progress (for better or worse) inherent to modernisation theories serves as a reference for the history of consumption. To avoid linear understandings of the emergent consumer society, we have to stay clear of staging the history of consumption as a 'pre-' versus 'post-' scenario.

A common focus of consumption studies lies in the agency provided or limited by consumption at different times. Different agencies are therefore taken as key markers to distinguish between premodern and modern cultures of consumption. But a different view emerges when a practice-oriented approach is taken and the social practices of consumption come to the fore. Consumption practices vary not just over time and across space but also at the same time and in the same place. While this is hardly surprising, we will show that as academics, informed by modernisation theories, we risk interpreting specific contemporary consumption practices as 'traditional' and likely to vanish. But the reason for this can also be found in the empirical realities we engage in as researchers, especially in the simultaneous variations of social practices.

Shopping as social practice

Investigating shopping as social practice is an appropriate starting point for studies of the geography of consumption for shopping is the fulcrum of the relationship of consumers and producers in market-driven societies (Lunt and Livingston, 1992, page 86; see also Callon, 2005, pages 5 – 7). Investigating shopping for food also allows insights into the conduct of everyday life beyond the spectacular environments that are often associated with spaces of consumption (eg Goss, 1993; Pred, 1995). There are other advantages in aligning studies of consumption with theories of social practice. Practices as conceived by Reckwitz (2002) consist of routinised forms of behaviour which are made up of a multitude of single actions. According to Reckwitz, practice is a pattern of bodily movements tied to conventionalised activities of understanding, knowhow, and structured ways of desiring or teleo-affective structures (cf Schatzki, 2002, page 80). Practices are a nexus of 'doings' and 'sayings'—that is, nondiscursive and discursive elements (pages 76f). The agent is a 'carrier' of practices as a corporeal and mental actor. Thus, practices consist of the routinised ways that "bodies are moved,

objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described, and the world is understood" (Reckwitz, 2002, page 250).

This approach can be related to a conception of the nexus between places and the everyday:

> "So, in everyday life, what is striking is how people are able to use events over which they often have very little control to open up little spaces in which they can assert themselves, however faintly. Using talk, gesture and more general bodily movement, they can open up pockets of interaction over which they can have control ... . Clearly, an important part of this process is that spatial awareness we call place. For places not only offer resources of many different kinds (for example, spatial layouts which may allow certain kinds of interaction rather than others) but they also provide cues to memory and behaviour" (Thrift, 2003, page 103).

In other words, everyday life emerges through routinised if creatively improvised connections of places and practices or, as Schatzki puts it: "Human coexistence ... transpires as and amid an elaborate, constantly evolving nexus of arranged things and organized activities" (2002, page xi).

The methodological advantage of the theory of practice is the fact that practices are a visible feature of everyday life and are directly observable. Every practice is a singular event but allows for generalised understandings and conclusions about the fabric of social life. Practices draw on powerful discourses but also demonstrate their limited reach. They emphasise a low degree of social constraints but also a pragmatic submission to the logical sequences of specific practices.

Shopping as a social practice is thus to be understood as a socially conveyed, learned, and habitualised activity which consists of a variety of single, highly routinised, actions. Shopping is better described as a social accomplishment rather than as the exercise of sovereign choices made by isolated individuals (cf Jackson and Holbrook, 1995). Furthermore, consumer practices are embedded in specific social contexts (Jackson et al, 2006) and, as Gregson et al (2002) have shown, these practices actively constitute specific retail environments rather than consumers simply choosing between a series of preformed venues. The ability to shop also corresponds to the opportunity to shop according to the time, space, and other resources that are to hand. Investigating the specific arrangements of shopping practices must, therefore, take account of the changing landscapes of consumption.

Much of the Western world and, increasingly other countries are experiencing an ongoing process of retail consolidation. The food retail market provides a good example. In Germany, almost 98% of the market is shared by thirty companies. The top-ten companies account for almost 90% of the retail market as has already happened in Finland, Sweden, Norway, France, Belgium, Austria, and Switzerland. In the UK, four firms (Tesco, Asda-Walmart, Sainsbury's, and Morrisons) account for 75% of total grocery sales (Cabinet Office Strategy Unit, 2008). In 1970 Germany had about 150 000 food retail stores. This number has been in constant decline since then. From 1995 to 2005 the number of food retail stores has fallen from 80 000 to under 60 000. Small grocery stores with no more than 100m retail space still make up 38% of food stores but their market share is less than 3% (BVL, 2008; Everts, 2008; Junker and Kühn, 2006).

