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RESTAURANTS IN THE GREATER ATHENS AREA: A SERVICE FOR ALL?

Theme Session**: SECTORAL CHANGES & NEW MARKETS (CULTURE AND ENTERTAINMENT)**

INTRODUCTION

The topic of the paper is the analysis of the spatio-temporal and cultural dimension of food consumption in the Greater Athens Area. The purpose of the paper is to uncover the geographical distribution of eating places and the consumption pattern of the residents in Greater Athens Area.

Eating in restaurants as a form of entertainment constitutes a practice that has been intensely developed, and socially broadened, in recent decades in most of the developed countries. The conditions in the labour market and the changing demographic structures have created much greater needs for consuming meals outside the home. At the same time, the growth of tourism, migration, and, more generally, of the international movement of people and goods have increased the relevant needs and have internationalized tastes. The percentage of the internationalization of a cuisine in a city is an indicator of its cosmopolitan character. Except for the degree of exposition of the population to international tastes, this indicator is also connected to the level of local cuisine – one could not, for example, make an interesting comparison between London and Paris based on the percentage of restaurants with

English and French cuisine –, to the percentage of immigrants, the nationalities, and the income level of the tourists.

Eating is the only basic human need that can take place in the context of a large group and can have a leisure function. The first can be evaluated in comparison to sleeping and going to the toilet, while the leisure function of eating is also valid in the cases that it is a solitary activity. Eating as a leisure activity belongs to the fourth main category of leisure activities, i.e. entertainment and social life. The other three are culture, sport, tourism (Deffner, 1999). The three main dimensions of eating places are the economic, the cultural and the geographical one. As far as the economic dimension is concerned, eating belongs to the service sector (and specifically to hospitality/catering) and its consumption dimension is as important as its production one; perhaps more important in terms of research. As far as the cultural dimension is concerned, although traditionally food belongs to popular culture (Bell and Valentine, 1997, pp. 5-11), recent developments such as hip restaurants (which have their roots in the French haute cuisine) show that high culture has also a role to play. As far as the geographical dimension is concerned, this paper, mainly because of spatio-temporal constraints, adopts a classic scale differentiation related to planning that consists of the following aspects: architectural, urban, regional, and global. However, there exists a more complex one developed by Neil Smith (1993), and adopted by Bell and Valentine (1997): body-home-community-city-region-nation-global.

Eating as a research subject covers many issues. Some issues that will be examined in this paper are: a) the development of gastronomy as a science, b) the relationship between gastronomy and tourism, c) the appearance of new types of eating places. The following issues are important but are not going to be dealt with in this paper: a) the promotion of health issues, b) the influence of fashion as is reflected in the tendencies for diet and fitness.

The conceptual focus of the paper is on the consumption aspect, which relates to the issue of tastes and dominant leisure tendencies, such as out-of-home and ‘passive’ activities. Although the economic dimension of eating is very important, also for reasons of spatio-temporal constraints, this paper will limit itself to the cultural and geographical dimensions.

I. THE CULTURAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL DIMENSION OF EATING

The growth of services and consumption has lead to the growing importance of retailing (Wrigley, 1991), which plays a crucial role in the new developments within labour practices and the social relations of production and forms contradictory relations with the regulatory aspect of the state (Wrigley and Lowe, 1996). However, one should not go too far and argue for the existence of a service class.

Two important dimensions of food consumption, but also of consumption in general, are *cultural indigenisation* and *cultural as well as geographical difference*. A good example of the first is the function of McDonalds in East Asia where there is a two-way interaction (Watson, 1997, referred in Crang, 2001, pp. 411-2). This shows the following: a) the forms and meanings of consumption, despite being a global phenomenon, are locally specific, b) the consumption of non-local products may be even helpful to the on-going production of authentic local cultures, and c) when it does matter where things come from, then these origins are understood in locally specific, imaginative ways (Crang, 2001, pp. 412-3). A good example of cultural and geographical difference are Indian restaurants in Britain which show that 'Indianness is something (non-Indian, white) British people may enjoy consuming, but that does not make it, or the British-Asian… restaurateurs and waiting staff who embody it, culturally British' (Crang, 2001, pp. 416-7). The development of Indian, as well as Chinese and Italian cuisines in England – and not only: for the globalisation of Chinese food see Goody, 1999 – raises the question of authenticity, although, according to Cook *et al.*, there is no single version of it (2000).

