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SITUATING CONSUMPTION, SPACE AND PLACE

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Above all, the transformative force of consumption becomes evident as soon as one begins to take geography seriously

(Clarke et al, 2003, 80)

Many social scientists and others have heeded Henri Lefebvre's (1991, 342) directive that "the commodity needs its space". Commodities—what Michael Watts (1999), in channelling Marx, has quite rightly called the "DNA of capitalism"—have become and continue to be the focus of a great deal of research and scholarly engagement. From more popular accounts of things such as chewing gum (Redclift, 2004), sushi (Corson 2007), 'luxury' items (Thomas 2007) and bananas (Koeppel 2008), to wide-ranging, critical engagements with (post)colonialism (Cook and Harrison 2003, 2007), empire (Domosh 2006), and globalisation (Freidberg 2004a; Mansfield 2003) *through* specific 'tales' of goods, much of this work is about uncovering the cultural and political economies that make up the 'social lives' (Appadurai 1986) of particular commodities. Many scholars—and especially geographers—have sought to add to the scope and content of this work by exploring the 'spatial lives' of these commodities, clearly one aspect of Lefebvre's wide-open refrain; indeed, as he puts it, "[t]he commodity is a *thing*: it is *in space* and occupies a location" (Lefebvre, 1991, 341; emphasis in original). Drawing variable inspiration from the anthropologically-inflected field of cultural materialism (e.g. Woodward 2006; Douglas and Isherwood 1996) to the muckraking *Jungle*-like exposés of authors such as Upton Sinclair and more contemporary investigative journalists, this spatialisation of material culture has sought to investigate how spaces, places and materialities weave in and out of commodity cultures, circuits, networks and chains. Thus, it is not all that hard to argue that, fundamentally, commodities are *essentially* geographical: they inhabit, produce and embody space and spatial relationships in all their multitudinous ways and means across their travels and travails from production to consumption and beyond.

Echoing Lefebvre's statements and in parallel with his wider endeavours, many have started to argue that consumption, too, needs its space. In short, we are *where* we consume and investigating this aphorism is where this volume is specifically situated. Building on the existing writings on the geographies of consumption (e.g. Bell and Valentine 1997; Clarke et al 2003, 79-131; Crang 2008; Jackson and Thrift 1995; Mansvelt 2005), the chapters in this volume argue that the inseparable and indelible relationships of consumption, space and place should perhaps not be as implicit—as they sometimes are in commodity network studies (e.g. Cook et al 2004)—nor, even, as forgotten as they often can be in broader economic and other geographical 'stories'. Thus, seen from this angle, quite a bit more can and should be drawn out of David Harvey's (1990) famous passing comment that the grapes on our supermarket shelves are silent about the exploitative relations behind them. Indeed, this statement was arguably made from *inside* the spaces of consumption and *through* the figure of the consumer and is deserving of much greater empirical and theoretical engagement.

Rather than simply dismissing it as merely ephemeral eruptions of 'culture' on the wider landscapes of capitalism, understanding consumption and its geographies is *central* to understanding the powerful geographical imaginations and materialities of the contemporary 'society of consumers' (Bauman 2007). This is particularly true in the context of those working for more 'ethical' and 'alternative' socio-material futures *through* consumption (e.g. Barnett et al 2005; Harrison et al 2005) in our newfound role as 'citizen'/'political' consumers (Clarke et al 2007; Mansvelt 2008). Here, ethical consumption might simply be a variation on the more general consumer-capitalist theme, whereby consumption, "...rather than being a freedom, a right or a liberty, ... has become one's civic duty and a collective responsibility" (Doel 2004, 154).

Further, consumption must be and remain *equally central* to theorisations of space and place. In just one example, the practices and politics of consumption are clearly one of the fundamental, yet relatively unrecognized, processes that conjoins Soja's (1996) triptych of socio-spatial relations—i.e. spatial practice, representations of space, and spaces of representation—in the construction of the modern lived (urban) experience (Mansvelt 2005, 57). Indeed, as Jayne (2006, 157) has summarised, despite advances in spatial theory,

Research has tended to overlook the practices and values of consumers... . This failure to engage with the multiplicity of consumption cultures (and so much of their power and dynamism) is only now beginning to be rectified. Similarly, those seeking to link production with consumption, to identify consumptive subversions and the different meanings which different people assign to particular activities and practices (and how local[ities] and nation states mediate this), are beginning to show how such issues are historically and geographically constructed and negotiated.

In taking this a bit further, Clarke et al (2003, 80; emphasis in original) make the no-bones-about-it claim that

...consumption tends to *reconfigure* space and place, often disrupting, undermining and *displacing* consumption activities that were once thought of being related to specific places (think of 'Italian' food, 'exotic' fruit, or even the humble potato). The complexities of geography tend to undermine all simple all-or-nothing generalizations, not least when it comes to consumption. The geography of consumption frequently seems to pull in two different directions at once – setting up contrasts between spaces that are *spectacular* and *seductive*, on the one hand, and spaces that are *ordinary* and *mundane*, on the other; creating – paradoxically – *homogeneity* and *heterogeneity* at the same time; promoting both *mobility* and *fixity* without contradiction; and ensuring the *space* and *place* sit alongside each other in a way that challenges unreflexive assumptions about the way the world works.

But this too can be taken further, albeit by re-packaging some of what Clarke et al describe above as an argument for the need to understand the inherent 'relationalities' among what they see as the characteristics, creations and effects inhabiting the geographies of consumption. Drawing on some of the wider theoretical trajectories and

ontological interventions in geography (e.g. *Geografiska Annaler*, 2004; Massey, 2005; Murdoch, 2006; Lee, 2006; Whatmore, 2002) and elsewhere (e.g. Goodman, 2001), then, the focus shifts away from dualities and ‘contrasts’ to an exploration of not only the relationalities and relationships between and among consumption, space and place, but, for instance, how and in what ways the spectacular and the ordinary are often present and indeed, fundamentally *construct* and are *constructed by* consumption and its discrete practice(s). Here, eating is one of the most obvious illustrations of some of these relationalities: put simply, dining out in the spectacular spaces of a five-star, celebrity chef-run bistro in London (or New York or Las Vegas or Los Angeles or Paris or Hong Kong or...) is also about fuelling one’s body with the most mundane of biological activities in the ingestion of calories in the form of (most-likely very expensive, yet tasty) foodstuff. Further, that local, organic chicken that briefly inhabits your plate ‘space’ and the act of consuming it contains, constructs and connects *both* spatial mobilities and fixities: the chicken was shuttled along a commodity chain from the sites of local production to your very table, while, at some point, it not only became ‘sticky’ through those socio-material processes that certified it as ‘organic’ but, more simply, it had to remain in one particular place in order to be eaten and further metabolised into the mobilities of your body. It is this conceptualisation of consumption, space and place—that space and place *make* and are *made in* and *through* consumption—that is at the implicit and explicit theoretical heart of the chapters in this volume.

Yet, these relationalities are and remain anything but innocent; as Miller (1995, 10) has quipped, the consumer, in the not-so-surprising guise of the First World inhabitant, has become a kind of ‘global dictator’. Thus, as Massey (2005, 101;

emphasis in original) has put it, “what is always at issue is the *content*, not the spatial form, of the *relations through which* space is constructed”. Neil Smith (2004, 28) echoes this point with aplomb: “Space matters, of course, but even more so the processes and events that make nature and space”. Here, then, the relationalities among space, place and consumption, *in particular*, are littered with those that are and have been decidedly unequal and exploitative of people and nature; these are relations that are material in their very essence, power-full in their production and practice, political in their constitution and cultural in their deployment and engagement. Thus, Marcus Doel’s (2004, 150-151; emphasis in original; see also Goss, 2004, 2006) declaration—written as a sort of counter-weight to the perceived excesses of post-structuralism for which the topic of consumption is seen to hold a particularly unhealthy obsession—holds truth for us and for many of the authors here:

We remain – as always – resolutely materialists. So, we are struck by the *force* of signs, by the *intensity* of image, and by the *affects* of language. ... As fanatical materialists, **we are struck by everything** – nothing will be set aside from the play of force, nothing will be spirited away onto a higher plane or exorcised into a nether-world. One does not have to be a magician, market-maker or medium to know that onto-theology and diabolism act in our world. It is true that we take up signs, words, images, quantities, figures, maps, photographs, money, hypertext, gardening advice, lipstick traces, the exquisite corpse and so on and so forth – but we take them up as force: as strikes and counter-strikes; as blows and counter-blows.

It is how the forces of consumption ‘strike’ and are ‘struck’ by, in and through space and place that, in particular, weave their way in and out of the volume’s chapters.