The structural change in the retail landscape could be understood as part of the modernising of consumption cultures as revealed in the consumption studies mentioned above and embedded in the wider process of modernisation. This would imply significant changes in shopping practices themselves as well as changes in everyday sociality.

As we will show, much of the empirical evidence seems to corroborate this claim. But, at the same time, we will show how this interpretation is flawed by colloquial

understandings that have common features with key claims of modernisation theory such as the increasing impersonality of shopping environments.

The supermarket is the paradigm of the everyday experience of modernisation or, as Ashley et al have it, "a paradigmatic site of disembedding, involving innovations in travel, payment, quality control, packaging and self-service" (2004, page 113).

Similarly, Brändli (2000) interprets the introduction of self-service as a part of general modernisation impulses, from the mid-20th century onwards, that have been designed in order to regulate variety and difference. This ordering of desires and needs has been accompanied by a significant rise in discreet but constant surveillance and the regulation of 'traffic' (eg the arrangement of supermarket aisles and the use of CCTV). The supermarket, therefore, consists of coordinated circuits in a totalising environment which has no place for the unpredictable. But the supermarket, as Zukin (2005, pages 78f) observes, also warrants the freedom of anonymity. In addition, low prices and more products have invited shoppers since the beginning of the 20th century to browse more and to buy more.

The supermarket, therefore, represents in scholarly thought a thoroughly modern space with all the paradoxical inversions of liberation and constraint. The historical backdrop for this scenario is to be found in the small stores of the presupermarket era which seemingly offered social relationships between shopkeepers and customers that have since been lost (De Grazia, 2005, pages 414f). These accounts mirror the previously mentioned optimistic and pessimistic views on the evolution of consumer society whereby the local greengrocer provides the favoured contrast to 'modern' shopping practices, although the dispersion of small retail stores has been a feature of 19th-century modernisation itself (Spiekermann, 1999).

In fact, the relationship between shopkeeper and customers had been tense until self-service was introduced. Despite the possibility for customers to complain and the potential to build up individual relationships, shopkeepers have always been under suspicion of charging their customers too much, of cheating while weighing or counting money, or favouring some customers over others. In contrast, the supermarket has been advertised as a place of social equality shorn of the suspicious looks of neighbours. In addition, new methods of packaging and increased hygiene standards have made the supermarket a favoured alternative since the 1950s.

On the basis of ethnographic fieldwork carried out in London in the 1990s, Miller (2001, page 98) explains the popularity of the supermarket and even bigger retail forms among his elderly respondents as a positive experience of modernisation, associated with clean and tidy supermarkets representing ideas of progress. Miller et al (1998) also found that supermarkets and shopping malls were used like local stores by some residents as they became familiar environments, used for 'popping in' and 'topping up', practices usually associated with corner stores and other smaller scale retail spaces. An interesting tension emerges in this research between the positive sentiments assigned to the local greengrocer or corner store and the actual practices associated with the modern supermarket.

In his research on the history and meaning of the supermarket in Australia, Humphery (1998) discovered that most respondents talked about their experience of the supermarket in comparison with other shopping practices in places like the local greengrocers or the market. Small stores such as the delicatessen or the butcher were used to signal the opposite of the supermarket and to invoke a sense of nostalgia. Thereby, a product-related distinction occurred, separating small-scale shopping places for fresh food from bigger ones for other items. Furthermore, respondents claimed that they liked the idea of "being able to give your money to people who are small business owners" (Humphery, 1998, page 185). Humphery observes an 'experiential gap' expressed

by his respondents, "between the unpredictability of older shopping spaces and the much more predictable possibilities of wandering the supermarket aisles" (page 15).

What strikes us here is that his informants were talking not about their shopping experiences from a long time ago but about the difference it makes in the contemporary world to shop at the market, the butcher's shop or the greengrocer's shop compared with the supermarket. As Ashley et al (2004, pages 112f) remind us, markets and other 'nostalgic' places can be regarded as a response to the supermarket and other 'modern' shopping places not simply as their historical precursors. The reintroduction of weekly farmers' markets in the USA and Europe since the 1970s can be interpreted in a similar light (Hinrichs, 2000; Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000). Of course, bringing the rural back into the city centres through farmers' markets can be seen as part of the gentrification processes described by Zukin (1989), serving the appetite of white middle-class consumers for cultural difference, entertainment, and services of new urban elites (cf Sassen, 2001, pages 284–287; Slocum, 2008). Indeed, the growth of small-scale immigrant entrepreneurship including small grocery stores has also been interpreted in this light (Rekers and van Kempen, 2000). However, as Ashley et al (2004, page 118) conclude, "contrary to fears of homogenization, people possess sophisticated food cartographies in which unpredictability is a prominent trope."

