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Introduction

This thesis is structured in three chapters. Each chapter was established on the basis of the other. Therefore Chapter One (*A Theory guided Question*) does not form a separate theoretical analysis of my object of inquiry, but rather is to be taken as opening a discussion towards my ethnography. The theory that was guiding my question is mostly taken from of Economic and Business Anthropology. In the course of my research I started off with the theoretical framework, but soon realized that I needed to write, read and conduct the theory and the ethnography at the same time. This is, as the following thoughts will show, due to the complexity of the concept “work”, and due to my own understanding of the workplace Starbucks. I am therefore referring to theoretical approaches in each of the chapters guided by the ethnography and my readings of the literature, both happening simultaneously. Chapter Two (*Baristas in Starbucks*) introduces to the ethnography, followed by the analysis of the *work* in the chosen Starbucks store. Chapter Three (*Conclusive Thoughts*) finalises the paper with theoretical as well as personal conclusions.

It might be puzzling at some points that I refer in Chapter Two, to theory that was not mentioned in Chapter One, or I mention theories in Chapter One, but do not include them until the very end of the paper (Chapter Three). The idea that this somewhat *circular* method is based upon is to shift between small and large contexts, on the one hand not to lose broad overview and on the other to keep the reader focussed on the example Starbucks.

Chapter 1

"What is Work?" a Theory Guided Question

1 Introduction to Chapter One

This chapter discusses with the concept “work” on a theoretical level. Although the chapter is named “theory guided” I want to start it with my own circumstances first, and then open up considerations about “work” as something to be both, problematic and interesting.

I am *working* on my thesis at this very moment. In this sense I am working with the aim of obtaining my masters degree. I have made a schedule that tells me what is to be done when. I am part of a process that takes time and keeps me from doing other things. In addition to writing this thesis, I am currently *working* as a waiter in a coffee shop in Vienna. The purpose of this work is to earn additional money to support my livelihood. This is all what I could say when talking about “work” as such, this is all that needs to be said when making a clear statement of “what I am doing right now”. The activities that I mention all have a purpose. It seems as if the activities need to be embedded¹ into some kind of institutional setting referring to my livelihood like, for example, the money market or the university to be called “work”. On the other hand I could also say that I was working on social relationships when meeting some friends that I have not seen lately, to avoid disappearing from my social circle (the thesis takes a lot of time). Thereby the purpose of the activity of meeting some friends would be not to lose contact, or not to get too isolated. The activity, it seems,

¹ See also Neale (1964) for the embeddedness of activities to be defined as work.

becomes a necessity as soon as it refers to “work”. If I went for a walk right now, on the small hill behind our flat, I would not call it work although it is probably necessary for my health. It is pure freedom. Therefore the question that I ask first, is about the dimension of this concept “work” used in an everyday context. To me at first glance, it resembles the following model:

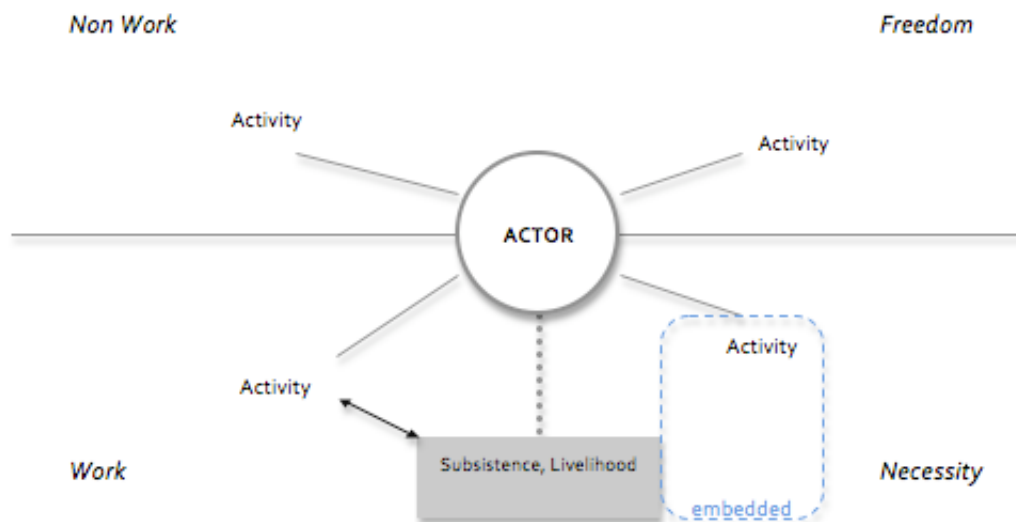


Figure 1. What is Work? (Source: Author)

The actor in figure 1 defines whether one activity is “work” or not, if it has either a direct connection to his or her subsistence or livelihood (e.g. working as a waiter), or in the words of Walter C. Neale (1964: 1305), if the activity is “embedded in the same sort of institutions” (e.g. University: schedules, rules and money). Activities are called “work” because they “recreate social relationships and are organized in the same way by the same institutions which organize the provision of material means” (ibid.: 1305).

The University in this case has obviously an indirect connection to my livelihood and is thereby organised in the same way (dashed blue line), although the activity of writing the thesis does not directly help to sustain my livelihood right now. This explains also the second opposite in the model above, between necessity and freedom. When, in everyday language, one is referring to “work”, as in the case of “working on a relationship”, it seems as if it has to do with the necessity² of the

² see also Hannah Arendt (1959) for „labour as necessity“, that I will refer to later in this chapter.

action. Activities can be shifted (in an everyday language) from both sections “work” and “non work” depending on context, depending on what one considers as an immediate necessity.

The question then is whether it makes sense, defining this activity as something different than any other. Or whether the activity itself should be taken into consideration *without* putting it out of any defining context. The example above is simply a reflection of my current situation, but nevertheless the resulting model is a leading thought that becomes important later in the research, and was guiding me through the literature in search of definitions. In the following I will adumbrate the problem of defining “work” for this research, and its implications for my ethnography. As mentioned before, the thesis is not divided clearly into theory and ethnography, so this chapter on the *Theory Guided Question* is meant only to open up the discussion to subsequently let selected theoretical findings in Chapter Two support the ethnographic arguments. The question of “What is Work?” thereby becomes a theory-guided question in the sense of mainly embracing theories of the sub disciplines *Economic Anthropology* and *The Anthropology of Organisations* or *Business Anthropology*³.

The section perspectives on “work” embraces selected historical as well as political perspectives. Because these could form a thesis itself, the arguments are kept short. The historical perspective illustrates what I meant by “work” as dynamic and changing. The political perspective offers an introduction to classical theorists such as Adam Smith and Karl Marx. The perspective of anthropology that follows is only an excerpt of selected theory, and is therefore again only to be seen as opening up the discussion that is more elaborated within the ethnography.

In a next step the “theory guided question” leads, following the anthropological perspective, through to the two sub-disciplines (Economic and Business Anthropology) each following the question of “what is this sub-discipline?” and “what does it contribute to an understanding of work?”. The latter question is more a question of “what *can* it do?” to again let further theoretical thoughts come to the fore within the ethnography.

Each section of the *Theory guided Question* is closed with conclusive arguments that summarize the implications on my paper. The arguments do not *describe* “work”

³ I will refer to the difference of these terms in section 4.

fundamentally, as being a concept that is clearly defined, and as such used in my research. But are meant *to think of* “work” in dynamic and open terms as being a concept that was only lead - not controlled - by these thoughts throughout my research. Four of the statements become important at the end of the thesis, where they are put into context with the ethnography. The first statement in the next chapter stands on its own to open up the following considerations.