Building on this concern and the others mentioned above—and in order to contextualise the writings that follow—the remainder of this introduction is organised into four different discussions that work through some of the key relationalities of consumption, space and place and divide the volume up into discrete sections. These are

as follows: *the consumption of space and place, consumption in space and place, consumption as connection/disconnection/reconnection, and consumption as production and production as consumption.*

The Consumption of Space and Place

The body serves both as point of departure and as destination. ... A body so conceived, as produced and as the production of a space, is immediately subject to the determinants of that space: symmetries, interactions and reciprocal actions, axes and planes, centres and peripheries and concrete (spatio-temporal) oppositions.
(Lefebvre, 1991, 194-195)

From the air we breathe to the food we eat, the metabolic necessities of life require us to be consumers in some shape or form. Space too is a requirement as it is the very consumption of spaces and places by our (non)mobile bodies that gives us somewhere to live and make our lives, act from and be acted upon. We make our body ‘space’ *literally* through practices of ingestion—what might be called ‘eating’ the world (Lupton 1996; Valentine 1999)—and the ‘work’ (e.g. exercise) we do (or don’t) on our bodies. At the same time, we make our ‘selves’ *figuratively* through those very same culturally-specific foods, but also, for example, through the ‘fashionable’ clothes that adorn us to the hairstyles, jewellery and/or make-up that we choose (or don’t). Bodies, much like commodities, are essentially geographical given that they occupy, move in and, indeed, *are* space and (a) place. Space and place mark and make our bodies at the very same time we *make* them by being *in* them and by *being* them, by consuming *in* them and by *consuming* them. Thus, Lefebvre (1991), as quoted above, only tells half the story of bodies and spaces; instead, here, corporeality implies the consumption of space and the consumption of space implies corporeality.

Yet, increasingly the corporeal body is becoming less important and indeed, untethered in some ways from consumption and the consumption of space and place. Virtual spaces and place have quickly become the norm for everything from shopping to

aspects of one's social life to the living of portions of one's life in virtual realities and video games (Crang et al 1999)¹. Here, in ways probably unthought-of by Lefebvre, absolute and representational spaces come to intermingle with absolute and representational materialities in the spaces of the virtual. Consuming (in) the virtual then, is not only about bits and bytes, electrons and electronics—the materialities of virtualism—but how the consumption *of* and *in* the virtual creates these spaces and offers up new representation, identities and ways of being but also how it is about consuming new, (dis)embodied spaces and places. From the 'ordinary' consumption of vegetables and the 'adoption' of distant sheep (Holloway, 2002), to that of the Zapatista social movement in Mexico (Froehling, 1999), to the virtualisation of sustainable consumption (Hinton, 2009) and of 'cool ways' to mitigate climate change (Boykoff et al, 2010), the mix of the 'real' and the virtual that has come to (re)define the everyday for much of the globe poses new challenges to the conceptualisations of the widening landscapes of both consumption and space (Doel and Clarke, 1999).

A leading example of the way in which the consumption of place has influenced the way we think is provided by Lefebvre (1991). He has written about tourism and consumption in the following terms:

This is the moment of departure – the moment of people's holidays, formerly a contingent but now a necessary moment. When this moment arrives, 'people' demand a qualitative space. The qualities they seek have names: sun, snow, sea. Whether these are natural or simulated matters little. Neither spectacle nor mere signs are acceptable. What is wanted is materiality and naturalness as such, rediscovered in their (apparent or real) immediacy. Ancient names, and eternal – and allegedly natural – qualities. Thus the quality and the use of space retrieve their ascendancy – but only up to a point. In empirical terms, what this means is that neocapitalism and neo-imperialism share hegemony over a subordinated space split into two kinds of regions: regions exploited for the purpose of and by means

¹ See Carrier and Miller (1998) for alternative takes on virtualism and consumption.

of production (of consumer goods), and regions exploited for the purpose of and by means of the consumption of space. Tourism and leisure become major areas of investment and profitability, adding their weight to the construction sector, to property speculation, to generalized urbanization (not to mention the integration of capitalism of agriculture, food production, etc.). No sooner does the Mediterranean coast become a space offering leisure activities to industrial Europe that industry arrives there; but nostalgia for towns dedicated to leisure, spread out in the sunshine, continues to haunt the urbanite of the super-industrialized regions. Thus the contradictions become more acute – and the urbanites continue to clamour for a certain ‘quality of space’. (Lefebvre 1991, 353)

It is clear that tourism today represents one of several ‘spaces of consumption’ in which the features that draw people to the area are increasingly contextualised, and at the same time hybridized, enabling the tourist consumer to experience them as part of a wider suite of experiences, of cuisine, costume, architecture, and music. In this sense ‘space’ has become invested with the cultural semiotics of ‘place’, it has acquired the elusive force of ‘identity’, so important to tourist destinations in the international tourist market. It also shows how in many respects tourism has developed a new vein of consumption, in rich and unexpected ways (Redclift 2006). The study of tourism has also forced us to confront the way we analyse place itself.

The discussion of place is closely linked to governing paradigms and systems of explanation. It thus possesses the potential to both signal something about location and the meaning which is attached to it. The dual conceptual role of place in consumption has been referred to as ‘place confirmation’, to underline the centrality of the idea of place both as location and the association of meanings with location (Manuel Navarrete and Redclift 2010). Like gender and nature, the meaning of place may be negotiable but its importance in the canon of concepts suggests considerable room for further development.

In the absence of systematic quantitative methods, place acquired a largely positivist mantle before the ‘ideological decades’ of the 1970s and 1980s, and its apologists acquired a quantitative zeal. The ‘cultural turn’ and post-modernism revealed a new emphasis on the human face of ‘place’ and its social construction, in which rather than being buried by globalization it offered a new form of conceptual revival. For both Marxists and neoliberals, place has suggested the interface of global structures and localized pockets of resistance—a regrouping of social expression in a locus of space. Its derivatives have opened up a new lexicon—emplacement, displacement, sense of place—with which to slay the dragon of global, place-less modernity, all flows and essences. One of the routes into place-confirmation, then, is clearly through enlarging the way that the concept of place is employed.

Another, second point of entry is through recognizing the sociological processes which condition us to think about place: its naturalization. This naturalization is important not just in the more conservative, bounded sense of place as ‘mosaic’, the traditional way in which geographers viewed ‘places’, but also in the more relational way place is employed today: place and identity, place and memory, place and belonging. A sense of place clearly exists in memory (and is institutionalized in memorializing), and this sense of place appears and disappears as places are discovered, erased and rediscovered. A number of examples occur in the chapters in this volume, and might lead us to ask questions about what lies behind the erasure and discovery of place. What do these processes tell us about societies and their histories? To develop conceptually, the idea of place needs to be linked to alternative visions of spatial polity in which history is an essential element, rather than a later embellishment.

One possible way of understanding the highly diverse literature on place emerging in the last two decades is to look at the politics of place from an historical and evolutionary perspective. Throughout history, place construction has played practical, socio-cultural, and symbolic roles. At the foundations of place construction are the processes through which individuals and groups develop survival strategies, solve common problems, and make sense of their own existence. Place attachment, sense of place, affection, embeddedness, identification, and other concepts are appropriate for interpreting this fundamental dimension of place. However, as humans became more capable of controlling the environment, the construction of social and cultural meanings grew increasingly independent of physical settings. The social dimension of human experience even surpassed nature's importance in the shaping of place. For instance, the built environment served to substitute for the ecological context in some sacred places. At the same time, the colonization of vast territories by relatively small groups, in the cause of imperial expansion brought about the possibility of transposing meanings and cultural systems from one geographical setting to another, and facilitated cultural hybridization, as happened during the Roman Empire.

With science and modernity, place construction was increasingly perceived in terms of filling "emptiness" with "civilization". The concept of space (as empty place), the production of maps, and the notion of private ownership of land were instrumental in the successful passage of colonialism. Concepts such as location, locale, or region were linked to the modern administration of place, which achieved its ultimate expression with the hegemony of the modern nation-state. In addition, colonization opened the doors for a diverse range of new power relations that would, in turn, lead to the construction of new places (of exclusion, domination, resistance, and so on).

In recent years, economic globalization is bringing the modern homogenization of place one step further by bypassing the constraints of national culture and state administration. Today, economic globalization is colonizing the “empty space” spared by the modern state and constructing new places of consumption dominated by logics of extraction, and economic profit. It is also creating new places of resistance and struggle, as Arturo Escobar (2009) shows in his work in Colombia. However, this homogenization has never completely replaced the historic and alternative constructions of place which are grounded in personal attachment, sense of place, cosmologies, personal intimacy and familiarity. Rather, modern and globalized spaces are being superimposed on top of previous meanings. Furthermore, the process of individuation that started in the Early Modern period and developed under liberal democracies was further deepened with post-modernity. As a consequence, the modern homogenization of place is only apparent and superficial. It is a force constantly counteracted and reversed by people’s impulse to find an existential meaning that the uniformity of mass consumption might never provide. It is in this context that the revival of academic interest in place construction is emerging.