To take this further, we would argue that the contemporary experience of different kinds of shopping space needs to be historicised. Observed differences between 'premodern' and 'modern' spaces do not necessarily refer to historical shifts but to contemporary experiential gaps that are conceived and expressed in historical terms. We argue that this historicising differentiation is connected to vernacular discourses of modernisation that surround the rise of the supermarket. Small stores and markets serve as the discursive opposite of the supermarket, the specific arrangement of consumption practices rendered as the experience of 'premodern' shopping. Thus, the meaning of the supermarket derives from contrasting it with a historically imagined and contemporarily lived construction of 'premodernity'.

In what follows, we will track the sociality of shopping by exploring trust as a crucial moment of contemporary shopping practice. Shopping, at least as it is understood in market-driven societies as the exchange of money for goods, is a social activity which is based on trust relations. Profound changes of practice are therefore likely to originate from changes in trust relations.

As Giddens (1990) notes, trust is necessary because of a lack of information. Uncertainty is ruled out by reliability. Trust forms the link between faith and confidence. Giddens conceives of trust in relation to modernisation as faith in the "correctness of abstract principles" (1990, page 34). According to Giddens, there are two major forms of relationships that involve trust: 'facework commitments' and 'faceless commitments' (page 80). 'Facework commitments' refer to relationships which are expressed and fostered in face-to-face interaction. This is found in settings where copresent people engage in various practices—they are present in the same place at the same time—whereas 'faceless commitments' refer to faith in 'abstract systems' as symbols or signs (eg certificates) or expert systems.

Following the 'pre-' vs 'post-' scenario noted above, Giddens assigns different historical times to these two trust settings. The 'premodern' times of small-scale societies in villages and towns would have been mainly based on 'facework commitments', while the transition to modernity would have led to an increase in 'faceless commitments' and a decline in 'facework commitments' (Giddens, 1990, pages 103–104). Superficially, the changing practices of shopping for food fit very well into Giddens's conception of trust. The increasingly complex makeup of global networks of production and consumption narrows the possibility for individuals to obtain thorough information. The assessments

of a small group of professional experts are bestowed with trustworthiness instead. In Britain, the main supermarket chains have attempted to occupy this position of trust, claiming to represent the consumer interest, a position that has been undermined by a series of 'food scares', mostly notably BSE (Marsden et al, 2000). In other European countries, trust in food revolves around a different constellation of actors, including retailers, regulators, and consumers themselves [for comparative European evidence see Kjærnes et al (2007)].

In regard to food and similar objects of contemporary consumption, a trust relationship between consumers and producers is observable which has no need of either human access points or facework but again fits into Giddens's notion of modern trust in abstract systems. There, trust in producers is substituted by trust in brands. The spaces in which trust in food brands occurs are mainly represented by the supermarket.

If we look at the enactment of trust in the light of a practice-oriented approach, trust has to be located not just in social relations but within practices. Trust, then, should be apparent within sayings and doings as well as in understandings. If there is a contemporary coexistence between two different forms of trust, this must be apparent in practices, in the way people talk about their practices as much as in what they do and how they make sense of their sayings and doings. Trust should be understood not as something that has to be necessarily there but as a learned, trained, and skilled activity that becomes relevant within certain practices but not others. Moreover, there are various ways trust relations are established, but what makes them 'real' and powerful depends on the intrinsic logics of a practice. For example, the practice of providing the family with food in order to survive on a daily basis does not need trust in the quality of a product as long as it nourishes the hungry, but the practice of providing the family with 'healthy' food bears the construction of trust relations that establish validation strategies of 'quality' in itself.

Evidence from ethnographic fieldwork

This inference is supported by evidence from research carried out in Stuttgart, Germany. In an ethnographic approach, customers of small grocery stores run mainly by immigrants were interviewed and observed. All the respondents had their own 'food cartographies', including supermarkets, discounters, delicatessen and speciality shops, market stalls etc.[3] In what follows, we will argue that the experiential gap between 'modern' supermarkets and 'premodern' greengrocers is mainly experienced through different ways of establishing trust within the practices of shopping.