2 Perspectives on “Work”

The perspectives on “work”, in the approach I will develop, is to understand “work” in *dynamic* rather than *descriptive* terms. The concept can be rooted in history, as I will show in point 2.1, it has changed and is still changing. The emphasis here is “time”, as surrounding and defining the activity, as well as the quality of the activity as such, resulting in an hierarchy that became constructed around it. The mentioned authors such as Arendt, Marx and Smith form the basics of my account on the following theories. In point 2.3, I will illustrate anthropological examples to additional thoughts that preceded my research and open the discussion towards the anthropological sub-disciplines.

2.1 Historical and Philosophical Perspectives on “Work”. Industrial

Revolution and Ancient Greece

“There has been a shift in meaning from words which first connoted painful activities bringing little merit to those who performed them, and even degraded them and placed them in a condition of social inferiority, while today the right to work, and the dignity of the worker, have positive meanings, at least in certain types of discourse” (Godelier, 1980: 166).

E.P. Thompson (2007[1967]) shows in *“Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism”* how England’s Industrial Revolution, by centralizing power in factories, took a great deal in creating the division between “work” and “life” with a new perception of time. Thompson describes how the “work” or “labour” in pre-industrial

England shifted from task-orientation to time-orientation as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Task-oriented, according to Thompson, is lead by “natural rhythms”: “sheep must be attended at lambing time and guarded from predators; cows must be milked, the charcoal fire must be attended [...]” (ibid.: 12). It is more “humanly comprehensible” because it is lead by necessity, and “work” and “life” are not clearly separated (ibid.). The shift to time-orientation came with the need of synchronisation in factories, although task-orientation neither disappeared immediately (only after the large scale machine-powered industry), nor completely (as it is still with e.g. artists or freelancers). Furthermore

“those who are employed experience a distinction between their employer’s time and their ‘own’ time. And the employer must use the time of his labour, and see it is not wasted: not the task but the value of time when reduced to money is dominant. Time is now currency: it is not passed but spent” (ibid.: 13).

Thompson argues that these changes brought about a new sense of time within the whole society, that is “the inward apprehension of time of working people”, “new working habits – new disciplines, new incentives, and a new human nature upon which these incentives could bite effectively” (ibid.: 10). Herbert Applebaum (1986: 46) also roots the division of work and non-work within the ownership of time in industrial society: “With the development of industrial society, people began to view time at work as belonging to others and time away from work belonging to themselves”.

The division of “work” and “leisure” or “work” and “non work”, as it is shown in Figure 1, thereby becomes a concept that emerged out of early industrialisation in England. Thompson, much like Marx, takes England as his case story therefore the argument can at least be taken into account for “western capitalism”. Thomas C. Smith (1986), for example, shows that the time perception in Japan (with the example of the Tokugawa peasant time) between peasant time and factory time has a different story⁴. Within the model above the activity of “work” being embedded into some sort of organizations or institutions that are connected to (or organized the same way as) livelihood or subsistence, becomes defined in terms of time. “Organised in the same way” has something to do with structure and time. The task-orientation for - say an

⁴ Thomas Smith argues that Thompson’s approach of a “cultural conflict over time-discipline” (42) is not universally valid. The Tokuwaga peasants (Japan) show that although being task-oriented had a “lively appreciation of time”, that survived the coming of the factories and thereby did not bring about changes in time perception.

artist's work - is also governed by time in this sense, and even "non work" becomes defined in terms of "free time".

Hannah Arendt (*The Human Condition*, 1958) has a different approach to "work" and "labour". She roots her concepts in Greek thought and shows how they changed throughout history. The notion of the *Vita Activa* as opposed to *Vita Contemplativa*, is divided into the terms labour, work and action. Arendt shows the constructs that emerged out of the Greek *Polis*, and the implications they have in the modern society: The private and the public, the natural earth and the artificial world, and the emergence of society in the nation state, and their connections to human action, work and labour. I take her into account mainly to show the meaning attached to the separation of "work" and "labour" on a theoretical level, and its implications in this thesis. Arendt (1958: 7) sees the term labour as "the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body" different to term work that "provides an 'artificial' world of things, distinctly different from all natural surroundings". Action has to do with the "plurality of men", an activity that takes place directly between humans, such as politics. Although Arendt emphasises work and labour as activity, she also sees the difference in the products that they yield. Labour produces goods for subsistence without durability, work produces goods that constitute the artificial world around us, and action exists in all human plurality: "to speak and to think, to see and to be seen, to hear and to be heard" (ibid.). Important to Arendt's approach is that she sees "labour", "work" and "action" as being part of a strict hierarchy where action within the Greek world was the most valuable (becoming replaced by *vita contemplativa*, that is pure thought). The problem she sees in history is that the hierarchy became twisted without regard to the context. What happened was that the difference between "the labour of our body and the work of our hands" (ibid.: 85), which is the difference of *animal laborans* and *homo faber* became overlooked, or simply exchanged, by productive and unproductive labour such as in Marx's and Adam Smith's theories. Whereas the Greeks placed "labour" within the household (slaves and women) and "work" in public, because it created something durable, the modern age is intermingling them both under one term. "The modern age in general and Karl Marx in particular, overwhelmed, as it were, by the unprecedented actual productivity of Western mankind, had an almost irresistible tendency to look upon all

labor as work and to speak of the *animal laborans* in terms much more fitting for *homo faber*, hoping all the time that only one more step was needed to eliminate labor and necessity altogether” (ibid.: 87). Arendt thereby criticises Marx for the glorification of all “work”.

Arendt’s approach opens up a thinking of work in terms of *creating something* as well as thinking of labour in terms of *producing only for the sake of consumption*. She sees the development of our society (as a labouring society, a society of jobholders) in the growing amount of consumption developing to a world where goods are produced and consumed at the very day they are made (and therefore all activity becomes labour). I think she is right when she refers to Marx as only talking about *homo faber* with all his emphasis on the productivity of work. What is interesting about her approach in this thesis is the outlook at work in the service industry, which I think would be in accordance with her, pure *animal laborans*, and to look at how it becomes *creative* (see chapter 10).

The two approaches on the “problem of defining work” show possible perspectives that are firstly concerned with the activity as such, and secondly concerned with the outcome of the activity. The perception of time, in Thompson’s article, surrounds and embeds “work” in a historical and social context, whereas Arendt deals with the quality of the activity rooted in Greek philosophy. The model (Figure 1) above thus expands:

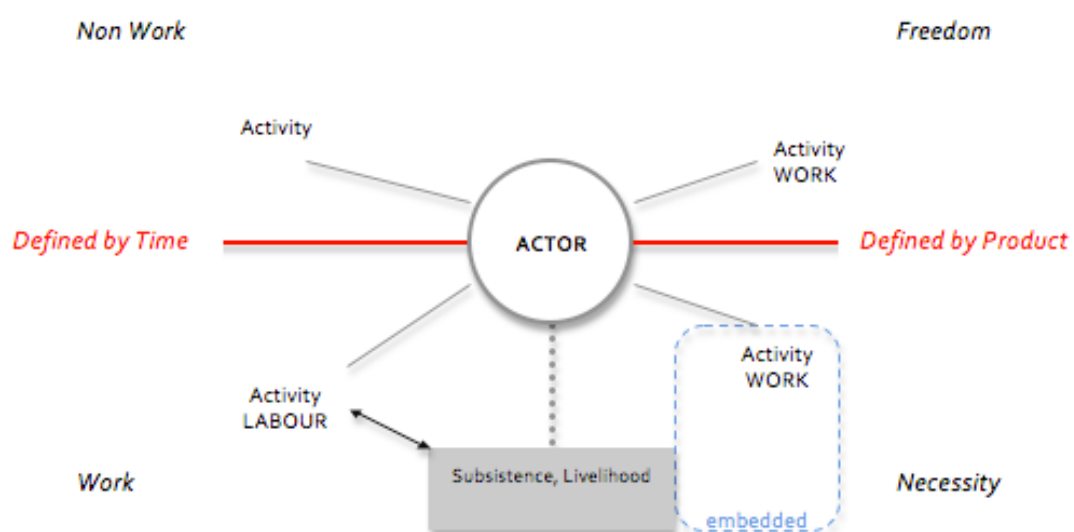


Figure 2. What is Work? Time and Product. (Source: Author)

The division of both sections “work” and “non work” become defined in terms of time, and thereby become rooted in historical perceptions of time. In the other approach the referring layers “Freedom” and “Necessity” become defined in terms of the product. The activity that is directly connected to subsistence is - in the words of Arendt - “labour”, and the activity of “work” in the sense of “creating artificial goods that have durability”, can be both necessity or freedom, because it is not by definition bound to necessity, it is not part of the biological process of the body.