The analysis of place requires the acknowledgement of ambiguities that are central to thinking in contemporary consumption studies. Places are collectively shared and contested. They do not necessarily mean the same thing to everybody. They are not ‘owned’ in the same way by everybody. This observation is also clearly true of the academic disciplines which have utilized place. In the world of academic discourse place is often part of a critique, and exists on an intellectual terrain. However, in the ‘lived’ world of experience place also has phenomenological import—it can be an affirmation of humanity, and in that sense critique alone does it a disservice.

Acknowledging the hybridity of place provides another route into place-confirmation, distancing the concept from its more descriptive history, and opening up the possibility of place as a more heuristic device, a way of understanding society rather than a point from which to view it. It also provides a pointer for the analysis of the way that place is consumed.

Food, even more now than ever, is tied up with the consumption of space and particularly place. One food-scare or media exposé after another—components of what Susanne Freidberg (2004b) calls the ‘ethical complex’ of food—have caused what might be called the ‘transparency revolution’: consumers are asking for and/or food suppliers are providing greater knowledge about where food is coming from and how it is being produced. Here, both the literal and figurative consumption of space and place are counter-posed to the ‘place-less’ and ‘face-less’ commodities of the globalised food system, the latter quite often equated with environmental and human exploitation at numerous scales. Thus, coffee now exclaims it is from Nicaragua (or Columbia or Ethiopia or Indonesia or . . .) and traded ‘fairly’ (Bacon et al, 2008), milk now comes from ‘happy’ organic cows (e.g. DuPuis, 2000), (quality) potato chips are now ‘naked’ (e.g. Illbery and Maye, 2008) or specifically from small-scale, traditional farms and farmers (Goodman, 2009) and vegetables are now often local to wherever it is you are shopping (e.g. Goodman and Goodman, 2007; *Local Environment*, 2008). Food is being sold through stories (Freidberg, 2003) of not just its origins but the ins and outs of how it was made and by whom in order to further fill up the meanings attached to these commodities by ‘placing’ them, most often, in their ecological and social contexts. Thus, not only are the qualities and materialities of *terroir*—a defined, geographic place that produces distinct material characteristic in foods (Barham, 2003)—being

metabolised by consumers, but increasingly so too are the ‘fairer’ economic and labour processes as well as the images of producers and their farms plastered on food labels and (increasingly) web pages. Undeniably, less ecological and human exploitation, the latter troublingly less of a concern in organic production systems than it should be (Guthman, 2004), leaves a better taste in one’s mouth and a glowing imprint on one’s (food) conscience.

This sort of ‘place theory of value’—one that has begun to wrap up the use, exchange, labour and sign value of some of these meaningful foods into one neat ‘spatialised’ package—takes on and extends Cook and Crang’s (1996) earlier cultural materialist work on the role of geographical knowledges in constructing our “worlds on a plate”. Here, they discuss the ‘displacement’ and ‘replacement’ of various ‘culinary cultures’ through the three spatial processes of settings, biographies and origins that haunt foods and, now the many *other* commodities that work to ‘unworry’ their consumers about where it is that they come from.

Two points stand out here. First, (food) commodity biographies and origins are becoming increasingly legislated, standardised and institutionalised through the processes of standardisation, codification and verification. Standards like these set up their own political economies, not surprisingly, by dictating who can be in and who is left out of these networks from the spaces of production to consumption (Guthman, 2007); inequalities of access follow quite closely in the wake of standardisation at the same time it opens up spaces for some to enter into more ‘defined’ markets. In addition here, the ordinary ‘messiness’ of places and spaces are, through standards and codification, reduced and abstracted to logos, labels and texts, a process that also works to ossify the very places and people that end up on various food and other commodity

narratives. Place becomes quantifiable and easily knowable, commodify-able and package-able for the consumer and the marketplace; as Prudham (2007, p. 414) puts it in the context of the commodification of nature more broadly, these processes “render the messy materiality of life legible as discrete entities, individuated and abstracted from the complex social and ecological integuments”. These sorts of renderings have lead in many cases, to the rather ‘easy’ buy-in by large multinational capitals into these markets; and as the continuing mainstreaming and institutionalisations of organic, fair trade and other niche food networks driven heavily by this corporatisation of these sectors is showing, these processes don’t seem to be slowing down.

Second, exploring the settings of culinary cultures—what Cook and Crang (1996, 142) define as “...the contexts in which they can and should be used”—might lead us to not only consider how the places and spaces of (food) consumption work, but that they can be riddled with inequalities in not only the levels of geographical knowledge that consumers may have, but by virtue of the economic access that many do not have to these meaningfully placed foods. Here consumption is not only culturally situated and contextualised in the places that we might find ourselves eating, *but also* economically situated, contextualised and produced. Thus, the consumption of food place and placed food is most often only available for those who can afford it and/or for those who can marshal the necessary knowledges to make it meaningful or value-laden. The consumption of place and space in food networks is as much about economic and cultural power as it is about the desire to eat, drink and be merry in novel and alternative ways.

While situated in the *Introduction* section of the volume, both Trentmann and Clarke’s chapters very much touch on the theme of the consumption of space and place.

Trentmann introduces an historical dimension in to the account of the relationalities of space and place and the ways they are consumed. Here, he not only argues for the need to get beyond the analytics of the consumerist ‘present’ in order to recognise its much deeper and more entangled historical trajectories, but that an historical approach is crucial to understanding how the practices of consumption have been complicit in the re-jigging of public and private spaces over time. To explore these histories, he deploys the three themes of the ‘mental spaces’ of the consumer, the ‘remoralisation’ of trade practices and, by drawing on Lefebvre and de Certeau, the governance of everyday spaces through consumption. Overall, the historicisation of the spatialities of consumption proposed in Trentmann’s chapter provides fertile ground from which to build further analyses of the temporal dialectics of consumption and space.

Clarke’s chapter endeavours to show how the spaces of consumption are much more than, as he puts it, the ‘consummate spaces of capitalism’. In particular, he works to reinvigorate understandings of the commodity fetish and its spatialised pleasure- and desire-making abilities in consumption through the lenses of psychoanalysis. Fantasy and seduction, fostered by the fetish whose form is dedicated to their creation, are the engines that drive the production and consumption of space through the effervescent consumption-scapes we can’t seem to look away from. In a rather justifiably fatalistic turn, instead of the fetish allowing us—through its critical analysis—to perhaps explore the social relations of production and consumption as a way out, we are ‘absorbed and abolished’ in the seductions of symptomatically overdetermined consumerist spaces that haunt us with their commodities.

Of the chapters specifically in *Part II* of the volume, **Redclift** examines the ways in which ‘place’ is constructed culturally as well as geographically through

consumption, taking as his case the Mexican Caribbean. In the chapter, he shows how the meanings attached to 'place' and the way that it and its meanings are consumed have changed over time reflecting shifts in global consumption patterns and connections. Moving from the production-consumption of chicle/chewing gum to the consumption by tourists of a denominated space called 'The Mayan Riviera', this space now brings together both material and symbolic elements of place in the search to attract the global tourist. In a turn very much related to Trentmann's arguments, Redclift concludes that in order to understand how place and space are consumed they must be placed into an historical context sensitive to the spatialised dialectics of production and consumption.

Situating alternative food networks in the context of the global institutional architecture of the World Trade Organisation and the imitative competitive strategies of powerful actors in the conventional food system, **Wilkinson** describes how these networks produce and consume alternative rural spaces in Brazil. Social control of food provisioning and the capacity of alternative production-consumption networks to revitalise rural space are the stakes in these struggles to appropriate the consumerist-oriented symbolic capital vested in place. His analysis distinguishes networks pursuing ethical, universalistic critiques of conventional food provisioning, such as Fair Trade movements, from those adopting an aesthetic, particularistic critique predicated on place-based geographical specificities of inherited craft knowledges incorporated in Brazilian farming, food processing and culinary practices. In particular, Wilkinson recounts the dialectic between markets and social movements as mainstream actors' attempts to replicate the symbolic values embedded in craft knowledges are countered by the efforts of alternative food networks to retain control of the economic rents

generated in rural space by re-asserting the distinctive qualities of locality and geographical specificities.

Consumption in (retail) space and place

Will you survive the fire? The Shopocalypse!

Can you feel the heat in this shopping list?