If we look at small grocery stores, it is first and foremost remarkable how shopkeepers are bestowed with the kind of trust which would be associated with brand loyalty in 'modern' consumer spaces. Shopkeepers, butchers, and bakers were conceived by respondents as experts who, because of their daily occupation, have 'just more of an idea' of the goods sold than someone in the supermarket "who basically just stacks the shelves".[4] The baker, as one woman said, has to be an apprentice for

[3] The fieldwork was conducted by Everts in 2005–06. The main data were gathered in twenty small grocery shops, seventeen of them led by self-employed shopkeepers with a migrant background. The research involved participant observations in the shops and concentrated on the interaction between shopkeepers and customers but was as well a major source for narrations from the shopkeepers themselves. In addition, interviews with regular customers were conducted, including fourteen in-depth interviews and another twelve interviews on the street which have been recorded and transcribed. All data have been analysed drawing on qualitative content analysis and by using the software Atlas.ti 5.0. There is no space to document individual 'food cartographies' in detail here but see Everts (2008, chapter 3).

[4] Interview extracts are taken directly from the researcher's field diary, translated for this paper from German into English.

three years for good reasons and the greengrocer has to choose the goods herself or himself at the wholesale market.

In practice, there are various routines in the interaction between shopkeeper and customers which refer to his or her expertise. On the one hand, customers enquire about the quality and place of origin of products or ask for information about various preparation methods. On the other hand, shopkeepers convey their knowledge about products, preparation etc to customers even without being asked. They not only are accepting the role of the expert but stage it on their own:

Field diary (6 February 2006): *A woman in her 20s enters the shop. As she wants to take two clementines from the box the shopkeeper says: 'Not these, they are not good, these over here are better'. 'How does he know', the woman asks bemused. 'These had been out in the cold today', the shopkeeper says ... they had been frozen and would be pulpy inside. She should trust him. He would know. The woman wants to buy some olives and sheep cheese as well. ... The sheep cheese, he explains at length, should be kept in a Tupperware box or in a jar. Before eating it, it should be washed with lukewarm water to pull the brine out. The brine would not be good. Apart from being too salty, it would contain a lot of chemicals which keeps the cheese from going bad.*

Field diary (7 April 2006): *A man in his 70s examines a bottle of olive oil warily. ... Would this be good, he asks the shopkeeper, or should he take the Mazola [a vegetable oil]? 'That depends for what you want to use it', the shopkeeper replies. 'For salad and the like this would be excellent but not for frying. For what do you need it?' 'Fried potatoes', the man answers. 'No, this oil wouldn't be good, too heavy', the shopkeeper says. He should preferably take the Mazola.*

The examples show how shopkeepers actively interfere with customers' practices of selecting goods and assessing quality or appropriateness. Thereby, shopkeepers establish themselves as experts and the source of trust. This stands in contrast to the supermarket with its embodied ideology of free choice where customers are left alone with making the appropriate choice, guided only by the claims different labels and brands make.

In small shops, 'premodern' trust relations are apparent in other respects, too. Customers with young children like to take their children along or even send them on their own to the store. Parents consider smaller stores as a good and safe place to introduce their children to the basic rules of shopping—such as making choices based on what is needed and having the money at hand to pay for the chosen items. This education strategy includes the shopkeeper. Respondents were quite clear in emphasising the trustworthiness of 'their' shopkeeper as the main reason for sending their children to that particular place. The shopkeeper would know their child and help her or him to choose the right items and pay the correct amount of money. And if anything fails and the child brings home the wrong items or buys something which has gone bad, it would not be a problem to get it exchanged.

Field diary (8 April 2006): *A girl, c. 10 years old, enters the store with an empty packet of Gaggli noodles and asks the shopkeeper if he has this product in stock. The shopkeeper goes with her to the shelves and has a look. He doesn't have the same and offers her a similar brand. The girl asks: 'How much is it?' 'It's 1.60 euros', the shopkeeper says. The girl stands there motionless for a while, brooding .... She looks uncertain and eventually leaves the store without buying anything.*

This example of a failed transaction elucidates how shopkeepers are, in turn, made to participate in the acquisition of shopping skills. In this case, the failed purchase appears to be a personal failure of the shopkeeper rather than the impersonal and structural failure of providing too little choice often associated with discount stores.