To show the emergence of the concept “work” as being so central in economic theory (*Political Perspectives on Work*) I will go into further detail with the theory of Karl Marx and Adam Smith, the forerunners.

Conclusive Arguments One

The perception of time in “western capitalism” is essential to the division between work and leisure. It has a specific date and even place of origin that is controlled by specific circumstances. These considerations aim to think of the concept “work”, as opposite of the concept “leisure”, as dependent on context in a certain social as well as political framework.

The concept “work” refers to activities, which are part of a hierarchy. The abstraction of all activities, embedded into institutions such as the money market, as work, has political reasons. These considerations aim to think of the concept “work” as still influenced by the “original” hierarchy of the activities (labour, work, action).

2.2 Political Perspectives on “Work”. Adam Smith and Karl Marx

For an understanding of the concept labour/work as I approach it, one has to engage in political economy. Mainly there “labour” became the essential human activity that is meant to explain all human development on a large scale. Smith together with

Ricardo is the founder of classical economics and their concept of “labour” shaped the disciplines of economics until today. Marx criticised certain aspects in Smith’s theory and his analysis of capitalism is very helpful in critically assessing the principle foundations of “labour”. I refer to Marx only in the sense of his conceptual framework in connection to labour in his early writings as well as the critique in *Capital I*. I do not deal with Marx as evolutionist or historian, but only with his theory of how he understood the concept and the implications of labour. The points that are analysed in this chapter are Smith’s theory of labour in contrast to Marx: the division of labour, value theory of labour, use value and abstract value of labour and alienation.

In the “Wealth of Nations” (2007: 5) Smith defines the annual labour of every nation as “the fund of which originally supplied with all the necessities and conveniences of life which it annually consumes, and which consist always either in the immediate produce of that labour, or in what is purchased with that produce from other nations”. In this definition labour becomes defined in terms of the activity that produces the necessities and commodities of life. It is not labour itself but the division of labour that is the source of wealth. Smith (ibid.: 9) sees “the greatest improvement in the productive powers of labour” being the effect of the division of labour. The division of labour lies within a certain propensity of human nature; “the propensity to truck, barter, and exchange one thing for another” (ibid.: 19).

Smith is the first who understands labour in such a general and abstract sense, and is only able to do so because of the changing conditions of his time. Spittler (2008: 51) argues that this modern concept of labour can only arise in capitalism “where individuals easily move from one job to another and are indifferent to the kind of work they do” where one form of labour no longer retains dominance. Referring to the thoughts of E.P. Thompson it is the shift towards a time-oriented labour (labour force as commodity) that makes this generalization possible. The concept has its roots in Bourgeois society, and is strongly linked to the evolutionary worldview of that time (18th century England). The assumption of the highest forms of production that was essential to the economy of the Bourgeois society made it possible to assume that “labour in general existed in all previous societies”, just not quite as developed (Spittler 2008: 51). The value of the product is, on the one hand, determined by the labour that is needed to produce the product (this is mostly the case in ‘primitive’

societies), and on the other hand, through exchange of the product (demand and supply in 'civilised' societies) (see Seiser, Mader 2006). Nevertheless Smith argues that "Labour, therefore, it appears evidently, is the only universal, as well as the only accurate measure of value, or the only standard by which we can compare the values of different commodities at all times and at all places" (Smith 1776: 1.5.17). This later became known as "the objective and subjective theory of value" (Seiser, Mader 2006).

To sum up Smith defines labour as part of human nature (provide means for necessities and conveniences) that sooner or later will lead to the division of labour as the source for all wealth. This propensity in human nature led some of his interpreters to the concept of the *homo oeconomicus*.

Keith Hart (2009) describes Marx as the greatest economic anthropologist of all time, and Gerd Spittler (2008: 45) deals with Marx as "the greatest influence" on the Anthropology of Work. Spittler divides his approach on Marx into the late writings of Marx (mainly *Capital I*, 1867), and the early writings ("*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*" published in German 1932 and the "*Outline of the Critique of Political Economy*" published in German 1939) that did not become accessible in English until the late 1960's. According to him these publications promoted the Marxist renaissance in the 60's and 70's.

For Marx the point of departure is not labour (as activity) but labour power that is "used" in labour. (Marx 1972: 169) It is labour power, "the aggregate of those bodily and mental capabilities existing in a human being, which he exercises whenever he produces a use-value of any kind" (Marx 1972: 154) that is bought and sold. The treatment of labour power as a thing people can buy and sell, as a commodity, is the key to understanding capitalism in Marx's sense (see also Durrenberger 2005: 125). The theory of surplus value in chapter five of *Capital I*, is argued as follows: The uniqueness of the commodity labour is its capability to produce more than it needs for its own recreation. All other commodities are valued in the sense of the "labour embodied in them", but human labour produces surplus value. "The daily cost of maintenance of labour power, and the daily output of labour power, are two very different things" (Marx 1972: 187). The labour power that produces the subsistence of the labourer might only be half a day, where the labourer is able to work the whole

day, and therefore produces surplus value for the capitalist who has bought his labour power.

Hannah Arendt (1958: 88) sums up Marx' approach: "This productivity does not lie in any of labor's products but in the human 'power', whose strength is not exhausted when it has produced the means of its own subsistence and survival but is capable of producing a 'surplus', that is, more than is necessary for its own 'reproduction'".

For Marx labour has a "twofold character" embodied in commodities. "On the one hand, all human labour is, physiologically speaking, the expenditure of human labour power; and thus, as homogeneous or abstract human labour, it creates the value of commodities. On the other hand, all labour is the expenditure of human labour powering a special, purposive form; and thus, as concrete useful labour, it creates use-values" (Marx 1972: 16). The twofold character of labour in the commodity manifests itself in a "bodily form" (useful objects) and a "value form" (depositories of value) (ibid.: 17).

This concept of labour is strongly connected to his concept of value. Marx's critique of political economy is concerned with the theory of value. According to Marx value is not something inherent in a commodity, but part of a social framework. Whereas Smith sees the value of a commodity being increased by the labour inherent in it, and therefore the division of labour as a source for all wealth, Marx argues that the value of a commodity in capitalism is dominated by exchange and not by use (see Morrison, 1995). This means that the value of one commodity should be quantitatively represented in the value of another. The exchange value becomes independent of the use value and merely defined quantitatively. "First, whenever commodity exchange takes place it is abstracted from use because only the common element of quantity determines exchange" (Morrison 1995: 63). The consequence for labour is that qualitative distinctions begin to distinguish two different activities due to labour time (a similar argument that E.P. Thompson makes). "Marx believed that it is precisely the 'act of equating' the labor of the shoemaker with the labor of the coatmaker that reduces both of their different kinds of labour to characteristics they have in common" (Morrison 1995: 64).