The popularity of Asian cuisine in Britain is a typical example of the impact of multiculturalism in food tastes, which is also valid in France. An interesting historical fact is that in France there were relatively few prohibitions on behavior at table during the Middle Ages and *manners* among the French courtly upper class start to resemble those of a formal dinner party only before the Revolution (Elias, 1939/1994). French haute cuisine owes its reputation since the Renaissance to a combination of factors such as the leniency of the Church and the models proposed by the Court, the high aristocracy and later the bourgeoisie. The current situation is not very good, because it is characterised mainly by banality and poverty of tastes despite a few dozen genial chefs (Pitte, 1991). A comparison between France and Britain shows that they generally are, despite being close geographically, far apart gastronomically not just in

recipes and ways of cooking but in their attitudes toward the pleasure of eating and its place in social life. The difference in culinary cultures has been shaped by social and political development (Mennell, 1985/1996).

Bourdieu in his study of *tastes* in France states cultural capital, economic capital, spare time and status as the crucial factors of food consumption and taste. Two of his most interesting remarks are: 'as one rises in the social hierarchy, the proportion of income spent on food diminishes' and ' the art of eating and drinking remains one of the few areas in which the working classes explicitly challenge the legitimate art of living' (Bourdieu, 1979/1984, pp. 177-200).

Consumption has a stronger *relationship to identity* than production, since pleasure constitutes an important factor in the quest of identity, which, for most people occurs in their leisure time and space (Deffner, 2002). In this sense, eating as a crucial element of consumption is also related to identity (Delamont, 1995; Bell and Valentine, 1997). Every ingredient of the past and the present can be read in the recipes: identity, our relationships with other species, our status in society, even the place of our society in the world (Fernández-Armesto, 2001). Modern civilization, the evolution of the ways of life and industrialization have transformed our relationship to alimentation and, at the same time, of ourselves (Fischler, 2001)

Gastronomy, except being the art of good eating and drinking, has become also the relevant science, and incorporates wider notions of traditions, culture, society and civilization (Gillespie, 2001). From the eight great revolutions in the history of food the three are the most relevant for the subject of this paper: a) the rise of inequality made food an indicator of rank and turned cookery into haute cuisine, b) long-range transmissions of foodstuffs and foodways broke down cultural barriers, and c) industrialization and globalization transformed the way food is delivered, consumed and conceived (Fernández-Armesto, 2001). European gastronomy, in particular, has undergone various changes such as: a) the birth of the menu collection, b) the appearance of concept cuisines, c) the advance of fusion cuisine, d) the harmonious union between food and wine, e) the transformation of the nature of dining, f) the growing philosophical importance, and g) the development of the hospitality industry (Gillespie, 2001, ch. 3).

Eating as an activity *relates with many other activities*. Some of the most important examples are: congresses and meetings in general (Van Vree, 2001), shopping – a subject that has also been analysed from a geographical perspective, see

Miller *et al*,. 1998; Jackson *et al*., 2000) –, social relations, business, tourism. The latter constitutes a crucial a factor for many areas, and a new relevant type of tourism has already been developed focusing on day visitors, i.e. food tourism. Some of the factors which have contributed to this are: the evolution of eating places as visitor attractions (Swarbrooke, 1995/2002), the growth of business travel (Swarbrooke and Horner, 2001), the variety of hip restaurants, and the construction of multiplexes.

Gastronomy overlaps with different subjects, callings, professions and trades (Gillespie, 2001, pp. 2-5). Thus, the study of food requires a multidisciplinary approach. The disciplines that are mainly participating in the construction of this approach are anthropology, history, economics, leisure/cultural studies and geography. An important starting point for the *anthropological approach* is Levi-Strauss (1968/1990 and 1964/1970). A focus issue that has been examined, and has already been mentioned, is identity (Delamont, 1995; Fischler, 1990/2001). The global diversity of gastronomic tastes is analyzed by Harris, who shows that 'irrationality' is explained through practical, economic or political necessity (1985/1998). History is useful mainly because it demonstrates a sense of continuity: according to Dalby, there is an unbroken tradition of fine food and wine from classical times, through Rome and Medieval Europe, to what we eat and drink today (1996). The main general context in this case is the study of manners by the figurational school of Elias and his followers (Elias, 1939/1994; Mennell, 1985/1996) – modern manners have also been studied (Finkelstein, 1989; Fernández-Armesto, 2001).