Other observations show how the shopkeepers are expected to serve their elderly customers. One middle-aged woman noted that she was particularly proud of her shopkeeper and the community who shopped there when he, without hesitation, called an elderly woman to the front of the queue to serve her first and everyone accepted this. On another occasion, an elderly woman showed her expectations as well as her confidence in her shopping practices in a small shop.[5]

Field diary (8 April 2006): *A woman in her 80s with a cane enters the shop and asks in a rather harsh tone for the young clerk, who helps out on Saturdays: 'Is he not there? I haven't seen him in a while.' She means the shopkeeper. From the back of the shop the wife of the shopkeeper approaches the woman. 'Ah', she says, 'you serve as well'. The shopkeeper's wife takes the bag of the woman and walks with her around the aisles, filling in whatever the customer wants (15 ice-lollies, 2 coffee cream, 1 chocolate, 1 pack of noodles, 4 bananas, 1 cream, 1 pack of strawberries, 1 pack of Wurst and some other things). At the till the young man puts the rest in a carrier bag. The customer rearranges everything once again. The total bill is 31.40 euros and she pays with a 50 euro note. The clerk asks her if she has 1.40 euros. She gives him her wallet and says: 'Look what I have'. He takes himself the 1.40 euros and shows it to her. She says: 'Yes, it'll be all right.' She wishes a nice weekend and leaves.*

Most cashiers in supermarkets can be observed helping elderly customers to select money from their wallets. However, this is often done with reluctant resignation and accompanied by disgruntled remarks from other customers in the queue. But the confidence of being served in the way depicted in the field diary shows how shopkeepers are expected to shop *with* their customers rather than just providing the surroundings. In these shopping practices, shopkeepers are central to the establishment of trust. This differs from other retail forms where it is brands rather than clerks that perform this role.

Most of the researched stores are run by self-employed people with a migrant background whereas their regular customers are primarily White and German.[6] This difference can also be a starting point for trust.[7] For instance, one shopkeeper couple—the woman was born and raised in Germany with a Turkish background and the man emigrated from Turkey as a young man—are bestowed with trust because of them 'being Turkish'; as regulars contend, if someone knows tropical fruits then it must be because of their background.

[5] It has to be noted here that staff in supermarkets in smaller towns in Germany do help elderly or disabled customers with their shopping but within the researched city neighbourhood this does not happen. Interestingly, this also plays into the hands of conceiving of the countryside as being more 'traditional'.

[6] The empirical research was originally inspired by the puzzling gap between the everydayness of multiculturalism in many German cities and the problematising tone of political, public, and academic debates on immigration and multiculturalism. Stuttgart, with its nearly 600 000 inhabitants, has a long history of labour immigration, in the last fifty years, especially from the states of former Yugoslavia, Turkey, Italy, and Greece (Gaebe, 1997; Meier-Braun and Weber, 2005). In 2004, 34% of Stuttgart's population was statistically defined as having a migrant background (Lindemann, 2005).

[7] Miller (2001) notes that many of his elderly respondents framed the emergence of immigrant entrepreneurship within the discourse of decline, thus displaying racist attitudes. In the German case study, racist attitudes were occasionally apparent when respondents talked about foreigners in the city in general but no connections were made to small shops. Of course, this might be due to the fact that the focus of the research was on the customers of small shops and not on people who deliberately avoid them. But, generally speaking, Stuttgart is well known for its successful efforts in accommodating diversities and promoting tolerance.

Female customer in her 50s: *"What I also like about them [one particular married shopkeeper couple], they buy their products in Turkey where they know their stuff and most, at least the summer fruits [tropical fruits], really good, I noticed. If you think of apricots and peaches, they are nowhere as good as there."*

Oddly enough, this particular shopkeeper couple had, as the man himself admits, virtually no knowledge of fruits and vegetables until they founded the business and most of the products they sell are not of Turkish origin. But the ethnic coding of businesses which ascribes certain business skills and attributes to certain ethnic groups (cf Pütz, 2003) becomes part of the process of establishing everyday relationships of trust.

Moreover, the ethnic coding is particularly tied to the practices of the shopkeeper ('they buy their products in Turkey') rather than to the shop as a whole. Whereas brands seek to convey through design, images, and text a kind of authenticity that denotes what they *are* (cf Cook and Crang, 1996), shopkeepers are trusted based upon what they *do*. Notions of authenticity arise from attributing to shopkeepers a distinct agency that is related to notions of ethnic origins.

This perceived 'expert' knowledge, based on ethnic origin, is not constructed solely by customers but also by shopkeepers themselves. A female customer who explicitly wanted to buy Turkish coffee was advised by the shopkeeper to buy the Greek equivalent. The Turkish product was in stock but, as the shopkeeper explained, Greek coffee would be cheaper, tastier, and of better quality. He stressed that he was brought up in Turkey and therefore knew the questionable methods of production including the use of nondeclared dubious surrogates. Interestingly, 'being Turkish' is not always used as a means of generating authenticity but as expertise in the regionally differing practices of production. Here, again, it is within the staging of expert knowledge and shopping with the customer—in short, the sayings and doings of the shopkeeper—that specific trust relations become effective.