This concept leads Marx to the dual character of labour, which is useful as well as abstract labour. His explanation of useful labour is similar to the elements that are in the definitions in the following chapter that all deal with labour as the expenditure of

human energy to meet material needs. "Labor in its useful form is thus a condition of human existence since it serves a specific material purpose – to sustain life. Labor in its useful form is, therefore, independent of society and is thus a simple condition of human life" (Morrison 1995: 66). Conceiving labour in abstract terms, that means quantitatively in labour time makes it possible to summarize qualitatively different activities under the same term and with the comparable criteria of expenditure of energy. This is the perspective of capitalism that "reduces all useful labor to a certain amount of movement, nerve, muscle etc" (Morrison 1995: 68).

In Marx's early writings the concepts of self-creation and alienation through labour come to the foreground, because only there Marx refers to labour more as an activity, rather than labour as the expenditure of labour power. In Spittler's opinion (2008: 55) Marx's rather mechanical emphasis on labour power can probably also be due to the socio-historical context of the time during which he wrote *Capital I*. Spittler mentions Helmholtz as well as others (in the 1850's), who applied the concept of work systematically to the functioning of machines, and took man as a model for the machine that might have influenced Marx: "the naturalist and mechanical conception of labour power begins to dominate in Marx's writings at the time when Helmholtz's public lectures took place".

Spittler places great emphasis in his book "Founders of the Anthropology of Work" (2008) on the German authors that influenced Marx. German literature in romanticism (Schlegel, Eichendorff, etc.) praised the laziness of leisure, the idleness that is preferred to work, and, together with Fourier, who saw work as attractive for everybody if distributed properly, they are Spittler's points of departure (ibid.: 30ff). "Most 19th century authors were in agreement that man is idle by nature. [...] Most authors were concerned with the question of how it is possible that man is willing to perform regular work despite his tendency to indolence" (ibid.: 37). German classicism on the other hand, under Herder and Goethe, was the foundation, together with German philosophers like Hegel, to upgrade the value of work and the work ethos. Hegel "raises work to its highest standing" (ibid.: 40) and Spittler (2008: 40) sees Hegel's "Lordship and Bondage" in "The Phenomenology of Spirit" (1807), as the key text to Marx's theories. There, Hegel there argues how the bondsman transforms not only nature through his labour, but he transforms himself. For Marx,

this became the self-creation of man through labour. For Hegel (Morrison 1995: 88) the process of 'self-actualization' is meant to describe humans as beings that can never be completely developed, that they realize themselves always in relation to obstacles that act against them. Hegel sees this struggle between "the individual and the external world in terms of abstract forces" (ibid.). For Marx the struggle is not in thought, but a material struggle where humans perceive society that was originally a natural extension of their nature as alien, and thus standing over and against them (ibid.).

Morrison (1995: 92) describes Marx's concept of alienation in his *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts* in the three functions of labouring:

"First, it connects them to nature insofar as they are reliant on the means of production to fulfil themselves by producing food, shelter and clothing. In this sense they are connected to the means of production in terms of economic subsistence and survival. Second, labor connects them to the means of self-affirmation since it helps them gain control over nature and facilitate well-being and existence. Third, it connects them to the product of their labor to the extent that the product has a use value which is directly used as a means of existence"

Alienation is therefore the break with the connection of the self-defining aspect to the labouring activity. In capitalism the worker produces for the capitalist. The means of production do not belong to him. They stand above and against him and are opposed to him "as an alien thing" (ibid.). "As exchange becomes the dominant social relation, product alienation becomes greatest when the workers cannot use the product they produce" (Morrison 1995: 93).

Because labour is external to the worker, it belongs to the capitalist. The worker is alienated from his activity. Marx criticises Smith in saying, that only labour in capitalism, in class societies is seen as forced labour and non-labour as happiness and freedom, due to the alienation of labour.

"First, the fact that labour is external to the worker – i.e., does not belong to his intrinsic nature; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not feel content but unhappy, does not develop freely his mental and physical energy, but mortifies his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He feels home when he is not working, and when he is working he does not feel at home. His labour is therefore not voluntary but coerced, it is forced labour. It is therefore not the satisfaction of a need; it is merely a means to satisfy need external to it" (Marx 1975: 275; cited from Spittler 2008: 47).

The worker therefore sees his work merely as a means of living, of fulfilling immediate economic needs. According to Marx, when all social relationships are transformed into economic relationships, humans enter into competition with each other and become alienated from each other. This breaks the social relationships of humans as part of the human social community (see also Morrison 1995). I will refer to the writings of Marx and Smith later in the ethnography. For now the initial model becomes more complex with the thoughts expressed above:

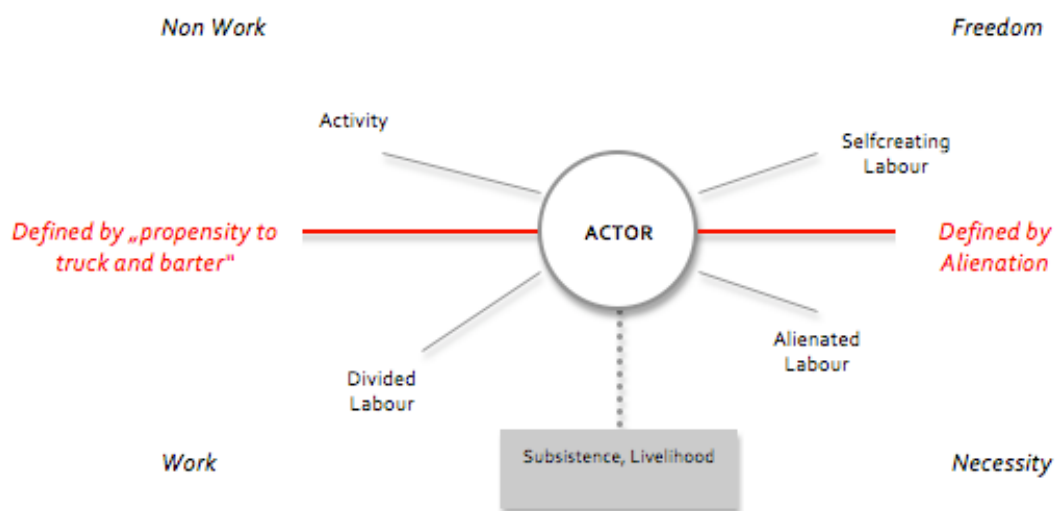


Figure 3. What is Work? Labour and Alienation. (Source: Author)

For Adam Smith the “propensity to truck and barter” that humans have is leading necessarily to the division of labour and therefore to the “wealth of nations”. Figure 3 shows this propensity as a division of work and non-work to illustrate Smith’s approach in connection to Marx’s. For Marx alienation is central for transforming free labour (that is self-creating) to forced labour, and thereby making the division of labour and non-labour meaningful.

Conclusive Arguments Two

Adam Smith’s theories were crucial to the upgrade of the productive activities that he calls “labor”, because he was the first to define it as the source for all wealth of nations. Human nature is responsible for the division of labour that,

as the crucial factor, makes human kind prosperous. These considerations aim to think of the concept “work”, as changed with Adam Smith, on an abstract level, as source for all wealth.

Karl Marx deals with labour, in terms of labour power, on a theoretical level, to criticise the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist, as the owner of the means of production. These considerations aim to think of the concept “work” as activity that was theorized in Marx’s early writing in terms of alienation, and there opened up considerations of “work” as “selfcreating activity”, as activity of and towards the worker, and thereby questioning Smith’s perspective.