Two important general issues in the *economic* approach are the study of the food system (Tarrant, 1985; Tansey and Worsley, 1995; Marsden and Wrigley, 1996; Ilbery, 2001) – a subject that also constitutes a link with rural studies (Goodman and Watts, 1997) –, and the study of the hospitality sector. Two additional specific issues, also connected with the aforementioned activity of tourism, are the development of food attractions and the necessity of their management (Swarbrooke, 1995/2002, p. 368), as well as the crucial role attributed to food service in hotels (Medlik, 1989). The hospitality dimension, and especially the catering one, creates a link with leisure studies (Gillespie, 2001), and this creates a further link with cultural studies. Apart from matters relating to the issue of the body (Bell and Valentine, 1997, ch. 2), the focus of *cultural* approach is on consumption (Featherstone, 1991; MacClancy, 1992; Gregson, 1995; Urru, 1995), and on the study of eating places as workplaces Marshall, 1986; Crang, 1994a), a subject that constitutes a link with the

anthropological approach (Whyte, 1948a and b; Spradley and Mann, 1975). This perspective acts as a reflection of the issue of the social and ethnic division of labour (Zukin, 1995, ch. 5), as well as of the interrelationship between work and leisure.

The cultural approach is also related to the sociological approach (Mennell *et al.*, 1992; Ritzer, 1993/2000), the philosophical approach (Brillat-Savarin, 1826/1975) and the *geographical* approach. There is even talk of gastro-geography that comprises of physical, human, medical and economic geography (Gillespie, 2001, pp. 14-6). The study of food constitutes a dynamic, albeit not yet crucial, component of the 'cultural turn' in geography (Cook *et al.,* 2000), which has brought identity politics and issues of consumption to the fore in geography (Bell and Valentine, 1997; Crang, 1994b and 2001). Thus, food plays an important role in the construction of place identities: we are not only what we eat but also where we eat (Bell and Valentine, 1997). The connection of the geographical approach with the historical one leads to the historical geography of food and wine (Pitte, 1991; Unwin, 1991), and the connection with the leisure approach leads to leisure geography (Smith, 1983a and b).

The reference to leisure brings forth the issue of *time*, which in recent years has become a crucial component in planning, and, due to its neglect, perhaps more crucial than space (Deffner, 2001). The impact of globalisation can be observed in what Harvey calls 'time-space compression': it has assembled 'the world's cuisine in one place in almost exactly the same way that the world's geographical complexity is nightly reduced to a series of images on a static television screen'. Different worlds (of commodities) are brought daily in the same space and time, but 'in such a way as to conceal almost perfectly any trace of origin, of the labour processes that produced them, or of the social relations implicated in their production' (Harvey, 1989, p. 300). According to Apparudai, 'consumption creates time' since daily rhythms of regulated consumption practices, and especially those that center around the feeding of the body, 'take on the function of structuring temporal rhythm' (1993, cited in Bell and Valentine, 1997, p. 4). According to Gofton, the commodification of time leads to 'time famines', i.e. an increasing of time discipline in consumption. Food technologies have radically altered our relationship to eating, since food 'doesn't signify the season or the time of day, or the day of the week in quite the way it did, nor does it mark the roles and relations between adults and children within formal meals' (1990, cited in Bell and Valentine, 1997, pp. 4-5).

A crucial issue in leisure geography is the *location of restaurants* and three of the most important situational forces that affect this are: a) the threshold population (fast food franchises do not need a large population and may be found in both large and small population centres, while 'five-star' restaurants are found in limited numbers and near large cities), b) the catchment area ('people tend not to travel as far for fast food as they do for dinner at a good restaurant'), and c) the development and morphology of recreation business districts (RBD, an aggregation of restaurants, amusement businesses, accommodation, cafes, theatres, shops etc. catering to a seasonal influx of tourist) in resort towns (Smith, 1983a, pp. 30, 68-9). As far as the analytical techniques of site-selection methods are concerned, most feasibility studies are done under contract for clients, and the methods and results usually are not published (Smith, 1983a, p. 117). Time is an important factor to be taken account of in the development of restaurants mainly in two aspects: a) spatial changes (former problem areas are rehabilitated and become fashionable shopping and dining districts), and b) changes in tastes (restaurants are especially vulnerable to fads) [Smith, 1983a, p. 119].