The neighbors fade into the super mall.

The oceans rise but I—I must buy it all.

Shpocalypse, Shopocalypse...

(First stanza from Reverend Billy's (2006, 57) Church of Stop Shopping's hymn *The Shopocalypse*)

As argued by many (e.g. Castree, 2003; Massey, 2005; Thrift, 2003), space and place are not merely the stage on or containers in which we act out our social and material lives, but rather are actively negotiated, created and changed through all manner of relationships. And, as we and many of the authors in this volume argue, consumption is one of the key relationalities actively constructing and changing spaces and places which in turn recursively effect consumption practices. Yet, the acts of consumption are situated and contextualised in both time and space; they happen *somewhere* and *somewhen*. In Lefebvre's (1991, 341) words '[e]xchange with its circulatory systems and networks may occupy space worldwide, but consumption occurs only in this or that particular place'. Bell and Valentine (1997) work to engage with this analysis specifically by working through food consumption across and through the scales of the body, home, community, city, region, nation, and globe to suggest that consumption connects intimately across all of these spaces and places. Phil Crang (2008) takes a slightly less schematic approach to explore relations—through geographical knowledges and (dis)connections—between the creation, expression and practices of global and local consumption cultures. Mark Paterson (2006, 171; emphasis in original), in his excellent exploration of “consumption and everyday life” engages with culture, consumption and space descriptively, yet even more diffusely:

... culture is ordinary, about everyday life. We continually produce and reproduce our culture through activities, some of which are reflective and some unreflective, and this certainly applies to consumption. ... [I]t's not just *what* we do but *where* we do it, so that the spatial contexts of cultural practices often help structure the activities occurring within them. The design and planning of spaces of consumption actually alter consumer behaviour, both intentionally and unintentionally. ... [T]he *places* in which everyday life occurs are important. This point is crucial. The *spaces* which are given or imposed on us, the shopping malls and supermarkets designed from architectural blueprints, come to be *places* through the uses and activities of the people within them. Just like the use of commodities, the use of a space might significantly alter its intended meaning or purpose, and may change over time. [For example, s]hopping malls are famous for being the hangout for pensioners, walkers, mallrats and housewives at different times of the day, consuming to varying extents and using the given space in manifold ways.

Over time, the 'everyday' spaces and places of retailing, as keyed on by Paterson, have come under increasing scrutiny. This has been from several different perspectives, namely writings that engage with the 'external' economic spaces and places of (mainly) retail capital and its trans-nationalisation through supermarkets, the 'internal' cultural spaces of places like department stores, malls, fast food joints and other chain retailers and, also, more integrative work that looks to cross this external/internal divide through a broadly conceived 'cultural political economy' (e.g. Hudson, 2008; Jessop and Oosterlynck, 2008) applied to retail settings. The story about external retail spaces has mostly been one about consolidation and globalisation, from 'Do it Yourself' stores to supermarkets to 'discount' grocers (e.g. Wrigley and Lowe, 2007) and how they work to embed themselves in the globalised spaces of shopping and consumption (Wrigley et al, 2005). In particular, in the UK, two stores (Tesco and Asda in 2005) accounted for 50 percent of the spending on food (Tallontire and Vorley, 2005), with one in eight pounds in the economy travelling through a Tesco supermarket (Parsley, 2008). Research and writing on the internal spaces of retail has focused on the

‘palaces of consumption’ in the spectacular places of the department store and the mall. Drawing a historical line through from Benjamin’s Arcades Project, urban and suburban landscapes have been given over to the distinctive activities of shopping—what Paterson (2006, 174-185; emphasis in original) suggests now encompasses *looking* rather than *spending*, *desire* rather than *need* and the activities of leisure *and* pleasure specifically coded as *feminine*—through the spread of department store ‘place’ and the ‘mall-ification’ of much of the developed, consumerist world (see also Goss, 1999). Here, malls produce and re-produce paradoxical spaces of both freedom, in the form of (still limited) choice, and control. Crang (2008, 388) expands here, describing the mall this way:

There is the attempt to produce a fabricated space in which the individual consumer can be made to feel like consuming... . There is the emphasis on creating an internal, closed-off, privately owned but partially public environment, divorced from the harsh exterior world, not only climatically but also socially, through the operation of security systems that ensure the absence of anyone who might threaten this consumer paradise or disrupt the pleasure of the shopper. Thus, these privately owned and managed spaces rework the older public spaces of the street or market... .

He continues with a second important and related point, specifically that “...there is much more to going shopping than buying things...”. Indeed,

[s]hopping is in part about experiencing an urban space, seeing and being seen by other shoppers. It is a social activity. But they seek to manage this social experience. The street gets recast as a purified space of leisurely consumption, cleansed of nuisances that inhabit the ‘real’ streets, like ‘street people.

In short, Benjamin’s strolling *flâneur*—in the more contemporary guise of the housewife and the teenaged ‘mall-rat’—are as subtly and not-so-subtly controlled by these designed retail spaces as they are ‘free’ to produce and inhabit them through their own presences, identities and behaviours.

More integrative approaches—through the rise of ‘new retail geographies’ (Wrigley and Lowe, 1996) and ‘commercial cultures’ (Jackson et al, 2000; Miller et al,

1998)—have urged us to take *both* “economic and cultural geography seriously” (Lowe, 2002) in analysing and conceptualising retail and consumption space and place. Part of this project builds on Peter Jackson’s theorisations (e.g. Jackson, 1999, 2002; see also Crang, 1997) of consumption and ‘commodity cultures’ where he attempts to muddy up and engage with the dualisms—production-consumption, culture-economy, material-discursive, local-global—that have tended to haunt research on consumption, shopping and retail. For Wrigley and Lowe (2002, 16-17), who echo both Jackson’s and Phil Crang’s work, analysing ‘new’ retail and consumption geographies, thus, involves the following sort of analytical framing:

Our perspective on retailing and consumption, like Crang’s (1997, 15) on economic geography in the era of the ‘cultural turn’ more widely, rests on the view that ‘these spaces, places and practices are never purely economic, and nor are the surpluses they produce’, but it is ‘the commitment to study these vital economic moments – production (in its broadest sense), circulation and consumption – and their regulation, by whatever means necessary, wherever they take place, and whatever materials are produced, circulated and consumed in them’ that is essential.

One of the best examples of this sort of work is Michael Smith’s (1996) critical engagement with the cultural economy of Starbucks. Here he produces a multi-form ‘reading’ of the spaces of the coffee retail giant that not only engages its connections to the colonial relations that (still) define coffee production and consumption, but how these relations are ‘placed’—through marketing schemes and the ‘Starbucks’ experience’ created by their retail settings—and made to create value for ‘knowing’ consumers and the company alike. Tasting the world through coffee denotes powerful historical, economic and geographical relations: Starbucks “...trades not only in the 300-year-old market for this tropical commodity but in an equally enduring if less tangible symbolic economy of images and representations that are the cultural correlates of Euroamerican domination” (515). Yet, simultaneously,

the symbolic appeal of Starbucks coffee cannot be separated from the manner in which it is served, since service is so central to the Starbucks model. ... There is thus a performative element in Starbucks, an aestheticization of the commodity, as the 'baristas' transform the formerly mundane acts of serving coffee into the theatrics of consumption. (506)

Here, the cool logics of post-colonial capitalism and cultural marketing are wedded to the middle-class, urbanite themes of 'coolness' and the European coffee 'encounter' through the sale of an over-priced and over-meaningful 'ordinary' cup of coffee. Indeed, much like the mall—and now the spaces of the home through TV shopping networks and Internet shopping—the spectacle-ised shopping experience for more ordinary, 'everyday' commodities, what Paterson (2006) calls 'McDisneyfication', seems to be the order of the day in Starbucks and many other retail settings.

Yet, lest one think that the increasing power of retail capital has gone quietly into the night, a host of different forms of resistances and different forms of alternatives have arisen in light of the overwhelming shadows of corporate retailer control over local and global lives and spaces. A multiplicity of strategies—what Littler (2005) calls 'beyond the boycott'—are in use here, many of which have drawn political inspiration from social critics such as Naomi Klein and her vastly influential *No Logo* (2000) and with Eric Schlosser and *Fast Food Nation* (2001). For example, web-driven activist campaigns—two of the most popular being tescopoly.com and wakeupwalmart.com—have sought to successfully empower local movements interested in reclaiming and defending their community spaces from the retail giants of Tesco in the UK and Wal-Mart in the US. Other engagements include consumer pressure campaigns designed to get more environmentally and socially responsibly goods into stores; here, groups or individual consumers become 'guerrilla' shoppers who ask store staff for these more responsible goods and/or write letters to the retailers requesting these good be stocked.

