

**Kowalczyk, A. and Derek, M. (eds.): *Gastronomy and Urban Space. Changes and Challenges in Geographical Perspective*. Cham, Springer, 2020. 345 p.**

When I started reading the volume in early February 2020, I was sitting in a café on campus, packed with students chatting over double shot tamarind lattes, a Viennese melange or sipping a pumpkin spice ice coffee from a trendy repurposed jar. A mundane scene symbolized the zealous enthusiasm towards gastronomy in the last decades worldwide. Besides *what* to eat, customers have become more conscious about *where* to consume. The generation called Millennials, many of them university students these days, is especially engaged in experimenting with food and drink as well as documenting and thus trending catering places on social media (Howe, N. 2017). Consequently, the book, edited by Andrzej KOWALCZYK and Marta DEREK, might be appealing to its target audience: university students and non-academics who are interested in the “spatial aspects of eating facilities” (p. XVIII).

Since gastronomy is studied by various disciplines and the term itself is used in everyday conversations, the Preface provides definition of gastronomy and urban space as these are understood in the volume. It clarifies that the aim of the book is to present problems related to the geographical location of restaurants, bars,

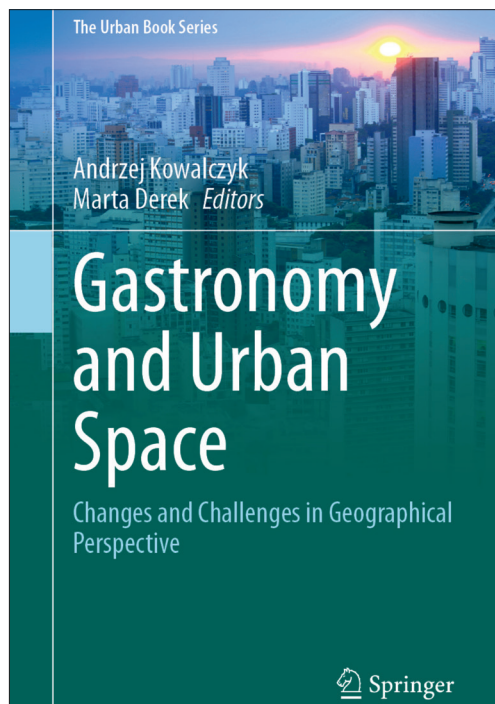
cafés (etc.) in urban areas. As the authors note, they are aware of the social, cultural, economic or health related issues of gastronomy in urban space, but in their view these topics are in lesser extent in the domain of socio-economic geography and rather should be studied by sociologists, anthropologists, urban planners, economists, etc. The Preface specifies that the book adopts a positivist approach, which, in their view, better suits the needs of students. Whilst their standpoints can be debated, the sharp demarcation line drawn by the editors helps them clearly circumscribe the place geographical research might occupy among other disciplines engaged in this topic. By narrowing down the scope of issues, and analysing the spatial processes from a positivist approach, the content of the book remained cohesive, albeit the 18 chapters were written by 14 authors.

*Gastronomy and Urban Space* was written by geographers, mainly affiliated either with the University of Warsaw or the Jagiellonian University in Cracow, but researchers from St. Petersburg and Prague also participated in one chapter. Whereas the authors pay special attention to referring to examples and case studies from all continents, the book (especially Part II and III) has a strong geographical focus on Poland and, in lesser extent, on East-Central Europe. It was a conscious decision of the editors who believe that the book demonstrates that the region “has become an interesting laboratory for exploring the development of gastronomy in urban space, especially as these aspects of geopolitical transformation have not been previously reported in broader studies” (p. 344.). Indeed, one of the most valuable contribution of the book is to draw attention to the spatial processes and specifics of food consumption, catering and supply in this region, so far underrepresented in international literature.

The book is divided into three main parts. Part I serves as a historical and theoretical foundation of the book, whereas Part II and III discuss the main changes and challenges related to gastronomy in contemporary urban space and society. Both Part II and III start with introductory chapters (Chapters 4 and 14) followed by problem-oriented studies (Chapters 5–13 and 15–18).

Part I consists of three chapters. Chapter 1 provides an exciting journey in the history of gastronomy across continents and cultures. The reader can learn about how different catering facilities (restaurants, inns, cafés, etc.) have developed in the urban space in different settings. The chapter is richly illustrated with photos, tables and maps, which visualise and adequately complete the text.

