

Globalization and McDonaldization

Globalization is “the worldwide diffusion of practices, expansion of relations across continents, organization of social life on a global scale, and growth of a shared global consciousness.” (p. 160)

McDonaldization is one of major forces driving globalization (others are capitalism and Americanization).

Aspects of/perspectives on globalization

Glocalization is “the interpenetration of the global and the local, resulting in unique outcomes in different geographical areas.” (p. 163)

Grobalization focuses on “ the imperialistic ambitions of nations, corporations, organizations, and the like and their desire, indeed, need, to impose themselves on various geographic areas.” (p. 164)

Nothing: “a social form that is generally centrally conceived, controlled and comparatively devoid of distinctive substantive content.” (p. 167)

Something: “a social form that is generally indigenously conceived, controlled, and comparatively rich in distinctive substantive content.” (p. 169)



McDonaldization in a Changing World

In addition to the four principles of McDonaldization—efficiency, calculability, predictability and control—three other factors are important in understanding the drive for McDonaldization:

1. McDonaldization leads to lower costs and higher profits.
2. Many people value and pursue McDonaldization as an end in itself, leading them to overlook its disadvantages.
3. McDonaldization meshes with certain changes taking places in society, such as more women working outside the home, emphasis on mobility and being “on the move,” the increasing affluence of some of the population, the influence of the mass media, and technological changes.

Some Alternative Perspectives

McDonaldization is a central process of the modern world. Some social science perspectives challenge the McDonaldization thesis by positing that modernity is over. Ritzer critiques these viewpoints.

1. Postindustrialism is the claim that society has moved from goods-production to service provision. But this thesis is limited. Postindustrialization and McDonaldization coexist.
2. Post-Fordism is the claim that the principles of Fordism are being replaced by interest in customized and specialized products, flexible production, more skilled workers, etc. But Fordism continues to exist and shows no sign of disappearing.
3. Postmodernism is the claim that society is becoming more irrational, not more rational. This is not true. But McDonaldization is compatible with Jameson’s view of postmodernism as a late stage of modernity, which emphasizes superficiality, waning of emotion, loss of historicity, and reproductive technology.

Dealing with McDonaldization

Three perspectives on a McDonaldized Society

Velvet cage: McDonaldization is comfortable; it represents a standard of good taste and high quality

Rubber cage: the bars of McDonaldization can be stretched to allow adequate means of escape; some aspects are disliked, others are appealing

Iron cage: McDonaldization is deeply offensive and there are few ways out

Strategies for carving out less rationalized life

Create non-McDonaldized institutions

Fight back collectively

Cope individually

WARNING!

Sociologists have found that habitual use of McDonaldized systems is hazardous to your physical and psychological well-being and to society as a whole. (p. 235)