

# The mcdonaldization of society

Sociology



The McDonaldization of society THE MCDONALDIZATION OF SOCIETY George Ritzer, Explorations in Social Theory From Metatehorizing to Rationalization Ana Cristina Moraru Organizational Behaviour, Semester I, MBA I Prof. Dr. Radu Baltasiu January 17, 2013 The McDonaldization of Society

McDonaldization is "the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as of the rest of the world. " George Ritzer is a sociologist that starting from the theory of Bureaucracy of Max Weber and passing through concepts like: Fordism, Taylorism, Sneakerization, Globalization or Americanization, makes a critical analysis of the impact that McDonaldization has on every aspect of the society. Ritzer highlights four mains dimensions that lie at the success of McDonaldization process: Efficiency — the optimum method for completing a task with the least amount of costs or effort. In a world where everything moves at the speed of light, where people are always in a hurry, McDonald's offers the possibility to go from hungry to full in a tiny amount of time, sometimes without leaving your car. Other industries adopted the McDonald's sistem too, e. g.: loosing weight much faster, fill your own cup service, paying bills online, etc. Efficiency is proven for the Mcworkers too. They are trained to behave all the same and to not deviate from the organizational rules. Calculability — the emphasis of the size vs cost vs time it takes to get the product. In other words, quantity became equivalent to quality. They implemented the idea 'bigger is better', they sell the Big Mac not the Good Mac. The bigger product it is, the better it tastes and you seem to pay a nominal amount of money for it and still the time required to eat is less than if you'll cook yourself at home. The same calculability is available for the workers in the McDonaldize systems.

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They are expected to accomplish a lot of tasks, in the shortest time, for a low pay. It is not about how good they are at their jobs, it is about how fast they are and agreeing to work a lot for a minimum salary. Predictability — the guarantee that the products of McDonald's will look, taste and cost the same from a place to another. The standardized services that offers no surprises and assures you that you'll share the same experience in every McDonald's fast-food. The process of standardization applies to the workers too. They often have scripts to memorize and follow for whenever the occasion arises. Control — substitution of non human for human technology. McDonald's controls their customers very subtle. Waiting lines, limited menus, few options, uncomfortable seats, all is done in order to control the traffic of clients. They wish them to eat quickly and leave so the flow of customers rise. The people who works in McDonaldized organizations are controlled at a higher level and not that subtle like customers. They are trained to do a number of things in a precise way in a sort amount of time. The technologies used are designed to reinforce this control, e. g.: the soft drink dispenser that shuts itself when the glass is full, or the french fries machine that rings and lifts itself when the fries reach the perfect level to be served. These are non human technology designed to be handled by humans and making them feel threatened, that in case, they don't manage to follow strictly the 'laws' of the organization, they eventually will be replaced by those machines. Like an extent to this four dimensions George Ritzer outlines the concept of the irrationality of rationality. The McDonaldized system offers powerful advantages based on a rational thinking. But like all rational systems inevitably they give birth to irrational ones. The downside of McDonaldization are the unreasonable side effects it has on the environment. For example,

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McDonald's USA gets their meat from South America, where the trees get cut down for a place for the cows to grow. The underground water supplies shows traces of nitrates and fertilizers used for growing that perfect potatoes. The packaging material used by McDonalds's is according to them 'recycled', but London Greenpeace demonstrated that only a little part of the paper is recycled and 2000 km<sup>2</sup> is needed for making that paper. Another unreasonable side effect would be the cold, impersonal atmosphere developed in such Mcdonaldize organisations. The automatic way to serve you, the drive-through line where you leave before you eat, all seems to be part of an assembly line. However, a few ones would prefer the irrational way to serve their meal, like the pizzeria in Havana, Cuba, where are only two bored employees, a waiting line that spills out into the sidewalk and you have to wait a hour minimum to get your order. Aspects of the modern society The 'modern' phenomenon, McDonaldization, is influencing our society at an accelerating rate. Ritzer sustain the fact that McDolandization is built up on aspects like bureaucracy, fordism or taylorism. "Bureaucratic administration means fundamentally domination through knowledge. " Weber's theory of bureaucracy is characterized by six elemets: a well-defined formal hierarchy and chain of command, management by rules and regulations, division of labor and work specialization, managers should maintain an impersonal relationship with employees, competence, not personality, is the basis for job appointment and formal written records are used to document all the rules. While recognizing bureaucracy as the most efficient form of organization, and even indispensable for the modern state, Weber also saw it as a threat to individual freedoms, and the ongoing bureaucratization as leading to a " polar night of icy darkness", in which