This strategy, along with the threat of wide-scale picketing, caused Starbucks and several other supermarkets to begin sourcing fair trade coffees in the US (Goodman, 2004). A more direct and performative strategy (beyond getting and choosing alternative goods) includes the work of the Reverend Billy of the Church of Stop Shopping (see Reverend Billy, 2006). He and his flock perform street, shop, department store and mall ‘...activist-theatre events including anti-consumerist conversions, blessings on sidewalks and choreographed mobile phone actions’ (Littler 2009, 80). As the good Reverend (2006, 3; see also www.revbilly.com) puts it,

Do I have a witness? As the Smart Monks from here at the Slow Down Your Consumption School of Divinity have said “Stop! Stop shopping, Stop!” Now children, we are all Shopping Sinners, each of us is walking around in a swirl of gas and oil, plastics and foil. We should all hit our knees and weep and confess together. We are not evil people, but somehow we have allowed the Lords of Consumption to organize us into these mobs that buy and dispose, cry and reload. Yes, the Rapture of the Final Consumption, The Shopture, is underway.

Littler (2009, 81-82) conceptualises their performances this way:

Reverend Billy and his Church epitomize anti-consumerism in one of its most entertainingly camp forms. They exemplify the politics of ‘boycott culture’ mixed prominently with a flamboyant advocacy of consumer abstinence. ... [I]t works at a ‘level’ of promotional tool to generate consideration of the effects of what consumers buy on them/ourselves, on the people who produce them goods and the environment; on the ties and alliances in question. Beyond this, its recommendations are either undefined as ‘open’, depending on your point of view, although a variety of potential actions are pointed towards: lessened consumption, alternative forms of consumption (second-hand swap shops), and unionized activity.

The performance of Billy and the choir chanting refrains about the ‘Shopocalypse’ work to rough up the spaces of retail and act as an ‘interventionary’ force for good by getting consumers to engage with and think about their ‘devotion’ to shopping and retail spaces and places in a much more critical fashion.

A final but related strategy discussed here includes the development of growing 'alternative' retail-scapes through out much of the consuming global North. From second-hand clothing and goods shops (Gregson and Crewe, 2003), to fair trade worldshops (Goodman and Bryant, 2009) to more mainstream alternatives such as the Body Shop (Littler, 2009; Kaplan, 1995) or Whole Foods (Johnston, 2008), these shops offer not only different consuming experiences but also commodities of 'difference' in used goods and/or environmentally and socially friendly items on offer. The growing importance of 'alternative food networks' (Goodman and Goodman, 2010) or AFNs has particularly spurred the development of alternative forms and spaces of retailing in the EU, UK and US; these include the growth of such places as farm shops, farmers' markets, regional food networks, food box schemes and local, small-scale retailers supplying 'local' foods. Much has been written about these emerging spaces and places in terms of their possibilities but also paradoxes, contradictions and problematics that inhabit these networks (Kneafsey et al, 2008; Maye et al, 2007; Guthman, 2003, 2004, 2008). Farmers' markets, in particular, as a sort of novel and/or revitalised alternative food production/consumption space have received much sustained popular and academic attention (Hinrichs, 2000; Holloway and Kneafsey, 2000; Kirwan, 2006; Slocum, 2007). Less (critical) attention, however, has focused on how supermarkets have so easily and thoroughly bought into AFNs, especially in the UK, by becoming some of the largest suppliers of organic, fair trade, free range and 'natural' foods. Thus, as they have moved into the mainstream spaces of the supermarket, AFNs have quickly become just another accumulation strategy, virtually devoid of their 'oppositional' or 'resistance-oriented' politics (Allen et al, 2003). One of the key analytical projects emerging from these observations, then, is how, in the spaces and places of

consumption, the relationalities of the alternative and ‘conventional’ work to construct each other but also the very spaces and consumption practices they inhabit and make.

Utilising a political economic lens to explore consumption in space and place, **Hughes, Wrigley** and **Buttle** examine how corporate retail buying practices undermine international codes of conduct on labour standards and the efforts of ethical trade movements and advocacy organisations to persuade UK-based retailers to view these practices as an integral part of their responsible sourcing policies. Drawing on Gary Gereffi’s distinction between producer-driven and buyer-driven global commodity chains, Hughes et al explore the buying power exploited by large transnational commercial capitals in UK food and clothing markets, which increasingly operate in the production and consumption spaces of the Global South in sourcing commodities and/or expanding their retail activities. Their analysis of corporate governance in buyer-driven UK supermarket and retail clothing chains and the ‘brokering role’ played by NGOs and ethical consultancy groups in the construction of more ethically-based purchasing practices reveals the fundamental spatiality of these interdependent yet asymmetrical consumer-producer relations. Here, even in the morally-inflected retail space economy, we only get what retail capitals are willing to pay for.

Moving in related directions, **McNeill** and **McNamara** analyse the contribution of aesthetic design to cultural production-consumption and surplus-value generation in the urban space economy of New York City in the 1980s. The document how and why hotel developers launched the new phenomenon of heavily differentiated ‘boutique’ hotels, a set of strategies which subsequently spread to global fashion centres in Europe. Avant-garde design of the lobby space as a dramatic, theatricalised ‘scene’ or public space, and the consequent blurring of public and private worlds, was at the heart of this

cultural innovation designed to encourage consumption in the particularised produced spaces of the urban hotel. In the ‘post-Fordist’ era of flexible production and market segmentation, innovative hotel developers used lobby design aesthetics to create new nodes of cultural consumption as a strategy of product differentiation targeting specific demographic niches. Competitive imitation of the boutique format by major hotel groups later resulted in its corporatisation and standardisation. There are conceptual and empirical parallels here with the quality ‘turn’ in food consumption, the growth of alternative networks and supply chains and the corporatised appropriationist response by mainstream retailers as detailed in the chapters by Hughes et al and Goodman.

Consumption as connection/disconnection/reconnection

Laws are like sausages, it is better not to see them being made.
(Otto von Bismark)

Bismark and his famous declaration about our desire to have the making of sausage hidden could hardly be more wrong today; we not only like to know the places and people our commodities come from, but the trials and tribulations they underwent in their travel to get to us and our store shelves. In some ways, this is the recognition—and one used for political effect by activists, journalists and scholars alike—that the act of consumption is an act of *connection* both literally and figuratively. The purchase of the latest fashion connects one not only to the labour and material processes of the production, processing (e.g. dyeing), and manufacturing (e.g. sewing), often under some pretty poor conditions no matter where one is (Crewe, 2004; Ross, 2004), but also to the significance surrounding those clothes as the ‘latest’, ‘trendy’, and perhaps, ‘cutting edge’. And, given what someone has called our ‘obsessive branding disorder’ (Conley, 2008; see also Arvidsson, 2006), if those clothes or goods are branded in a particular way, as, say, Nike or Louis Vitton (Thomas, 2007), the meanings of these fetishised

brands and our desired connections to them holds sway over pretty much everything else. Thus, even with this acknowledgement of consumption as fundamentally a form of connection, in practice according to Marx, the conditions and relations of production remain hidden behind commodity and brand fetishes when produced and consumed under the aegis of capitalism. Indeed, for many, this is the root of the current social and ecological crisis: we are unable to see, in short, we are ‘disconnected’, from the ‘true’ consequences of our consumption choices and patterns. Recovery often comes in the form, or at least tropes, of ‘reconnection’: consumers are able to ‘see’ and ‘know’ the impacts and results of their consumption, thus, armed with this information, they will make more progressive and ‘better’ choices (e.g. Hartwick, 1998, 2000). In reconnected goods and their novel, more ‘transparent’ economies, space and place (once again) become known and knowable to the consumer.

Yet, supplying what Cook and Crang (1996) call commodity ‘biographies’ is not equal nor, very often, to the same effects across the spaces of contemporary commodity cultures. This is particularly true for the labelling of goods, one of the most wide-spread forms of reconnection, which have quickly taken on different forms and different levels of ‘depth’. At one level, there is Starbucks selling ‘single-origin’ coffees, i.e. ‘Kenyan’ or ‘Costa Rican’, or a leather coat announcing on its label that it is ‘Italian-made’. Further, a more officially regulated instance of these biographies includes the development of ‘Protected Designations of Origin’ (PDOs) and the similar *Appellation d’origine contrôlée* (AOC), each designed to delineate regional goods by geographical location and ‘protect’ the names under which they can market themselves. Very much related to the consumption of place and *terroir* discussed above, origins here become an important part of the biographies and cultural cache of these goods. At another and perhaps

‘deeper’ level of (re)connection, are those labelled commodities more fully concerned with reporting on but also improving the social and ecological conditions under which particular things are produced and moved around. Here, these goods are often sold with a guarantee about their stories and the meanings they hold: most of these commodity biographies are standardised and audited by external bodies in order to boil down these stories into meaningful, transportable and protected logos relatively easily recognized by consumers. Yet, the ‘lines’ of (re)connection are quite diverse and change with the commodity under question; for example, fair trade is about consumers connecting to producers’ livelihoods (Goodman, 2004; cf. Lyon, 2006, Varul, 2008), Slow Food is about connecting to ‘tradition’ (Miele and Murdoch, 2002) and organic goods are about connecting to the environment (Seyfang, 2006).² Labelled goods such as these, particularly in the case of something like fair trade with the predominant images and stories of producers on and/or surrounding them, are about developing a more moral economy that can overcome spatial, social and economic distances (Barnett et al, 2005) and peel away the ‘dazzling’ fetishes that haunt commodities. Consumption becomes, then, a form of space/time compression for the progressive forces of good.