Even if not every customer viewed the shopkeeper as an 'expert', they all shared an implicit sense of confidence in small grocery stores, even admitting that there may not be a rational ground for doing so. But, as one female customer in her late twenties noted, "one has the illusion of them picking the apples from the trees themselves". And another male shopper in his 30s thought that these shopkeepers still remember what they had been told by their grandparents and maintained a sense of traditional trading and craft practices. Moreover, as a mother of two summarised:

"I find it important to support the small stores. Hence I go there, this is another reason. … You know the tendency …, everywhere big shopping centres rise and the others [smaller stores], well, they do not have a chance at all—of course, it is convenient to have a store where you can buy everything from food to clothes, shoes and whatever else—but, well, it just doesn't have the 'air' anymore."

This is the crucial link drawn by many respondents making sense of shopping in small shops. 'Big' stores are seen as having *lost* something that is *still* available in small shops. The specific enactment of shopping practices and trust relations in small shops is thus historicised in relation to their bigger and 'modern' counterparts.

The implicit narrative emerging from respondents' accounts of their shopping practices reads somewhat familiarly: the unsettling effect of an increasingly abstract network of food production and distribution seems to result in the individual quest for guarantors of trust. Those are mainly found by the customers of small grocery stores in places which are clear in structure, appearance, and size. In terms of Giddens's conception of trust, shopkeepers of small stores are interpreted as 'access points' to the complex world of food production and consumption. Their mediating position, which also has a lot in common with Giddens's notion of premodern 'facework

commitments', differs significantly, therefore, from the modern 'faceless commitments' to brands on the supermarket shelf. But it is a fact that this 'premodern' behaviour occurs today among all ages of customers and shopkeepers and is interpreted by them in opposition to the supermarket. We do not wish to exaggerate or idealise the trustworthiness of every small-scale or local shopkeeper. There is evidence from the UK, for example, of bogus claims being made by some market traders and small-scale vendors selling allegedly organic or free-range products that do not meet the standards required for such goods.[8] In some cases, at least, consumers may be better advised to place more trust in bureaucratically controlled systems of food labelling and certification than in less well-regulated retail sites. But this is not always reflected in popular attitudes which tend to trust face-to-face relationships with individual shopkeepers or stall holders rather than the larger 'faceless' corporations.

> **Field diary (7 April 2006):** *The shopkeeper tells that his customers complain many times about the impersonal ways in the supermarket. For example, the other day, a woman complained about the following. She wanted to buy something in the supermarket that was signposted but not on the shelf. She asked a clerk who just replied that it was out of stock. He didn't bother to have a look at their inventory. Indeed, the shopkeeper said, it's easy to say 'no and bye'. … Something like this would never happen in his store. If the customers want to have anything he does not have temporarily, he brings it from his next shopping tour. He shows me a list with 12 different orders. Tomorrow he'll go shopping. That's why he asked his customers this morning if they want anything special.*

Within the practice of shopping in small grocery stores, there unfolds an understanding of mutual responsibility and expectations that make the place look decisively different from other consumption spaces. Shopkeepers shop with their customers (they shop for them) thus sharing and facilitating practice rather than simply providing space for practice. To summarise the difference the small shop makes for those who occupy this particular place, it is helpful to look at how the French anthropologist Augé captured the common unease with 'modern' places, including the emotional assessment of quantitative changes in the retail landscape.

Consumer places and nonplaces
In the light of the preceding evidence, small grocery stores represent 'places' in the sense Augé (1995) thought of them. To Augé, a place has the ability to create an 'organic society' where appropriate behaviour and social relations are negotiated by those who are present. However, supermarkets represent the kind of late-modern 'nonplace' which Augé feels is spreading around the globe:

> "The multiplication of what we may call empirical non-places is characteristic of the contemporary world. Spaces of circulation (freeways, airways), consumption (department stores, supermarkets), and communication (telephones, faxes, television, cable networks) are taking up more room all over the earth today. They are spaces where people coexist or cohabit without living together" (1999, page 110).

Augé describes the spread of nonplaces as a feature of 'supermodernity', suggesting that there might already be an exaggeration of modernisation at work. This clearly qualifies Augé as an academic with a pessimistic view, who structures his observations along a historicising notion of spatiality based on past and present distinctions.

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[8] For example, *The Times* (15 May 2006) newspaper reported on investigations by the Food Standards Agency into the sale of bogus organic meat at farmers' markets and butchers' shops, claiming that shoppers were being duped: (http://business.timesonline.co.uk/tol/business/law/article718393.ecel). Other recent cases of food adulteration in the UK are discussed by Lawrence (2004).

