

The Consumer Society and the Postmodern City

By: David B. Clarke

London 2003

Publisher: Routledge

ISBN: 0-415-20515-8

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Consumption, the utilization of economic goods in the satisfaction of wants (*Merriam-Webster's Dictionary*), is a core process in today's society. The Consumer Society and the Postmodern City draws heavily on the controversial works of influential theorists Jean Baudrillard and Zygmunt Bauman. The central argument of the book is that consumption and consumer society are increasingly becoming more pivotal in the postmodern society in which we live.

In Clarke's examination of relations between consumption and the city, he takes an in-depth look at some implications of consumerism for the city. Clarke's consumerism goes beyond just buying and using things in assessing how consumerism is reshaping the nature and the design of the city. The author takes a broad look at consumption moving from a narrow meaning to a more applicable, broader definition.

The book examines the evolving society in which we live and the different types of consumption. Clarke argues that the central core of urban living is consumerism. From looking at consumption and the city, Clarke moves to more in-depth topics. In his discussion of the magnification of social inequities due to urban consumption, Clarke draws from the works of Baudrillard and Bauman, which make up the foundation of many arguments in the book. The meaning of lifestyle, focusing again on the consumer society in an urban setting also draws upon Braudrillard and Bauman.

Chapter 2, Everything You Wanted to Know about Consumerism (but were afraid to ask) is just that. It gives a detailed look a consumerism and the city using the works of Braudrillard and Bauman both as a jumping off point and as the central core of the arguments. This section of the book would be of particular interest to anyone interested in consumerism who would like a concise, clearly written explanation of it and its' relation to the city.

This book will be of interest to those interested in social life in urban centres, people questioning the term "consumer society" and it applicability to the postmodern city, those interested in looking at the city and consumption from a critical angle.

A detailed bibliography is included in the text, which allows for further research and reading for interested parties. There is also a comprehensive index. Each chapter is a stand-alone essay so that it may be read either from start to finish or by selecting chapters in any order.

Overall, the book is intentionally selective in the coverage of topics. It is only a snapshot of arguments for a consumer society in the city and some valid arguments, such as those dealing with gentrification have been omitted. The author contends that this is due to the plethora of literature on the subject. Nonetheless, it is an interesting and thought-provoking book and a worthwhile read for anyone interested in urban consumer society.