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increasing rationalization of human life traps individuals in the so called "iron cage" of bureaucratic, rule-based, rational control. Fordism, named after Henry Ford, is a notion of a modern economic and social system based on an industrialised and standardised form of mass production. Fordism has the following characteristics: first is homogeneity, the Model T Ford, being produced on a large scale, available just in the black colour; second it involves flexible technologies, like the assembly line for the mass production; third is standardized work routines(Taylorism) and fourth is the increase in productivity. Scientific management, also called Taylorism, was a theory of management that analyzed and synthesized workflows. Its main objective was improving economic efficiency, especially labor productivity. Thus, the person who puts hubcaps on cars does the same task over and over, more or less the same way each time. "Increases in productivity come from 'economies of scale as well as the deskilling, intensification, and homogenization of labor'(Clarke, 1990: 98). Economy of scale means simply that larger factories producing larger numbers of products can manufacture each individual product more cheaply than small factories producing goods in small numbers. Deskilling means that productivity increases if many workers do jobs requiring little or no skill (for example, putting hubcaps on cars) rather than, as had been the case in the past, a few workers with great skill doing all the work. Intensification means the more demanding and faster the production process, the greater the productivity. Homogenization of labor means that each worker does the same kind of highly specialized work (hubcaps, for example). This makes workers interchangeable. " '

McDonaldism' has many things in common with Fordism. First are the homogeneous products like the Big Mac, the Chicken McNuggets(identical

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from one time and place to another). Second, the technologies that makes the burger like the conveyor system, as well as the french fry and soft drink machine, are as rigid as many of the technologies in Henry Ford's assembly-line system. Finally, the highly standardized work. The McDonaldize system restricts the access to creativity. The human workers are told how to act and how to think and they are often deskilled so they can be cheaply trained and easily replaceable. The delimitation between historical events, cultural diversity and traditions has become more and more vague(Asian rap in London, Chinese tacos, etc). We are drifting into a phenomenon, called hyperspace, without even realising and loosing our values. The hyperspace is called by Frederic Jameson 'the area where modern conceptions of space are useless in helping people orient themselves'. He gives as example, the lobby in the Hotel Bonaventure, from Los Angeles, where the four towers that surrounds it, are absolutely symmetrical and it makes impossible for tourists to get to their rooms. David Harvey approach the idea of time-space compression. The chains of fast-food growing globally it can be disorienting. You can, today, eat at McDonald's in Italy, although they stand for pizza and pasta, because at McDonald's you'll have no surprises, you know what you get and tomorrow you can eat at Pizza Hut in China, although they stand for noddles and chopstix. The process called 'sneakerization' of society, involves the diversification of he product lines. This stands in opposition to the McDonaldization process. Before there was a single pare of sneakers for all types of activities and now there are specialized sneakers for all purposes: runing, walking, hiking shoes, etc. This type of diversification starts to appear everywhere: Philips makes various models of colour tvs, Seiko brings out a large wide of watches, so on. Ritzer believes that, although, there is

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easier to McDonaldize one single pair of sneakers, there is no barrier to McDonaldize a wide product line and he thinks, that actually this is the future where this type of system lies. The Globalization or Americanization Globalization is the process of international integration arising from the interchange of world views, products, ideas, and other aspects of culture. McDonaldized systems have been and are American creations that are being exported to the rest of the world (Coca-Cola, MTV, Disney). Thus, needless to say, the McDonald's presence in, and impact on, Japan is infinitely greater than that of the Japanese chain MosBurger on the United States. Almost 40 years ago, Francis Williams (1962) wrote: 'The American invasion is going on all over the world: American ideas, American methods, American customs, American habits of eating, drinking and dressing, American amusements, American social patterns, American capital.' Conclusion McDonald's and McDonaldization represent a threat to other cultures because, in one hand, they had an impact on how business are organized all over the world, or how people lead their daily lives and in another hand, they represent a set of principle that once integrated in a structure, can hardly be tracked down to originating in McDonald's or America. For this reason, to oppose McDonaldization it becomes more difficult. It's growing impossible to distinguish the global from the local and this may be a consequence, for the fact that, we have integrated the principles of McDonaldizations deeply into our local life. Many corporations have been making an effort to deny the rationalization of McDonaldization. Efforts are related to focusing on quality instead of quantity, enjoying the unpredictability of service and product and employing more skilled workers without any outside control. Protests have also been rising in nation-states in order to slow down the process of <https://assignbuster.com/the-mcdonaldization-of-society/>

Mcdonaldization and to protect their localization and traditional values.

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