2.3 An Anthropological Perspective on “Work”. Gerd Spittler

At this point one can agree that the concept of “work” within this thesis is a question of context. In the following I will briefly go into detail of how the definitions surrounding this concept are made, choosing a few anthropologists that dealt with “work” or “labour” on a theoretical level.

“Within every society work has a number of very different meanings” (Wallman 1979: 1).

“Work may be defined as the production, management or conversion of the resources [Land, Labour, Capital & Time, Information, Identity] necessary to livelihood” (Wallman 1979: 2).

“To meet their material needs, people produce, distribute and consume goods” (Durrenberger 2005: 125).

“All useful products are the creation of human labor” (ibid.: vii).

“Every social order has to recruit labor, whether by wages, slavery, households or lineages – and organize, direct, or channel labor to determine who does what, when” (ibid.: 1).

“Work is necessary for the survival of every society” (Spittler 2008: 11).

“No one would seriously deny that in all societies people perform work in the sense of producing food and articles of daily use and providing services for others. Work is necessary for the survival of every society” (ibid.: 12).

"In the West we commonly gave the name of work to all the activities by which we extract from nature the means of our existence. Today however we have widened its meaning to include all the activities for which we achieve payment" (Godelier, 1980: 167).

"Work is the expenditure of human energy, to accomplish an end, with some sacrifice of comfort and leisure" (Firth 1980).

The definitions are made up of numerous elements. It is obvious that the starting element is a somewhat "no one would deny" argument (see Spittler, Walman, Applebaum, etc). This refers to the fact that human beings produce food, shelter and clothing for their subsistence. The abstraction at the first level subsumes all the activities that are connected to that kind of production. Thereby the notion of necessity becomes crucial for work.

In a second step the activities that are connected to distribution of the products necessary for subsistence are applied to the concept of work. This is the material basis of the definitions. The "no one would deny" elements of the concept, referring to human nature, then become embedded in the broader framework of the economy. This is the second level of abstraction. The economy can be divided analytically into production, distribution and consumption (the means to meet material needs) of a society, a group of people. Within the framework of the economy, work becomes the chief unit of activities that connects the facts of 'human nature' to the other elements. In Spittler's (2008) approach on "economic reductionism" (further below) it seems as if the necessity as part of subsistence becomes replaced by necessity as part of livelihood, using the same reference to nature so that work explains itself. In this sense the question surrounds the notion of necessity for livelihood, as a central concept of our time. The fact that humans need to work in order to obtain their subsistence, as one single definition is not helpful to break down what has become of the concept "work", and the question of "what, in fact, is livelihood?". The abstraction, based on materialistic facts, gives reason for economic, technological and ecological circumstances that are important because they shape the form of the activity. They are nevertheless not capable of explaining why or how work became so complex. What is the meaning of work in a broader framework where there are highly abstract concepts such as occupations, alienation, social relationships, symbolic value,

identity, money, rationality, corporate identity, corporate culture etc? Does “work” not require these elements, crucial to the activity to be explained? Furthermore does it need to question and to look ethnographically behind the connection to the “no one would deny” character of the activity, than to take it as an essential point of departure?

Gerd Spittler (2008: 12) focuses on the problem of defining “work”, as reduced from other factors, rather than seeing it as its own “autonomous behaviour”. He points out three reductionisms that are common to explain the concept of “work”. The first one is “economic reductionism”. In the model (Figure 1) all the activities that I put in the “work”-layer are defined either by the fact of subsistence or livelihood, or by systems that are organised in the same way. In Spittler’s (ibid.) words this perspective does not need any closer investigation, because the activity is derived from the system it is embedded in (e.g. the money market). He then mentions the ecological and technological systems, where “work” gets reduced. In other words the ecological conditions (being it herders or agriculturalists), or the technological conditions (the usage of the tool and the material) is defining the concept. Spittler does not see economy, ecology and technology as worthless for an understanding of work, but he stresses the “reference of the activities of human beings” (ibid.: 13).

Spittler (ibid.: 14) points at the same problem that the model (figure 1) produced: “Work is more than just a feat of strength with a purposive rationality controlled by mechanical logic; it can be understood only within a meaningful context”. Spittler deals with these implications of the concept of “work” ethnographically in his books (among others) *“Arbeit in Afrika”* (1996), *“Hirtenarbeit: Die Welt der Kamelhirten und Ziegenhirtinnen von Timia”* (1998) and theoretically in the cited book above *“Founders of the Anthropology of Work”* (2008). It shall become obvious that his thoughts are valuable for my project (a Starbucks store in Chicago) as well.

The levels of abstraction referring to the concept of work give reason to place it in economic anthropology (see section 3.1). Taking the concept of work in its second abstraction (as element of the economy) an anthropological perspective can observe what elements surround the activity, how the activity is embedded in a social reality.

Conclusive Arguments Three

These considerations aim to think of the concept “work” as an activity not (only) reduced from certain circumstances, fully and meaningfully approached with fieldwork.

3 “Work” and Economic Anthropology

The aim of this chapter is to give a broad overview to the sub-discipline *Economic Anthropology (or the Anthropology of Economic Life)*, and to possibly root an *Anthropology of Work* within it. Among others I mainly refer to James Carrier’s (2005) “A Handbook of Economic Anthropology”, as well as the lectures of Keith Hart (2009, University of Chicago) “Economic Anthropology: A Short History” and the online version of the course “Ökonomische Anthropologie” (2007, University of Vienna: Elke Mader, Gertraud Seiser).

3.1 What is the Anthropology of Economic Life?

To answer this question it has to be clarified what can be meant by economic life. Carrier (2005: 1) defines ‘economic life’ as: “the activities through which people produce, circulate and consume things, the ways that people and societies secure their subsistence or provision themselves”. Carrier takes ‘things’ as referring to material as well as immaterial objects. Anthropology of economic life is therefore the anthropological perspective on these activities (ibid.). First of all, it is important to see the difficulty concerning the ‘anthropological perspective’, because there is far more than just one, which also led to the numerous approaches in economic anthropology, as well as to the significant discussion from the 50’s to the 70’s between substantivists and formalists.

What distinguishes this perspective different from others? The basis of the anthropological perspective is mainly rooted in the thoughts of Bronislaw Malinowski (1922, *Argonauts of the western Pacific*) and his emphasis on extended fieldwork.

Carrier (2005: 2) subsumes this perspective under the terms empirical and naturalistic: "It rests on the observation (empirical) of people's lives as they live them (naturalistic)". Economic anthropology therefore can be meant to describe non-western economies, as well as western economies, and challenge them due to the different approaches from directions such as neoclassical economics. The aim thereby is still to describe and understand human behaviour, and therefore develop theories and methods, as it is common in anthropology.

In Carrier's definition above, 'economic activities' in which people engage can be seen as part of larger systems such as production, circulation and consumption. This approach leads to questions regarding the relationship between and within these systems as well as the relationship to other systems like religion, kinship and so on. Polanyi (1944, 1957) challenged, in this sense, the economic theories of his time when he saw the uniqueness of the new industrialized economy in being *disembedded* from the social matrix, contrary to e.g. tribal societies, where economic activities are interwoven with social relationships. Polanyi's critique in "The Great Transformation" (1944), and even more so in his "Trade and Market in the Early Empires" (1957), all in context of the historical circumstances of that time (World War II, Great Depression, Cold War, etc.) can be seen as a catalyst for the emergence of the sub-discipline, often as an answer to the economists in the 'neo-classical' tradition as "being critical of the discipline's claim to be universally valid" (Hart 2007, website). The aim of Polanyi and his students was therefore to develop a "set of conceptual tools for analysing, pre-capitalist, embedded economies" (Isaac 2005: 15). Polanyi (1957) coined the two meanings of economics: substantive and formal. According to Polanyi the formal meaning works only in industrialized market systems, and for comparative economics only the substantivist (ibid.). As an example Polanyi takes Malinowski's Kula trade to show the embeddedness of the factors of production, the organization via reciprocity and redistribution, as well as the absence of a price-setting market principle and fixed market places. "The substantive meaning of economic derives from man's dependence for his living upon nature and his fellows. It refers to the interchange with his natural and social environment, in so far as this results in supplying him with the means of material want satisfaction" (Polanyi 1957: 243).