The *architectural* scale is the starting point of the spatial perception of eating places for most people. Thus, it is not by chance that the design aspect of restaurants is considered a first priority issue. This occurs even in chain restaurants (Bell and Valentine, 1997, pp. 133-6), and not only in hip restaurants, even if the aesthetic value judgement is a matter of debate since beauty is subjective.

The *urban* scale experiences a plurality of choice of food consumption offering every imaginable (and unimaginable) culinary temptation: food shops, cafes, restaurants, take-aways, pubs and clubs, fast-food stands, home and office delivery services. Two quintessential features of urban living are the lack of everyday time and the preference of 'modern' home delivery (mainly of fast food). Thus, urban eating experience is also marked by twenty-four-hour cafes and supermarkets (or mini-markets), as well as specialist food shops. These are differentiated from corner shops and allotments that characterize the rural areas (although there are many of both within cities). 'They also separate the urban from the rural, where food provision is often severely underdeveloped (though, of course, the rural is commodified through food consumption in 'farm shops', quaint village tearooms and "local", characterful pubs, all ripe for city day-trippers to pick). The current ebbs and flows of urban growth and no growth, counterurbanisation and gentrification continue to reshape the

map of the urban, but its food geography remains one of choice, convenience and access'. This picture has been enriched by the role of supermarkets, whose effect to the rituals of city living has been immense: 'the trip to the supermarket is now a landmark in the structuring of our life-patterns'. The importance of food in the cities is also witnessed in its role in place marketing in the process of world competition (Bell and Valentine, 1997, pp. 16-7, 121).

'If the urban is about consumption, then perhaps, more than any scale, the *region* is about food production'. Regions face a constant dilemma between reaffirmation, also though marketing, and erosion of distinctiveness, mainly due to the homogenising forces of globalisation. In this process food plays an important role, since certain regions evolve distinctive cuisines even from its nearest neighbours. Although regional traditions are often exposed as mere inventions, regional identity becomes enshrined in bottle of wine (e.g. Bordeaux) or hunks of cheese (Bell and Valentine, 1997, pp. 17, 147). This last remark is also valid for Greece (Mamalakis, 2002; Manessis, 2002).

Global cuisine seems to be the dominant trend in contemporary culinary culture, and 'food is constantly used as an example of the complex process of globalisation being theorised – it always seems to provide a perfect, common sense, everyday way of illustrating sometimes difficult ideas' (Bell and Valentine, 1997, pp. 189-90). Restaurants contribute to the globalisation of food. In general, they 'chronicle the trends and shifts in cultural tastes, social behaviour and cultural interaction in a continually evolving social domain' (Preston-Whyte, 1999, p. 444). They also chronicle response to community fears. For some all these aspects provide 'an opportunity to engage in the consumption of diverse cultures; for others it provides a sense of cultural cohesion that may be strengthened by the presence of members of the same or similar social or cultural group' (Preston-Whyte, 1999, p. 456).

Restaurants can be considered as sites of cultural capital – even in renaissance cities (Bell and Valentine, 1997, p. 121) – and part of the symbolic economy (Zukin, 1995). In this sense, eating places, as well as take away food shops, can be considered as cultural industries, even if Pratt does not include them in his analysis of the cultural industries production system (Pratt, 1997, pp. 1960-1). The typology of restaurants relates to typology of cuisines (Cousins *et al*., 2001, cited in Gillespie, 2001, p. 69), which, however, is country specific since every country has its peculiarities. Thus, it

is not strictly followed in our research, which also did not cover two special, and very interesting, cases: fast foods (Harris, 1985/1998, pp. 121-6; see Ritzer, 1993/2000 for the general social impact of the logic of efficiency that characterizes fast food) and neighbourhood taverns.