Chapter 2 introduces theories about urban space. Although the models (I presume) are familiar to geography students, explaining and illustrating their



implication in studying the spatiality of gastronomy is justifiable. Throughout the book, the authors of each chapter keep referring back to these models when they evaluate the spatial development in gastronomy and food service sector, which further increases the cohesion of the volume.

Chapter 3 addresses issues related to gastronomy in contemporary urban settings. Among others we can read about the role of gastronomy in tourism, urban planning or city marketing; the social dimension of food consumption and place is also addressed. The chapter enlists problems and conflicts related to gastronomy in contemporary city and society, which the author categorises into two main groups: changes and challenges.

Part II is dedicated to the changes. In Chapter 4, Marta DEREK suggests that gastronomy should be perceived as a lens through which the social and cultural changes and their manifestation in urban space can be observed. Each chapter is dedicated to a specific topic (in which *change* manifests). The structure of the chapters is as follows. First they offer a brief introduction and literature review (in certain studies the applied methodology is also communicated). Then the authors illustrate the topic with international examples and analyse a case study, in most cases based on an example from Poland, mainly Warsaw and Cracow. Finally, the list of references at the end of each chapter, makes the book ultimately user-friendly. Chapters 5 and 6 are closely related to culinary tourism and the interconnectedness of specific local foods and regional cuisine in creating 'place' in the city.

Chapter 7 explores the geography of gastronomic services in the city centres. The case studies were Warsaw's central district (Śródmieście) and the historic centre of Cracow and St. Petersburg. Based on the spatial and temporal analysis of the distribution of eating facilities, researchers were able to visualise how the density of such places indicate the growth and changes of the city structure (St. Petersburg), or demarcate the central core of cities (Warsaw, Cracow). These findings are complemented with two case studies: Żoliborz in Warsaw and Podskalí in Prague, both situated near the centre. Subchapter 7.5 about Żoliborz is particularly interesting. The author shares fascinating details about the history of the neighbourhood and the way political, economic and urban transformations shape the spatial presence and character of eateries and vice versa. The case study about Podskalí (Subchapter 7.6) concludes that an important factor behind the growing number and density of eateries in this urban neighbourhood (*change*) might be the intention to relieve the pressure on the historic centre of Prague, which is currently suffering from over-tourism.

With the following three chapters, the reader continues moving away from the city centres. Chapter 8 takes us first to three peripheral neighbourhoods of Warsaw (Bródno, Nowodwory and Tarchomin). Similarly to Subchapter 7.5, these subchapters introduce to the history of these neighbourhoods in a nutshell, which

is followed by the spatial analysis of eating facilities. The authors found that new restaurants were opened in Bródno after 2000. As the number of residents remained more or less stable, they claim that these new restaurants are signs of the socio-economic and cultural shift induced by the appearance of middle-class dwellers settled in more prestigious new housing. In general, outlets of fast food chains are frequently visited by families with children in these peripheries.

With Chapter 9 we arrive to the suburbs. The authors conducted field work in Piaseczno district, south of Warsaw. Among others, their findings serve as adequate illustration of how gastronomy can be comprehended as a lens through which we can understand and follow socio-cultural changes. Based on their field work conducted in the seven settlements belonging to Piaseczno, the authors point to the importance of social status of inhabitants and tourism that diversifies eating facilities and leads to the spatial concentration of prestigious restaurants in certain parts of the town, whereas low quality facilities are still present elsewhere in the district. They claim that such a diversity in eating facilities reflects the gap in the social status of inhabitants living in Piaseczno.

Chapter 10 endeavours to reveal some aspects of gastronomy and space in smaller towns (500,000 inhabitants and below). The chapter is well grounded and contextualised in international examples and the supposedly tremendous efforts to compile a database of eateries relying on search engines and websites of town halls must also be noted. I found particularly interesting the section about places that were transformed into restaurants or pubs, including a former mine 320 meters below the surface (Subchapter 10.3).