Many of these issues have been aired and rehearsed in debates devoted to exploring how to describe and conceptualise the ways by which consumption, production and commodities are related and connected. Part of the task has been developing methods to engage with what Lefebvre (1991, 341; emphasis in original) points to in his thinking about commodities:

² Other (re)connecting goods might include sustainable wood (Klooster, 2006), fair trade gold (Hilson, 2008), non-conflict gems (LeBillion, 2006), non-sweatshop clothing (Hale, 2000) ethical flowers (Hughes, 2001; Hale and Opondo, 2005; Wright and Madrid, 2007) and ethical ‘veg’ (Freidberg, 2003).

Chains of commodities (networks of exchange) are constituted and articulated on a world scale: transportation networks, buying- and selling-networks (the circulation of money, transfers of capital). Linking commodities together in virtually infinite numbers, the commodity world brings in its wake certain attitudes towards space, certain actions upon space, even a certain concept of space. Indeed, all the commodity chains, circulatory systems and networks, connected on high by Gold, the god of exchange, do have a distinct homogeneity. Exchangeability ... implies interchangeability. Yet each location, each link a chain of commodities, is occupied by a *thing* whose particular traits become more marked once they become fixed, and the longer they remain fixed, at that site; a thing, moreover, composed of matter liable to spoil or soil, a thing having weight and depending upon the very forces that threaten it, a thing which can if its owner (the merchant) does not protect it. The space of the commodity may thus be defined as homogeneity made up of specificities.

Thus, from commodity systems (Freidland, 2001), to value chains (Ponte and Gibbon, 2005; Gereffi, 2001) and Global Production Networks (Coe et al, 2008) to more specifically culturally-inflected commodity networks (Hughes, 2000), chains (Hughes and Reimer, 2004), circuits (Cook et al, 2000) and cultures (Jackson, 1999), to engagements with cultural materialist conventions (e.g. Murdoch and Miele, 2004) and commodity qualities (e.g. Atkins, forthcoming; Mansfield, 2003), much ink has been spilt over the need to explicitly include the impacts of the cultural politics of consumption on the materialities of the world.³ On the whole though, this ‘geographical detective work’ (Cook et al, 2007) has worked its own ‘politics of (re)connection’ by tracing and ‘following the things’ (Cook et al, 2004) that construct and produce contemporary political and material economies.

One growing and important form of (re)connection—albeit not always but becoming more predominantly labelled, especially with food (Allen and Hinrichs, 2007;

³ For a more thorough discussion of these different approaches—and indeed a full-throated critique of more culturalist approaches to production/consumption networks—see Bernstein and Campling (2006a, b).

DuPuis et al, 2006)—includes those movements towards the ‘relocalisation’ of economic and social relationships. Standing as a critique of the depersonalising and abstracting forces of the globalised economy, examples include the ‘alternative economic spaces’ (Leyshon et al, 2003) of local and regional currencies (i.e. LETS programmes) (Lee et al, 2004; Williams et al, 2003), community-based, ‘diverse’ economies (Gibson-Graham, 2006, 2008) and the so-called ‘locavore’ movement designed to ‘re-place’ food through farmers’ markets, food boxes and cooperatives, regional food networks and the ‘100 mile diet’ (Smith and Mackinnon, 2007; Feagan, 2007; see also Morgan et al, 2006). In general, relocalisation is about a spatialised restrictiveness designed to (re)embed economies in sets of social relations that might develop an ‘ethics of care’ of the community (Kneafsey et al, 2008), respond better to local concerns and tastes as well as build up local and regional production/consumption capacities, all with a defensive eye against the parasitical nature of global markets (see Castree, 2004; Escobar, 2001).

Yet, scepticism abounds, especially in the context of the politics, processes and problematics of consumption as a form of and pathway to (re)embedded (re)connection; ambiguities and contradictions are rife here and they are worth the brief exploration of at least of a few points. First, amongst her other critiques (Guthman, 2002, 2003) Julie Guthman (2007) takes consumer-oriented labels to task for simply being about a neo-liberal value creation ‘trick’ through produced preciousness in the development of novel niche markets. Here, the labelling of sustainability is about the commodification of the ‘right’ kinds of space in nature and labour practices; sustainable development is simplified into simply another product we can buy off the shelves on our weekly shopping trip. In other words, labels, and indeed ethical consumption more broadly

(Clarke et al, 2007), work to entrench the old adage of ‘voting’ with one’s money whereby citizenship and consumerism are closely aligned (Trentmann, 2007) in what should be thought of as in some problematically classed ways. Second, in these networks of (re)connection, particular forms and types of privilege are cultivated and entrenched; namely, consumption is often constructed as *the* form of action required to foster wide-spread changes, with the provisioning of consumer and commodity knowledges *the* pathway to these progressive changes and ‘knowledgeable’, ‘responsible’ and ‘ethical’ consumers as *the* agents of these politicised actions (cf. Clarke et al, 2007). Here, commodity knowledges are very often particularly situated and contextualised; for example as scholars are beginning to point out (e.g. Guthman, 2008a, b; cf. Slocum, 2006), so-called ‘alternative’ foods and their consumption are culturally and materially coded as ‘white, middle-class’ and so have not penetrated as much into lower-income, African-American neighbourhoods in California as many activists would like. For Guthman (2008, 443),

... it may well be that the focus of activism should shift away from the particular qualities of food and towards the injustices that underlie disparities in food access. ... My deeper concern is how whiteness perhaps crowds out the imaginings of other sorts of political projects that could indeed be more explicitly anti-racist.

Furthermore, knowledges on labels, in contrast to some of the arguments suggesting they ‘defetishise’ the commodities in question (Hudson and Hudson, 2003), work to reinscribe fetishes through the very ‘transparent’ knowledges provided on them. Thus, as some have argued, the re-working of these fetishes in goods such as fair trade advertisements and labels in the form of indigenous people and women, entrenches the old colonial relationships that fair trade was set up to subvert economically (Vural, 2008; Lyon, 2006). While far from settling these debates, what this suggests is a need to

engage with the complexities of commodity fetishism and transparency—what Cook and Crang (1996) euphemistically term “getting with the fetish”—especially given the success of ‘alternative’ foods like fair trade and its ability to ‘seize the fetish’, grow markets and promote development for these same indigenous farmers and women (but see Goodman, 2009).

Third, as Crang (2008, 392) states

...the levels of knowledge required to understand the incredibly complex biographies of production are more amenable to academic study than they are to someone who has something else to do. Even the most committed ethical consumers therefore rely on shorthand rationales, judgements and knowledges ...

What this points to is the suggestion that knowledge created and facilitated through commodities, while perhaps potentially overwhelming, is just one reason or motivating factor for more ethical consumption practices. Barnett and Land (2007), while on the one hand recognizing the importance of information and knowledge as motivational forces for shifting consumption patterns, say, suggest that there is much more going on. Conceptualised for them through new ‘geographies of generosity’ they state that

... precisely because the demonstration of a person’s implication in labour exploitation in far away places or in environmental degradation only works by establishing the dependence of these consequences on myriad mediating actions, then strictly speaking the motivating force of the demonstration is fairly indeterminate. It might persuade a person that their actions contribute, in small ways, to the reproduction of those harms. It is just as likely for someone to conclude that their contribution is so highly mediated that not only are they not able to do much about it, but that this does not really count as being responsible in any reasonable sense at all. (1068)

Rather, “...at the very least, the reasons one might have for acting differently in light of causal knowledge are not likely to be reasons of knowledge alone. ... The fixation on chains of causality hides from view the degree to which responsible, caring action is

motivated not in monological reflection on one's own obligations, but by encounters with others" (1069). Thus, for them,

...focussing on a modality of action such as generosity suggests, instead, a different programme, less exhortatory, more exploratory: one which looks at how opportunities to address normative demands in multiple registers are organised and transformed; at the ways in which dispositions to respond and to be receptive to others are worked up; and how opportunities for acting responsively on these dispositions are organised.