II. THE GEOGRAPHICAL DISTRIBUTION OF RESTAURANTS IN GREATER ATHENS

The *food sector* in Greece is the largest manufacturing sector, with 18% participation in then total gross production value and 22% participation in its sales (according to the data of 1997). It is also one of the 3-4 most dynamic sectors of the economy and the rhythms of production growth are productivity are larger than the average (Arhiereos, 1999, pp. 8-9). As far as the crucial role of food service in hotels is concerned, according to the data of 1994, food service has participated in the 38.9% of the mixture of sales in Greek hotels, while room sales have participated in 45.6%. If we add the beverage service (10.7%), then the unified food and beverage sales cover a larger percentage of sales than the room service (*Food Service*, 1999, p. 17).

The main ingredients of the Greek cuisine, such as cheese, wine, honey and olive oil, already existed four thousand years ago. Greek food has diversified and absorbed neighboring traditions, yet retained its distinctive character. An interesting way of perceiving the role of gastronomy in Ancient Greece is that it can function as a useful background to reading Greek comedy and lyric poetry (Dalby, 1996). The Byzantine cuisine continues to be important, and the origin of taverns can be traced in the Byzantine era (Myrtsioti, 2002).

The *main current tendencies* that characterize the food sector in Greece are the following: a) the impact of globalisation, as well as tourism, both on high culture (nouvelle cuisine and exoticism) and popular culture (fast food), b) the traditional popularity of Chinese and Italian food (mainly as pizza and pasta), c) the fast rhythms in the growth of the relevant media (specialist magazines, books, guides, and television programs), d) the interest shown in advertising, but not in a strategic way of approaching marketing, e) the phenomenon of home growing, especially in second homes, f) the appearance of hip restaurants in islands.

As far as the international tendencies mentioned in Part I are concerned, the following observations can be made: a) gastronomy is not faced as a science, the most

characteristic indication being the lack of a leisure studies department – some cooking courses are taught at the Department of Tourist Enterprises in the Technological Educational Institutes, b) the relationship between gastronomy and tourism has not been developed as part of a strategy despite the growth of business travel, the variety of hip restaurants (even in roof gardens of hotels), and the construction of multiplexes or cultural 'multiplaces' (e.g. a combination of restaurant, cinema, gallery, art shop, conference room, and room for concerts/theatre shows), since eating places are not planned and managed as visitor attractions, c) the appearance of new types of eating places (this relates to the former remark), d) the promotion of health issues (existence of few shops with biological food), e) the influence of fashion as is reflected in the tendencies for diet (existence of many companies) and fitness (existence of many gyms).

An examination of the correspondence with the main changes in European gastronomy leads more to common points than differences. The common points are the following: a) the birth of the menu collection, b) the appearance of concept cuisines, c) the advance of fusion cuisine, d) the harmonious union between food and wine, e) the transformation of the nature of dining. The differences are the following: a) the growing philosophical importance, b) the development of the hospitality industry.

The first data source used in this paper is a secondary research – using data of 1999 from the weekly entertainment magazine *Athinorama* (Athens Guide) – carried out by the Institute of Urban and Rural Sociology of the National Centre for Social Research and the Department of Planning and Regional Development (DPRD) of the University of Thessaly in the context of the first phase (i. e. the cities) of the Socio-economic Atlas of Greece (financed mainly by the Ministry of National Economy and Economics and co-ordinated mainly by T. Maloutas). The main aim was to study the spatial infrastructure and distribution of food consumption focusing on four interrelated factors: number, types, prices and location.

The *typology of restaurants* adopted the one used in *Athinorama*, that gives a lot of detail. A small degree of grouping was performed and the main resulting categories, that show the plurality of choices, are the following:

a) cheap fish (cod),
b) cheap steak and lamb,
c) taverns and kebab,

d) music taverns,
e) 'meze' (snack) with music,
f) tex-mex,
g) Central Europe (Germany, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic/Slovakia),
h) regional Greek,
i) bar restaurants,
j) Far East (Japan, China, India, Polynesia, Thailand),
k) international cuisine,
l) classic cuisine (international and Greek),
m) Italy (modern, regional, tratorie, classic),
n) piano and fun restaurants,
o) fish taverns and restaurants,
p) France (contemporary and classic),
q) Mediterranean,
r) modern and contemporary cuisine (international and Greek),
s) fusion and multi-ethnic,
t) Central and Latin America (Brazil, Cuba)
u) Arabic (Egypt, Lebanon/Syria)
v) Vegetarian
w) Ancient Greek
x) Creperies
y) Wine restaurants
z) Beer and microbrewery restaurants