The following three chapters (11-13) address three particular issues related to gastronomy and urban space: the appearance of ethnic cuisine in cities (11), the possible impact of tourist experience on culinary taste and eatery preferences (12), and the specificities of food supply in cities. In Chapter 11, after providing an easy-to-follow history of ethnic cuisine in urban context, the author focuses on two cities: Amsterdam and Warsaw. The study, which is based on the analysis of the location of ethnic restaurants and eateries, found that in the centre of Warsaw (Śródmieście) ethnic cuisine is more concentrated in space than its non-ethnic counterpart. This might be a bit of a surprise, but it also turned out that after the Polish cuisine Japanese is the second most frequently served ethnic-cuisine in central parts of the Polish capital city. This phenomenon can be explained by the popularity of Japanese food globally. Japanese dishes are favoured by geography students of the University of Warsaw who participated in the survey in 2014/15, which is analysed in Chapter 12. This is a rather short chapter, but (I presume) the topic has a potential both in teaching (maybe a research about their habits is appealing to students?) and research. Chapter 13 allows us to look behind the curtains: how the lo-

cal or exotic ingredients arrive to the city to eventually land on our plate. The chapter uses the case study of a Polish company, but the reader also gains knowledge about the theory of supply chain management and how it functions, for instance, in Indonesia and Canada.

Part III is dedicated to challenges which gastronomy is facing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Such challenges stem from the shifts in society, the changing culture of dining or dietary trends, and they are interlinked with technological developments. From the aspect of urban space, the authors identify four major challenges: food courts (15), green and blue spaces (i.e. parks and waterfront) (16), street food and food trucks (17), and home delivery (18). Following the structure of chapters in Part II, chapters in Part III first provide a general overview of the history of the given form of gastronomy, followed by examples from different cities around the world and, finally, by case studies from Poland (mainly Warsaw). From the historical overview the reader can learn that none of the above catering forms is unprecedented in human history, so one might say that these barely endanger the survival of more traditional facilities, like restaurants. Importantly, the authors illuminate the foreseeable/possible social and spatial consequences if these challenges spread. For instance, the increasing popularity of home-delivery threatens thousands of jobs, while the expansion of dining establishments occupies and/or impacts urban space in a way which creates concerns and conflicts between different users of urban space.

Chapter 16 is particularly informative in this regard. It explores the dining facilities in parks and in the waterfront along the Vistula River. These (open air) dining facilities function as societal hotspots appealing for a diverse clientele, but at the same time, regular park visitors or inhabitants living nearby might complain about the noise or dirt the guests leave behind. The arousing conflicts must be mitigated through the involvement of concerned parties (local government, visitors, inhabitants, street vendors, entrepreneurs) as it has happened in the case of Breakfast Market, a bottom-up initiative rapidly gaining popularity in Warsaw. (Similarly to the authors of this chapter, I also find it important to give the credit to the student, Monika BARTMAN, who dedicated her BSc degree thesis to the Breakfast Market).

Chapter 17 is not only fascinating because it offers a historiography of food trucks and street food in different regions, but it explains their social context as well. Furthermore, we can learn about what lies behind the popularity of street food (eating healthy, eating local and eating food prepared carefully), and why running a food truck is appealing to many young, educated people. The spatial analysis found a temporal fluctuation in the concentration of food trucks: weekdays they rather show up in the vicinity of offices, but in the weekend they appear closer to parks and waterfronts.

Chapter 18 is dedicated to home delivery. The authors provide a wonderful summary of the history and types of home delivery services, which is followed

by the study of a particular food delivery company. Analysing the spatial distribution of restaurants promoted by this company, they found that some type of cuisine can be found in higher concentration in certain neighbourhoods, which also reflects the status of that part of the city. For instance, pricey Japanese restaurants are concentrated in the newly developed business centre in the western part of the inner city of Warsaw, which is considered to be a prestigious one, and eating Japanese cuisine seems to be a symbol of prestige.

The book ends with a few pages long, enviably focused summary (Conclusion), which reviews the major aspects of the relationship between gastronomy and urban space studied in this edited volume.

*Gastronomy and Urban Space. Changes and Challenges in Geographical Perspective* is an informative, richly illustrated edited volume that broadcasts knowledge in a comprehensible and engaging manner. Besides the maps and photos, the textboxes (separated from the main text with a grey background colour) convey particularly interesting pieces of information. Apart from the literature review and theoretical grounding, the most valuable contributions are the case studies. Based on years of fieldwork, observation, photo documentation, rounds of questionnaire surveys, interviews, analysis of databases, blogs and social media, each chapter testifies the immense work and commitment of participating researchers and the meticulous work of the editors. The book talks about the intersection of gastronomy and urban space in a way which makes it a valuable and enjoyable book to read. Moreover, amid the ongoing coronavirus pandemic, this book attests as a mnemonic of the pre-lockdown ‘normality’, while some of the concerns and challenges gastronomy is facing in urban space (at least the time of writing this review, in mid-May 2020), sounds prophetic.

ÁGNES ERŐSS<sup>1</sup>

## REFERENCE

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