The approaches that emerged within economic anthropology were dedicated to this project, either to challenge contemporary economics or to substantiate its universal validity. Formalism as closely bound to the neo-liberal paradigm (universal validity for individual maximizing under scarcity) can be traced back into the 1870's with Mill's liberal utilitarianism, and the notion of diminishing marginal utility of Jevons, Mengers and Walras, at the same time (Hart 2006). Furthermore these roots go back to the founder of classical economics Adam Smith (1776). What is important, as mentioned before is Smith's notion of human nature that later became interpreted as the *homo oeconomicus*. The *homo oeconomicus* as interpreted by liberal economists is that humans are, by nature, utility maximising individuals, so the economy is driven by competition and self-interest. Smith's concept, together with Mill's liberal utilitarianism and his followers, is the basis for the formalist paradigm with the assumption that choices are made everywhere in fundamentally the same way in order to maximize. Formalism can be seen as the generalization of the economist's toolkit, which is utility-maximising under scarcity. Firth, as "the first formalist" (Hart 2007), tried to apply the economic principles of rational choice to ethnographic data of non-western societies.

The discussion between substantivism and formalism has its origins in the late 19th century where the historical economist Schmoller and the marginalist Menger discussed the same principles in the *Methodenstreit*. (see Hart 2007, Spittler 2008: 25). The dispute between formalists and substantivists renewed Marxist theories as a different approach. The influential group of political economists were mainly the French structural Marxists in the late 1960's, e.g. Claude Meillassoux, Maurice Godelier etc.

In the Marxist political economy (19th century) it is the economy that determines the mode of production. Different from formalists and substantivists this approach treats the economy from the point of view of production. "The economic structure of society is the real basis on which the juridical and political superstructure is raised and on which definitive forms of social thought correspond" (Marx Capital I: 82). The *modes of production* differ from each other through their *relations of production*, who in the last instance control the *means of production*. The key to understanding "any economy and society, is to understand who (that is, which strata or classes) controls

the means of production, by which every society makes provisions for its material existence and continuity” (Robotham 2005: 43).

The substantivist perspective got renewed in the culturalistic approach. This approach, according to Sahlins (2003 [1972]), and in the tradition of substantivism, sees economy “as a function rather than a structure”. He sees his *Stone Age Economics* (1972) as a contribution to a new era of “cultural economics”, together with Stephen Gudeman and Richard Wilk (Sahlins 2003 [1972]: ix). Sahlins’ questions the view on economics as a separate sphere of activities and not as encompassed in cultural order. He thereby widens the validity of Polanyi’s assumption of embeddedness to all economics. In Sahlins’ view, economic anthropology has to be replaced by “truly anthropological economics” (ibid.). He stresses the problem of seeing economics as a mixture of self-satisfaction and social constraint. “If you’re not maximizing material utility, you must be satisfying some other, purely social value” (ibid.: xi). That the cultural is subordinated to the economic rational only appears to be so, because they belong to “incommensurable orders of discourse” (ibid.). The way they are brought together is by translating cultural conditions into terms of the self-satisfying “rational” subject.

Sahlins states the importance for anthropological economics *instead* of economic anthropology, to be an awareness of the fact that “in the West as in the Rest, rationality is an expression of the culture, of its meaningful system of utilities, not the antithesis” (ibid.: xiii). His aim seems to be not to look at “the economic” as a separate system, but as embedded and encompassed in the cultural order.

This approach as a whole shifts away from the perspective on economic life as activities performed within production, distribution and consumption. Furthermore it shifts away from the aim of economic anthropology to challenge economic theories by using their own concepts. “I argue that economies and economic theories are social constructions. [...] My aim, then, is to analyze models of livelihood as cultural constructions. I explain such models by showing how and why they fit together, and I claim that analysis of this type yields an understanding not afforded by the use of Western models” (Gudeman 1986: viii).

Gudeman’s argument is similar to the thoughts of the German anthropologist Bärmann-Steiner (1957: 174), who stresses the importance of making a difference between economic facts, which, according to him, do not exist, and economic

relations in which people engage. This is also similar to Carrier's definition of the economic life, when he is referring to things as material as well as immaterial ("[...] knowledge and myth, names and charms, and so on") which can only become defined in terms of relations. Carrier (2005: 4) sees the different approaches on the one hand in studying the "form of thought" (e.g. utility maximization), or on the other hand studying the "substance of the activity [...] in larger social and cultural frames". Bärmann-Steiner (1957:175) takes a somewhat extreme position and simply concludes: "My position is that when we deal with economic relationships we speak of social relationships which can be described in a certain way". He therefore sees the term as descriptive terminology. This might be true, but appears too narrow considering that fifty years later

"Britain and America have dominated global capitalism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries respectively and so, gradually, the peoples of the world have come to absorb something of their economic terminology as common usage. All of these issues and more have to be addressed if 'the economy' is not to be trapped in ethnocentric abstraction" (Hart 2007 website).

3.2 Economic Anthropology and an Anthropology of Work

If one takes economics in this sense as referring to production, distribution and consumption of material and immaterial things (Carrier 2005, Durrenberger 2006), then work is the unit, the activity that is most crucial for all of the three layers. If Economic Anthropology explains how these systems are organized and how they operate, relate to each other, etc. (Durrenberger 2006: 2) then the Anthropology of Work is considered with the activities that underlie these systems. In that sense it seems as if Economic Anthropology was the macro-perspective where Anthropology of Work is one element in the micro-perspective. It is thereby not said which element of the system 'economy' it is and how it relates to others.

The broad definition of Economic Anthropology covers a wide range of activities. As mentioned above, Bärmann-Steiner's (1957) approach of seeing the term 'economic' as a descriptive terminology that refers to relationships more than to facts is helpful in that sense. The problem of defining 'economy', as mentioned above, is not yet solved, "Does it refer to an attitude of mind or something out there? Is it ideal or

material? Does it refer to individuals or collectivities? Perhaps to all of these – in which case, we should focus on the links between them” (Hart 2007, website).

What about work? Work is first of all defined as an activity, but is it an element of these systems, that can be defined in the same terms? Again the question: can it be reduced from ecology, technology or economy in the words of Gerd Spittler (2008)? Then again the question has to be answered, whether it makes sense to define “work”, or if this already is an ethnocentric approach. If the ‘economy’ is not to be seen as a separate system but encompassed into cultural orders (Sahlins, 2003 [1972]), then work, as relating to the activity of production, distribution and consumption, becomes a descriptive terminology for what “western capitalism” considers to be work. Work can thereby be seen only as activity within the cultural order, being defined in terms of cultural norms and habitus rather than by production and distribution.