In the Greater Athens Area Greek cuisine covers 55% of the *total number of restaurants*. If fast foods were recorded then the picture could be different. At the time of recording the main fast food companies that were in operation were MacDonalds, Goodies (a Greek company based in Thessaloniki and a vary serious competitor of the former) and Wendys (now its shops have been closed). However, if neighborhood taverns were also recorded, then perhaps the percentage of Greek cuisine would be greater.

As far as *restaurant prices* are concerned, the cheaper places are the taverns (with or without music) and certain categories of ethnic cuisine (Ethiopian, Egyptian, and Cypriot). The most expensive places are the contemporary 'experimental' restaurants headed by the not always successful attempts for fusion. These are

followed by the most established categories of ethnic cuisine (Italian and French) and by fish restaurants, the majority of which is situated in this price category exclusively due to the expensive raw material. The Far East cuisine shows a coexistence of relatively cheap Chinese with much more expensive Japanese and Polynesian restaurants. Also cheaper and more expensive French and Italian restaurants coexist, but with smaller price differences. The taverns and the popular profile ethnic cuisines do not show many price differences.

As far as the *location of restaurants* is concerned, taverns, 'meze' places and the relevant categories show a relatively equal distribution, with the exception of certain municipalities of Western Athens (a 'poor' area), where the limited catchment area (or lack of advertisement) of the neighborhood taverns leads to the fact of not having an entry in the weekly, and general, guides. The places of contemporary international cuisine and the most established categories of ethnic cuisine are distributed in the areas where the higher social strata live or use to visit, i.e. the centre as well as the Northeastern and Southern suburbs. If location is related to price, then two main phenomena are observed. On the one hand, the mixture of many and different categories in the centre lowers the average restaurant price. On the other hand, in the Northern and Southern suburbs, the average prices are higher, mainly because the market aims at a much more homogeneous clientele.

The second data source used in this paper is a research carried out by the Laboratory of Spatial Analysis and Thematic Cartography of the DPRD in the context of the programme 'Social Parameters for the Sustainable Development of Athens/Attica' (financed by the Organisation of Regulatory Plan of Athens and co-ordinated by T. Maloutas). The sampling survey was conducted between December 2001 and January 2002. The size of the sample was 2.117 questionnaires in households. The sample was not representative in the strict sense of the term, but it was based on a social typology of housing areas that were evaluated as interesting from older research on social segregation in Athens. The aim was to study patterns of consumption in relation to going out.

The main conclusions from this research are the following: a) the majority of the sample (49%) never, or almost never, have supper at restaurants on a monthly basis, b) the people who do that at least twice monthly belong primarily (38%) to the highest income group (880 Euros and above), while most no-goers (27%), do not belong to the lowest income group but to the second lowest group (290-440 Euros), c)

the most visited restaurants are mainly (30%) located in the eastern ('rich') suburbs, while the less visited (5%) belong to Piraeus, i.e. the port of the city, d) the majority (32%) of the people that have supper at restaurants twice monthly have a bachelor/ masters degree, while most no-goers (39%) are graduates, or no-graduates, of primary school, e) the majority (27%) of the people that have supper at restaurants have middle-to-high/high professions, while most no-goers (24%) are not the unemployed but wokers/farmers, f) the majority (22%) of the people that have supper at restaurants twice monthly live in 'rich' areas (not only in the central area of Kolonaki) followed closely by Patissia (20%), a densely built area near the centre, a part of which constitutes now the main housing area of the economic immigrants. Most no-goers (21%) live in Menidi-Aspropyrgos, two of the 'poorest' areas of Western Athens followed again by people living in Patissia (17%), something that is explained by the fact that residents of this area constitutes the majority of the sample (18%).

III. CONCLUSIONS

Eating is one of the most important activities of the service sector, in economic, cultural, as well as spatio-temporal terms. It constitutes a typical example of the interrelationship between the local and the global, since international cuisine co-exists with ethnic and regional cuisines. Even in the case of MacDonalds there can be a two-way interaction; as the East Asia and Greek experience show – e.g. in Greece, MacDonalds incorporates many local dishes.