Some of what this points to is that even with these forms of consumer and commodity knowledges, progressive acts may either not follow nor be possible for a complex set of reasons.

Finally, relocalisation movements have come under increasing scrutiny. Arguing against an overt 'geographical fetishism' (Castree, 2004), DuPuis and Goodman (2005) suggest that the 'local' can take on the potentially ugly moves of an uncritical and divisive reactionary politics of spatial and social exclusivity. Similarly, as Hinrichs (2000) has pointed out, in local food movements and practices, there is often a conflation of social relations with spatial relations: for example, consuming local goods might allow us to be 'closer' and 'better' in terms of the spatial distances they have had to travel but just as humanly, ecologically and socially exploitative as any other commodity. DuPuis and Goodman argue for a 'bringing back in' of the politics and processes of what gets constructed as 'local' through what they call a 'reflexive politics of localism'. Here, they caution

... against the reification of the local found in normative and market-oriented perspectives and their naturalization as a bulwark against anomic global capitalism. ... An inclusive and reflexive politics in place would understand local food systems not as local "resistance" against a global capitalist "logic" but as a mutually constitutive, imperfect, political process in which the local and the global make each other on an everyday basis. In this more "realist" open-ended story, actors are allowed to be reflexive about both their own norms and about the structural economic logics of production.

This need for the practice of reflexivity in the very politics of consumption—and not just in the politics of localism—is crucial and, indeed worthy of much greater reflection and research; this is especially true as we continue to hang many of our hopes for a better world on the likes of the ‘conscious’ ethical consumer.

In this part of the volume, **Jackson, Ward** and **Russell** are concerned with the formation and connectivities of food knowledges about the broiler chicken industry and how the different understandings found in the spaces of intensive commodity production, retail commerce and domestic consumption are negotiated and accommodated on the chicken’s journey to the kitchen table. As they detail in the chapter, part of this negotiation involves retailer knowledge of consumers to overcome their anxieties and create ‘trust’ and consumer understandings of food quality as provenance and animal welfare. Jackson et al use life histories to trace how food knowledges have evolved with the agro-industrial and retail transformation of these spaces since WW II in order to analyse the interplay of the material culture of the ‘manufactured meanings’ of chicken designed to foster (re)connections between the spaces and places of production-consumption.

Building on Jackson et al’s chapter, the contested control of the knowledge economy of ‘quality’—who defines how food is grown and how it is known—and how it is ‘placed’ to (re)connect consumers to their food is a central theme of **Goodman’s** analysis of food production-consumption networks and their shifting retail geographies of in the UK. Struggles over cultural understandings of quality hold the key to the constructions of value as UK supermarkets have been quick to realise as they build ‘own label’ lines of organic, local and fair trade products that can be argued to substitute convenience for social (re)connection. Such mainstreaming strategies erode the

legitimacy and alterity of these knowledge claims and inhibit the growth of alternative spaces of consumption.

Consumption as Production and Production as Consumption

So, while economists have often taught us that consumption is simply the opposite of production and that demand should be coupled with supply, 'consumption' actually retains far richer set of meanings.
(Clarke et al, 2003, 1)

A final way to engage with the relationalities of space, place and consumption involves what might be considered the rather essentialised conceptualisation of consumption *as also* production and production *as also* consumption. In short, in the 'moments' of *both* production and consumption are their so-called opposites—a position Clarke et al (2003) urges us to consider, one we wish to highlight here and one that is highlighted in many of the chapters, albeit perhaps not specifically in this manner. For example, in the simplest of terms, consumption might be seen as the production of everything from pollution and garbage (e.g. Rogers, 2005; Royte, 2006) in the contemporary 'throw away' society, to the production of one's identity—and indeed the very (re)production of one's own existence—to the production of profits and particular forms of politics (Ekstrom and Brembeck, 2004; Princen et al, 2002). Furthermore, in the context of the theme of the volume, consumption can be said to *produce* space and place, while production can be said to equally *consume* space and place. Clearly, we need to be careful in terms of how far we might take these arguments theoretically (i.e. Smith, 1998), metaphorically and in the 'real' spaces of the everyday. Yet, at a minimum, conceptualising production and consumption in this way allows us to open up these two processes and practices to fruitfully explore their dialectical and situated complexities, relationalities and spatialities. We do so here through three very brief explorations, focusing primarily on consumption as the production of identities and politics but also how the dialectics of consumption/production are materially related.

Taking this last, and seemingly somewhat obvious, point first, consumption is about the material production of space and place; anyone redecorating their house will recognize this fact rather quickly. The consumption of calories is about the literal (re)production of one's body 'space', a point argued earlier in this introduction. But more broadly and at a much wider scale, the consumption of goods—at least in the majority of the post-industrial North—is almost invariably the production of material wastes in form of pollution and garbage. Indeed, it seems as if the contemporary over-determined, over-consumerist moment we live in⁴, much of it facilitated by media and an energetic marketing industry, is about the production of spectacularly 'negative', 'blighted' and/or 'toxic' spaces and place through, for example, deforestation, industrial farming and the filling of landfills. Yet, simultaneously, production is very much about the consumption of the materialities of space and place. Here then, in a general sense, is the dialectic at work through 'creative destruction': the production of hardwood furniture, strawberries and/or a mobile phone—all destined for consumption at some point in their travel—is at one and the same time the consumption and fundamental transformation of forests, soil nutrients and metals and minerals. Others, such as Redclift (1997) and Bakker and Bridge (2006; see also Bridge, 2009) refer to the dialectics being described here as the 'metabolisation' of nature: the consumption of the material aspects of the environment in order to fuel the 'engines' of a productive and value-generating consumerist capitalism.⁵ And, although the authors would perhaps not

⁴ It remains to be seen how the economic downturn will fundamentally alter consumption levels and behaviours throughout the global economy. One take on how this might affect more sustainable consumption is provided by Hinton and Goodman (2010).

⁵ Clearly, political ecologist (e.g. Michael Watts) and eco-Marxists (e.g. Noel Castree) have been important contributors to these discussions.

necessarily agree with the specific conceptualisations we have suggested here, further excellent work has specifically built on these discussions by exploring the ‘nature of neo-liberal natures’ (McCarthy and Prudham, 2004) and the role and socio-economic stakes of privatisation in facilitating this metabolisation (*Antipode*, 2007).

Altering the dialectics of consumption/production sits at the current centre of many activist movements, especially those concerned with fostering more sustainable consumption. More than just the instances of (re)connection of consumption and production as mentioned above, the seeming goal is to alter the social and ecological relations of production *through* consumption. In important ways, then, sustainable, green and ethical consumption are about the intention of fostering an alternative and more progressive production of material space and place. Carbon offsetting, one of the pillars of the new carbon economy, is the perfect example of these intentions (see Bumpus and Liverman, 2008). Individual consumers can purchase (i.e. consume) carbon offsets in order to facilitate the ‘soaking up’ of their personal CO₂ emissions of, for instance, one’s holiday air travel. These carbon offset purchases are more often than not now linked to development projects in parts of the Third World through environmental interventions such as the planting of trees that work to take the emitted CO₂ out of the atmosphere. And while many have been quick to rightly point out the complications and problematics of these sorts of offsetting schemes (Liverman, 2009; Prudham, 2009), not least in the further and deeper commodification of nature in the form of ecological processes, consumption of the ‘negative’ commodity of the offset produces a particular sort of (arboreal) nature in the places and spaces that the money in these offsetting networks touches down.

Fiddling with the consumption/production dialectic is also a part of those campaigns interested in less- or non-consumption and/or what some have called ‘anti-consumption’ (*Cultural Studies*, 2008; see also Hinton and Goodman, 2010). In short, while anti-consumption can be seen as the production of a form of politics, the point here is to materially consume less or nothing and so about materially *producing* less or *nothing* in terms of waste or consumer-oriented goods in the first instance. Non-consumption, then, in spirit if anything else, has the intention of the production of non-consumerist spaces and places, but also the spaces and places of non-production and thus, non-exploitation; in many of these campaigns, there is a rather deep questioning of the relationships of needs and desires and the desire to question the very tenants of consumerism and consumerist capitalism.