However, there is much to learn from engaging with Augé's discussion of places and nonplaces as it throws light on the nondiscursive reality of the gap experienced by those who use the supermarket and the small grocery store.

In Augé's thought, sites such as supermarkets, airports, and motorways are spaces of transition and transience, spaces of mobility where people rush through in postmodern restlessness. These nonplaces of transit and circulation are associated with the loss of a strong sense of place: places which once had been the centre and locale of sociality and everyday life.

One prominent feature of place would be the copresent negotiation of appropriate and approved behaviour, whereas nonplaces are governed by a set of rules conveyed by impersonal institutions imposed on every individual:

"When individuals come together, they engender the social and organize places. But the space of supermodernity is inhabited by this contradiction: it deals only with individuals (customers, passengers, users, listeners), but they are identified (name, occupation, places of birth, address) only on entering or leaving" (Augé, 1995, page 111).

The imposition of rules relies less and less on other humans and is mainly achieved via text. It is text then, rather than other individuals, with whom one deals and has to interact as a user of nonplaces. One of the best examples of this 'invasion of space by text', as Augé calls it, can be found in the supermarket:

"The customer wanders round in silence, reads labels, weighs fruit and vegetables on a machine that gives the price along with the weight; then hands his credit card to a young woman as silent as himself—anyway, not very chatty—who runs each article past the sensor of a decoding machine before checking the validity of the customer's credit card" (1995, pages 99–100).

The communication between text/machine and human being replaces interactions between humans. If we relate this to the discussion of trust above we could conclude that the supermarket is a modern place where trust is conveyed by text (brand names, ingredient lists, logos, etc), whereas the 'premodern' place of the small grocery store relies on trust that is based on facework commitments.

Augé has been criticised for his elitist and pessimistic view of 'supermodern' places for various reasons. Crang (2002) notes that, if we follow the notion that nonplaces are the typical places of contemporary cities, nonplaces are not just liminal or threshold spaces, homogenised places of commodified experience, and of the rationality of scheduling and flow management, but places of fantasy and desire, inclusion and exclusion, and a social milieux for different groups of people, not least for those who as workers spend most of their day in the airport, supermarket, or subway station. But what makes the supermarket a nonplace for the customers cited above is exactly its anonymous and modern air in comparison with 'their' small shops.

But is this really the fault of how 'modern' spaces of consumption are organised? As a practice theory approach suggests, we have to look at the use of places and what people do. If they are bonding differently in one place than in another we have to consider the understandings that link their sayings and doings. Experiencing the small shop as a 'traditional' way of shopping may be born out of the practice of shopping, of the way people actually shop in different places according to their understandings of different places. Thus, there would be too much lost if we were to reject Augé's notion of places and nonplaces altogether. Therefore, we will bring two voices from German academia to the fore, each of which has tried to develop Augé's ideas further. Significantly, both are social scientists who are concerned with spaces of consumption.

Wöhler (2007) states that nonplaces refer to open, fragmented, and nonstructured horizons of meaning as well as to transitions and experiences of liminality.

According to Wöhler, nonplaces indicate merely the 'not-anymore' and the 'not-yet'. Therefore, nonplaces have the ability to allow tentative crossings of established cultural meanings and social norms. This becomes possible because nonplaces are precisely what Augé criticises; they are without history, identity, and relationship. In nonplaces, Wöhler continues, we experience the world we inhabit as less bounded and confined and are enabled to try on different identities. Eventually, this could lead into transcending the traditional dichotomy between self and other for it becomes suddenly possible to be the other. This can easily be related to Zukin's contention (mentioned above) that the introduction of self-service and the supermarket invited us to browse and shop more easily, eventually altering shopping routines including the products purchased. While the notion of becoming the other may be problematic, especially for food researchers inspired by critics such as bell hooks (cf Cook et al, 2008), the liberating effect of the ability to shop where you want and to buy what you want without your neighbour and shopkeeper knowing cannot be denied and has been advertised as such (eg Brändli, 2000, page 93). But, interestingly, the supermarket is portrayed by customers as a present form of retailing without history whereas the small shop, regardless of its age, assumes a distinctiveness and history.

This affirmative account of nonplaces as the 'spaces of hope', if we may express it thus, would be best put into perspective by looking at Zurstiege's (2008) consideration of Oldenburg's (1989) 'third places' and of Augé's nonplaces. Zurstiege conceives of the spaces of consumption as third places which are neither entirely the place of the family, the state, or the private life nor the place of work, economy, and the public but inbetween. Furthermore, he contends that the third places of consumption have, indeed, turned into nonplaces but neither for good nor for bad. It is not the end of society but a different mode of sociality. Whereas 'traditional' places tend to affirm subjectivity on the basis of weak social ties, non-places offer subjectivity through a generalised and highly mediated sense of identity and set of relationships. As Zurstiege notes, the shopkeeper was once seen as a key mediator between the worlds of production and consumption but is increasingly being replaced by advertisement and branding. This process enabled the impersonalisation of selling practices but has been compensated for through the perceived trustworthiness and persuasiveness of brand biographies (Zurstiege, 2008, page 133).