An attempt at defining work (Wallman 1979) can either be too general, so that anthropology of work becomes anthropology in general, or too specific, so that it is not worth defining, but only relevant in specific contexts. The Society for the Anthropology of Work, founded in 1975 (Nash 1988), does not place the Anthropology of Work within the framework of Economic Anthropology. It is not clear what exactly “work” is, only that it is not “limited to ‘labor’, to the workplace or even to the production of material goods” (Nash 1988: 1). The column of June Nash in the Anthropology of Work Review (ibid.) shows more what “work” is not, than what it is exactly: “not just technology, organisational culture, or a summary of the activities one does when receiving a wage [...] There are multiple forms of work within all societies” (ibid.: 1). Nash’s conclusion is that they begun to “think of work as the set of activities (some material, some not) one does to legitimate one’s claim on a social product; if this is so, what are the legitimate activities that constitute work in different societies? [...]” (ibid.: 2). She does not go into further details on how to operate with this definition, or what she means by “legitimate activities that constitute work”.

Spittler (2008: 12) sees the anthropology of work as a neglected field in anthropology that results to some extent in the “strong preference for the exotic” within anthropology. Spittler’s approach is to look at work as “autonomous behaviour”, as “meaningful activity”. He thereby stresses the importance of performance and meaningful context (see point 2.3) In his definition of work the “Necessities”

underlying the activity are important, but not the main object of inquiry for an ethnography. It is crucial to define the concept and to show its complexity. Spittler describes four main problems: the “Rationality Problem” deals with rationality as not “part of the definition, but part of the problem” (Spittler, 2008: 14). In the view of a group, the action is always rational; the “Institutional Problem” is similar to Polany’s concept of *embeddedness*. The question hereby is “How embedded is work in people’s life world (Lebenswelt)?” (Spittler, 2008: 14); the “Performance Problem” takes the different ways of performing work into account; and finally, the “Anthropological Problem” which deals with the significance of work for human beings.

Spittler’s approach is similar to Gudeman’s in the sense of shifting away from western models of economy. Spittler (2008) speaks nowhere of production or distribution of consumption but of performance, meaning, ethics, etc. “The anthropological aspect includes not only the meaning which work has for the people performing it, but also the question as to how constitutive work is for man. Is it only man who works or do animals work as well? Is work man’s basic distinctive feature?” (Spittler 2008: 18)

The Anthropology of Work, as I consider it for this thesis, deals with concepts that are part of the approaches in Economic Anthropology, and so depend on the various perspectives. The initial model is transformed with these perspectives and the key aspects that are taken into account when approaching an understanding of the concept work:

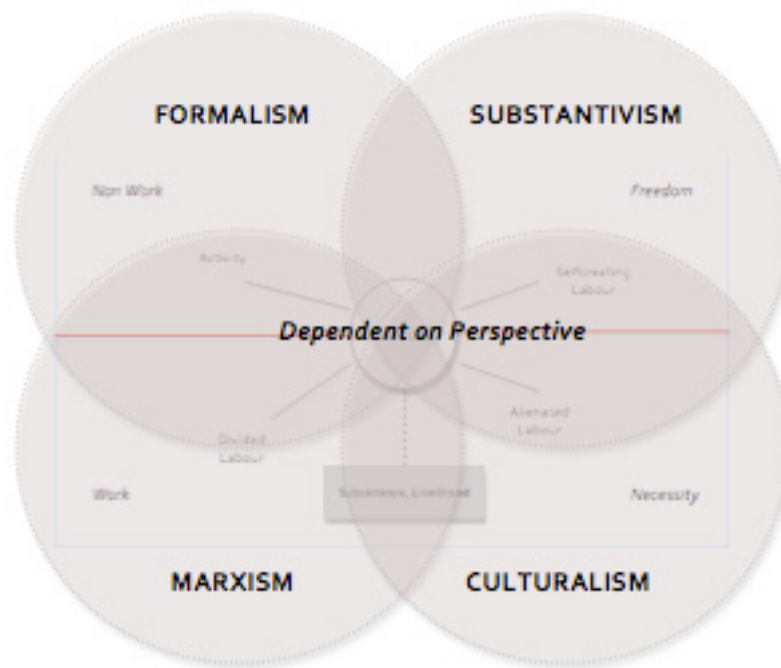


Figure 4. Work and Economic Anthropology. (Source: Author)

Not in each of the approaches there is a specific concern or emphasis on “work”, nor can the approaches be clearly divided. Nevertheless, basic assumptions may be identified and related to the historical circumstances within Economic Anthropology. In the sense of Spittler, Baermann-Steiner, Sahlins (2003) and Gudeman, the Anthropology of Work cannot be seen as one element in Economic Anthropology, but must be taken into account as a subject of its own. The interpretations that lead to systems like production, distribution and consumption can be seen as crucial, but they are perspectives nevertheless. “Work” regarded as autonomous behaviour can lead to questions about descriptive elements that can be extracted from the approaches in connection to work, such as Time, Identity, Information, Representation, Relations, Embeddedness, etc. as well as their relationships to one another. This, as well as the perspectives of economic anthropology that influenced my ethnography will be shown in Chapter 2. First, however, I will briefly take the Anthropology of Organisations into account, to shift away from the theoretical considerations above, and into a more practical oriented theory, as well as drives us closer to my field of research.

Conclusive Arguments Four

Work is part of economics, the chief unit of production, distribution and consumption. There are different perspectives on economics within anthropology, and thereby different approaches on the concept work. Work is embedded into a cultural order, into a social matrix (Polanyi, Sahlins). Work is controlled by the capitalist who owns the means of production (Marx). Work is a rational purpose activity, a means to an end, driven by utility maximizing.

These considerations aim to think of the concept “work” in anthropology as being dependent on perspectives, from various theoretical backgrounds. Much like this thesis as it will become obvious, is following selected theoretical thoughts, more than others, and thereby led by a *perspective*.

4.1 What is the Anthropology of Organisations?

In the same way as Economic Anthropology is the anthropological perspective (Carrier 2005) on the economic life of people, the Anthropology of Organisations or Business Anthropology can be seen as the anthropological perspective on the activities of people connected to businesses, organisations, to “workplaces” and institutions. I entitled this chapter the *Anthropology of Organisations*, because the emphasis of the following arguments always lies within the particular anthropological perspective rather than in a strictly located field. Seiser and Mader (2010) point out (referring to Baba 2006) that terms such as *Business Anthropology*, *Anthropology of Organisations* and *Industrial Anthropology* depend on different key aspects of research. Whereas Business Anthropology, established in North America during the 1980’s, and dealt mainly with private corporations, the term Anthropology of Organisations (GB) enfolded private as well as state owned and non-profit organisations. Nevertheless the terms (ibid.) all have a reasonably similar history in common and in the context of this thesis, I prefer *Anthropology of Organisations*, as mentioned above.

The Hawthorne Studies in the 1920s were the precursor to the Human Relation School. The findings of the Hawthorne Studies showed the importance of human relations within the work place and the efficiency of work. Jiménez (2007: xv) defines human relations as “the so-called quality of the social relationships that workers had at the workplace”. The study took place at Western Electric’s Hawthorne Works in Chicago, and was originally designed to study how physical stimuli affect the workers productivity (See Jordan 2003, Jiménez 2007). When Lloyd Warner joined the group, in 1931, that was led by the psychiatrist Elton Mayo, the following qualitative research pointed to a different direction: “The increase [of productivity] was a consequence of management’s interest in the workers, demonstrated by the presence of researchers like Warner” (Jordan 2003: 11). This increased the interest

in the *human relations* and blazed the trail for new concepts such as the *informal organisation*, *spontaneous cooperation* and *social relationships*, *social structure*, etc. that all were seen as decisive for work efficiency. Before the 1980's the discipline was not part of "mainstream anthropology", and limited to the group surrounding W. L. Warner in Chicago, and Max Gluckman in Manchester. The *Manchester Shop Floor Studies*, initiated by Gluckman in the 1950's, were a series of studies in five factories with different outcomes, each leading to a theoretical discussion about social context and interpretation (see Seiser, Mader 2010). I do not go further into detail with the history of the discipline because what is important to this thesis is the influence Anthropology had from the 1980's onwards with the increased awareness and rise of the culture concept within business economics.