Of a second brief concern here is the ways and means that consumption works to produce identities, the process of which Elliot (2004) calls ‘making up people’. As Mansvelt (2005, 80) puts it ‘[c]onsumption is a medium through which people can create and signify their identities’, with, ‘[t]he possibilities of casting off an old identity and adopting a new one [affording] yet another opportunity for consumption (Clarke et al, 2003, 16). Drilling down a bit more deeply, Mansvelt works to question whether we consume *to become who we are* or do we consume according *to who we already are*. In both schemes, she says,

...it is easy to posit the subject as an object of consumption, as one who (must) purchase identities to establish a coherent sense of self, or as consumers whose (classed) habitus is the source of all consumption. (83-84)

In some ways, drawing on Bourdieu, this is what Lury (1996; cited in Paterson, 2006, 39) refers to as ‘positional consumption’ designed to signify class, taste and/or the particular sub-culture or ‘neo-tribe’ (Bennett, 2003) one belongs to. Brands, branding

processes and, indeed, the much wider marketing ‘scape’ is also incredibly important to consider here; Paterson (2006) refers to brands and logos as the ‘poetics’ of consumer capitalism but he also explores how they allow the production of politics through the rejection and critique of specifically branded goods such as Nike and Starbucks. The deployment of both poetics and politics have reached new heights in the development of the markets for sustainable and ethical goods; here Barnett et al (2005) talk about the (re)branding of the self as an ethical consumer through the performances of purchasing and displaying one’s consumption and commitment to fair trade coffee and the use of ‘green’ consumerism guides (Clarke et al, 2007).

Yet, as Mansvelt (2005, 84) continues:

Both perspectives offer partial understandings of how consuming subjects may be constituted. Identities may be as much about belonging and sociality, practical knowledges and provisioning, as they are about representations, distinction and individuality. ... An emphasis on purchase of commodities for identity purposes (implicit in postmodern narratives) renders invisible the diverse ways in which subjectivities are affirmed and contested through consumption practices, rituals and discourses (Jackson and Thirft, 1995). Identities are also attached to bodies, making a consideration of bodies important to understanding relationships between consumption and processes of subject formation.

Consumption—while important at this contemporary moment—is thus just one of the ways that embodied identities can be produced and rendered fluid in space and time.

The final point to be made here, and one that works across much of the material discussed above, involves a consideration of how consumption can work to produce different forms of politics and politicised spaces and places. Drawing specifically on work by Michele Micheletti (e.g. Micheletti, 2003; Micheletti and Stolle, 2008) and more diffusely on that by others (e.g. Goodman and DuPuis, 2002; Sassatelli, 2006), Clarke et al (2007; see also Clarke, 2008 and Barnett et al, forthcoming) attempt to

move beyond the ‘consumer choice as politics’ discussion to engage with consumer-driven politics more deeply. For them, ‘doing politics in an ethical register’ involves a kind of ‘collectivisation’ of the economic and political forces of ‘ethical consumption singularities’:

... consumer purchases are ... worked into a form of politics by supporting the lobbying and media work of the NGOs and charity organizations economically connected to the markets for ethically-consumed goods. The politico-ethical subjectivities of consumers are materialized and actualized in acts of consumer choice which are then materialized in the wider political activities of organizations.
(Goodman, forthcoming)

And, while this work has, at one level, suffered from a general lack of empirical engagement, geographical specificity and over-theorisation, at another it has been useful in making the important claim that

... we have failed to recognise the political character of such consumption – the way in which such consumption is *organised and mobilised by social movement and other organisations*, and the way it acts as a *medium through which commitments are registered, policy-makers lobbied, and claims made on legislators*. (Clarke, 2008, 1877; emphasis in original)

Another important contribution in this area has been a reassessment of the civic dynamics of consumption and so ‘broadening the political’ (Trentmann, 2007) in Kate Soper’s (2004, 115) development of the notion of ‘alternative hedonism’ to describe the disaffection with consumerism and which provides “one distinctive rationale for the shift to ethical and green consumption”. The premise of alternative hedonism is that consumers are increasingly disenchanted with the contradictions embedded in the consumerist imaginary as they come to realise that the production of their consumption—pollution, congestion, stress, overwork, health risks, global warming, for example—is compromising their quality of life and pre-empting other possible pleasures and satisfactions (Soper and Thomas, 2006; Soper, 2007, 2008).

Soper (2004, 116) is not so much concerned with disenchanted individuals who adopt greener and more ethical lifestyles for altruistic reasons but rather with those who are motivated by “the more self-regarding forms of disenchantment” and how these can reinforce

the project of sustainable development ... hence ... the relevance of fostering the dialectic of ‘alternative hedonism’: of making explicit the desires implicit in current expressions of consumer anxiety, and of highlighting the alternative structure of pleasures and satisfactions towards which they gesture.

In drawing attention to a kind of ‘inverted affluence’, this work again reveals the complex subjectivities and performativities which inhabit consumption/production dialectics.

One of the important things that has received very little play in these discussions of consumption politics is the seeming double move now being ascribed to consumption and consumers. In short, consumption itself renders its own dialectic: on the one hand it is the cause of environmental and social problems that are, on the other hand, solvable through *more* consumption, albeit of the green and more sustainable kinds. This gets at Clarke et al’s (2003, 1) statement of the ambivalences contained within consumption and, perhaps even within consumers themselves. For them,

...one of the most interesting – and infuriating – things about consumer society is its ambivalence in almost every respect: socially, culturally, aesthetically, politically, economically and morally.

Ascribing further power and abilities to consumers—in their sustainable and ethical guises—and endowing them *specifically* with the ‘politics of the possible’ is a topic worthy of much further exploration.

As one of the chapters in this last section of the volume, **Gwynne** shows how taste, in the production and consumption of ‘palate geographies’, is not dead and indeed has become an accumulation strategy for UK retail capitals in the ‘location’, marketing

and sale of Chilean vintages in the international commodity spaces of ‘New World’ wines. In this account of the production of a novel global value chain, the concept of palate geographies captures the key importance of geographical specificity, including British consumers’ wine knowledges and the material skills and symbolic resources of Chilean wine producers in cultivating ‘global’ grape varieties and creating intellectual property in local place identity as *terroir*. These place specificities are exploited as a source of surplus value by oligopsonistic supermarkets in their role as the gatekeepers and producers of British palates and purses and as mediators of the knowledge flows that are so influential in the creation of these distinctive consumer cultures.

Bryant’s incisive dissection of the export industry of Burmese teak speaks strongly to the common issue of expanding Western consumption and the making of globalised production networks, here characterised by the destruction of nature, extractive livelihoods and their cultural materialist foundations. The spatial supply relations between the luxury consumption of teak and violence in its worlds of production is the constant in this moral geography, whose contingency arises principally as the post-colonial state and elites succeed their imperial counterparts and the military as the consumption of this versatile hardwood gives way to corporate and personal consumption. Bryant unmasks the ‘violent environments’—or, indeed, the ‘taste’ for violence and dispossession—produced by the commodification of nature in teak extraction and its contemporary militarization, a narrative of ‘creative destruction’ *par excellence* that has gained little political traction in the spaces of luxury consumption.

Shifting gears slightly for the final chapter in the book, **Laing, Newholm** and **Hogg** explore the ways in which the internet is producing a sort of ‘paradoxically’ empowered consumer with regard to the production and consumption of professional

services. As they show through a series of focus group interviews based on legal, financial and healthcare service sectors, they explore how the so-called 'information revolution' of online knowledge provision has opened up what they call the 'spaces of opportunity' as well as the 'spaces of threat' and anxiety. In short, information gleaned from the internet has destabilised professional discourses as it can equally lead to more well-informed clients, but can also be 'dangerously misleading to the ill advised' complicating service providers' efforts. Here, they conclude that 'virtual' knowledge production and consumption produces the internet as a 'changing space' which has real world effects that, while potentially positive, are inherently complicated and complex, not the least in terms of how they work to entrench individuals as self-governing subjects.

To conclude this brief discussion of our particular take on the relationalities of consumption, space and place, we turn to Julie Mansvelt's (2005, 164) deft prose as a way to encapsulate the arguments and explorations put forth here:

When consumption is conceived as a geography of embodiment, embeddedness, performance and travel, it does not restrict consumption to particular consumption sites and spaces, to the end of a commodity chain, to a circuit of culture, to practices of self-identification, to the symbolic and material appropriation of commodities in everyday life, or to following the biographies, histories and geographies of commodities. Rather knowledges about consumption can be seen as performative of these things, circulating and being invested with power in situated contexts and providing different insights on the world. Under such a schema, consumption does not come to mean everything and nothing, but takes its form and is actualized in the conditions of its reproduction. It is crucial to explore the (moral) spaces of visualization and embodiment and translation that result from the seeing, doing and becoming of consumption as situated social practice, and as part of the practice of geography. Doing so may assist in understanding and addressing the undesirable and uneven consequences of the power geometries that result.

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