Let us note, first, that nonplaces have always been with us as the places that represent the not-anymore and the not-yet and, second, that specific places in history and space assume nonplace characteristics. This may be represented as a place without history where the development of sociality grinds to a halt but is, in effect, a different mode of sociality. In regards to the empirical evidence provided, this is mainly achieved by the enactment of specific shopping practices. Thus, the way places are used creates and follows, at the same time, everyday understandings of what are seen as 'traditional' or 'modern' ways of socialising. The distinctiveness of 'traditional' versus 'modern' socialities are not traits of specific places but characteristics of the specific ways shopping practices are enacted and how those specific places are engendered. The makeup of certain places may facilitate specific forms of sociality but only insofar as the possibility of certain socialities is captured in the understandings that accompany the use of a place.

Conclusion

Small independent retail shops and their bigger counterparts such as the supermarket assume their distinct meanings through the distinct ways that these places are enacted. In particular, different ways of establishing trust relations help to enforce this dichotomy. Interestingly, different forms of trust relations are related to historical narratives.

The trust relations found in supermarkets are commonly understood as 'modern' whereas those in small shops are understood as 'traditional'. Our research suggests that Giddens was right to observe that different forms of sociality establish different forms of trust relations but his conclusion that this is what distinguishes modernity from tradition seems one-sided. Rather than denoting different forms of sociality at different times, different trust relations emerge from variations within practices at the same time. Thus, to take our example, the supermarket is experienced as modern because of the simultaneous existence of the corner shop and vice versa.

It is, therefore, not possible to draw conclusions about the shopping experiences of the past from this contemporary discursive difference such as all shopping once felt like corner shopping today. Researching the historic experiences of shopping would mean analysing the variations within shopping practices of a given period in the past rather than contrasting them discursively with experiences from the present.

Historic changes, often referred to as 'modernisation', have altered the practices of consumption and associated modes of sociality. Nevertheless, we argue that vernacular understandings and contemporary assessments of shopping are *historicised* rather than historical. This is suggested by the example of shopping for food and similar goods at corner shops and supermarkets. Of course, the ideas explored in this paper may apply to the experience of food shopping but not necessarily to other arenas of consumption (such as fashion, music, or technology). This underscores the need for further research on other (commodity-specific) consumption cultures. However, the centrality of shopping for food and the experience of the supermarket and similar retail spaces in everyday life give our conclusions a broader significance.

To sum up, the experiential gap we have described between different consumption spaces is represented discursively through notions of premodern and modern places, which correspond with different forms of sociality and different relations of trust. On the one hand, trust is bounded to the individual person of the shopkeeper; on the other hand, it is evoked through the impersonal use of text (advertisements, brands, labels, etc). The experiential gap is thus both real and imagined. Nevertheless, colloquial notions of modernisation have a considerable effect on the way spaces of consumption are experienced by consumers and how this experience is conceived and expressed by researchers. It remains a future task to show to what extent historicised discourses of premodern and modern places impact on the way consumption places are construed and used. Such research is likely to produce more insights about how different modes of sociality (eg trust in persons, trust in text) are established and reproduced depending on different (historically patterned) forms of knowledge and expectations about different places.

As demonstrated by our empirical research, theories of practice have the ability to focus attention not only on the way we conceive and experience places but also on how we 'do' place. The comparison we have drawn between historicised accounts of traditional and modern consumption spaces is rooted in our understanding of the way contemporary practices are enacted, how people talk about places, what they do there, how they do it, and how they make sense of their sayings and doings. In regard to the changing practices of consumption, a practice-oriented approach helps to register and explain variations of practices not just through time and across place but at the same time, in the same places and to explain how these places and spaces are understood and negotiated. To answer the questions we introduced at the beginning of this paper, we conclude that trust relations that are based on individuals and personal conduct are, indeed, popularly understood as being 'older', 'historic', and 'traditional'. Combined with the notions of decline and modernisation and the proliferation of what Augé calls 'nonplaces', this reinforces the nostalgic experience of small shops as places where you can *still* experience personalised trust relations in contrast to the not-anymore of the supermarket.

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