Eating also constitutes an indication of the consumption-production relationship. The urban level is the main location of consumption, while the regional level is the main location of production. The architectural level, i.e. the single unit of the restaurant, is the most usual spatial perception that people have of eating apart from the home. The reference to home leads to the observation that eating a variety of dishes is something that people can easily do at home: even if someone does not know how to cook, a variety of take-away shops exist – in the first case eating is not a passive activity, while in the second it is. However, going out, either as an activity in itself or in combination with another activity, constitutes an important part of out-of-home entertainment and social life, i.e. of leisure. Leisure is an integral part of time (and the opposite), and the temporal dimension of eating is mainly perceived through the role of daily rhythms of food consumption in the whole time structure. Since

leisure and time constitute objects of planning, then it can be argued that entertainment can also be planned (Burtenshaw *et al.*1991), and also act as a motivator of regeneration (McCarthy 1998 and 2002).

Research in Athens aimed to cover spatial infrastructure and distribution, as well as consumption patterns. The main conclusions concerning the former are: the dominance of the Greek cuisine, which, however, co-exists with a large variety of categories of cuisine (also in quantitative terms), the fact that restaurant prices can constitute a basis for certain hypotheses concerning the social differentiation of food provision as a service, the existence of important internal differentiations in certain categories, a combination of relatively equal geographical distribution with concentration. However, the phenomenon of restaurant districts is not observed as is the case in the South African multicultural city of Durban (Preston-Whyte, 1999). Also we a segregation of city cultures is not observed, as is the case in Leeds (Farrar, 1996), another multicultural city.

As far as the consumption pattern is concerned, it seems that, even if 'good' places are always crowded on Saturdays, many people do not go out in order to eat. However, the following profile of a person that goes to restaurants in order to have supper can be drawn: living in 'rich' areas, belonging to the highest income group, owning a bachelor/masters degree, having a middle-to-high/high profession, going to a restaurant located in the eastern suburbs. It is interesting to compare these data with research in the USA, which shows that nearly one-half of all adult Americans go to taverns and bars at least once a year, nearly 30% go once a month or more and tavern going ranks as a medium-level activity enjoying about the same degree of popular participation as attending a sports event but ranked higher than theatre going. The factors that exert a large influence in tavern use (in relationship with age, sex, marital status and religious involvement) are personal value orientation, level of sociability, and drinking behaviour (Okraku, 1998).

It is interesting to see in the near future if *recent developments* will reinforce existing tendencies or contribute to their change. The following developments are worth mentioning: a) the appearance of international chains (Fridays, Applebies, Pizza Express as San Marzano) and café restaurants, b) the appearance of new ethic cuisines (Maroccan, Persian, Polish), c) the growth of fun restaurants, d) the growth of Chinese (these also in the form of fast food), Japanese and Indian/ Pakistani restaurants, e) the repetition of successful restaurants of other areas of Greece in

Athens, f) the slow growth of business lunches, g) the growth of eating places (in connection with other leisure places) in the central area of Psirri (it is located in the western part of the municipality of Athens, where a process of refurbishing abandoned buildings for leisure purpose is taking place, though initiatives of the commercial sector).

Visiting restaurants in cities constitutes one of the many leisure activities that does not usually occur on a daily basis, and is characterized by contradictions. On the one hand, there exist a plurality of choices of types of places and prices, i.e. the resources for an improvement of the quality of life are there. On the other hand, a set of constraints (economic, spatio-temporal, even cultural but in the sense of 'cultural capital' and not in the sense of attitude) leads to certain social groups as being the principal visitors. Thus in order to become a service for all it needs a degree of planning, since also one of the aims of planning should be the contribution to the provision of pleasure (preferably on a daily basis, i.e. in piece and not only in block leisure). The argument that for most people the quest of identity occurs in their leisure time and space, and that pleasure constitutes an important factor in this quest, is exemplified in the case of food:

> 'The pleasures of the table belong to all times and all ages, to every country and to every day; they go hand in hand with our other pleasures, outlast them, and remain to console us for their loss' (Brillat-Savarin, 1826/1975)

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