The informal organisation approach emphasised the social context where the work took place, and gave rise to the usage of the "culture" construct within Business Economics (Jordan 2003, Smircich 1983). Jordan (2003: 40), referring to Heibert (1976), defines culture as "an integrated system of shared ideas (thoughts, ideals, attitudes), behaviours (actions), and material artefacts (objects) that characterize a group". She goes further by defining the characteristics of culture, and divides them into shared, learned, symbolic and adaptive characteristics. The rise of the culture-concept in business economics was various and widely spread. Smircich (1983: 255), among others, questioned the "cultural perspective", with its variety in applications, and shows the metaphors and concepts surrounding this perspective.

4.2 The Anthropology of Organisations and an Anthropology of Work

“Organizations are many and various, but they all have explicit rules, a division of labour, and aims that involve acting on or changing everyday life” (Hirsch/Gellner 2001: 2).

“Work” becomes partly embedded into the field of organisations.

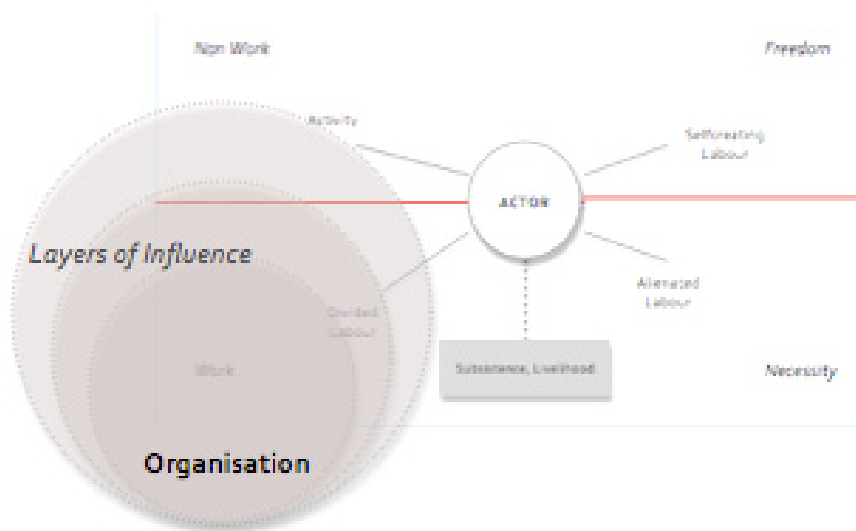


Figure 5. Work and the Anthropology of Organisations. (Source: Author)

The layers of influence depend on the outcome of ethnography. The question therefore is “What does the organization do, to the work of the people, as well as to their perception of their work?”. Furthermore, the question surrounds topics, such as how much a corporate culture, a corporate identity, corporate values, etc. can influence the everyday life of a person.

In my research I will follow this approach, and look closer at Starbucks’ corporate culture within chapter 6.2. Jordan (2003: 86) emphasises “the organisation as culture and all the components of the organization, such as organization structure, reward system, rules of behaviour, and goals, as components of the culture”. This is the first set of elements to be looked at.

Conclusive Arguments Five

The considerations aim to think of the concept “work” as embedded in an institution, defined and influenced by corporate as well as social norms of behaviour, corporate cultures, etc.

Chapter 2

Baristas⁵ at Starbucks

5 Introduction to Chapter Two

I chose Starbucks as my field of research for different reasons. First, I myself work as a waiter in a coffee shop in Vienna, and therefore have access to this kind of work and its environment. Second, during my semester abroad in Chicago during winter and spring of 2009, I lived together with two former baristas and managers of Starbucks stores in the USA. The two flatmates introduced me to various kinds of Starbucks literature and Starbucks philosophy, and were very helpful in guiding me through the research.

Starbucks, as a coffee-to-go restaurant, differs from fields such as the factory or the retail store. Whereas the factory consists of a production unit, and the retail store of a service unit, “the restaurant is a combination of production and service unit” (Whyte 1949: 19). A coffee shop is characterised by informal and flexible relationships, due to the customer - employee – manager work environment. This characteristic made it special to me doing my research in the store I chose, also because the access to information (informal chats and interviews), and participant observation was not too alien to the work environment. In the following ethnography I will shortly describe the Starbucks Company, its history and its product. Then I will introduce my fieldwork starting with the location and the store followed by the baristas interviewed. Section nine, ten and eleven summarise my findings. The structure of these last three

⁵ The term for “the coffee maker” – used by Starbucks, originally an Italian term for “barkeeper”

chapters is first “work” as a descriptive model (section 9), second “work” as a dynamic model (section 10) and third in summary, “work” as an inclusive model (section 11).

6 The Starbucks History and the Making of the Starbucks Experience

“People connect with Starbucks because they relate to what we stand for. It’s more than great coffee. It’s the romance of the coffee experience, the feeling of warmth and community people get in Starbucks stores. That tone is set by our baristas, who custom-make each espresso drink and explain the origins of different coffees” (Starbucks Founder Howard Schultz 1997: 5).

6.1 A Short History

The original Starbucks brand was founded 1971, in Seattle by Jerry Baldwin, Gordon Bowker and Zev Siegel (see Moore 2006), selling whole bean and ground coffee. Until 1981 it had four locations in Seattle and by the time Howard Schultz took over in 1987 the company consisted of six retail stores (ibid.). In 1992 Starbucks spread into the Northwest establishing 165 coffee shops and grew until now⁶ (2008) to worldwide 11000 locations. (ibid.). Howard Schultz shows in his biography *Pour your Heart into it* (1997) how he came up with the idea of the Starbucks cooperation based on the experience he made during a trip to Milan: “To the Italians, the coffee bar is not a diner, as coffee shops came to be in America in the 1950s and 1960s. It is an extension of the front porch, an extension of the home” (Schultz 1997: 52). Schultz took this concept of the *Italian ambience* and even Italian names such as *Café Latte*, *Barista* and *Espresso* to conquer the American market. His book is a success story that greatly resembles the *American dream*. Schultz was born in Brooklyn, New York, in federally subsidized housing. His family was poor, and Schultz writes that he knew from his childhood on that he would follow his dreams and become successful. “I dared to dream big dreams, and then I willed them to happen. I’m convinced that

⁶ Currently Starbucks is closing more stores than it opens for the first time since it started to expand, mainly due to the financial crisis and the downturn of the American economy (Washington Post, January, 2009).

most people can achieve their dreams and beyond if they have the determination to keep trying” (ibid.: 7). For Schultz this dream was to become economically successful, and furthermore to get “attained fulfilment and dignity from work that is meaningful” (ibid.: 4).

Starbucks as an economic success story (Moore 2006, Schultz 1997, Simmons 2005, Michelli 2007, etc) is interesting in many ways.

One is their marketing strategy that has to do with coffee in the sense of an experience and how they managed to emerge as a coffee shop in America, and then spreading out over the world. I am, however, more interested in the work of the baristas in the location I chose in Chicago, and how this “Starbucks culture” affects their perception of work.

6.2 Starbucks and “Corporate Culture”

Although profit is the last point on the Mission Statement (Schultz 1997: 139) of the company (“Recognize that profitability is essential to our future success”) it is crucial for understanding the method of *instrumentalisation* of the culture concept. Irene Götz (2000: 58) shows how the notion of culture in cultural sciences is supporting insights but must be differentiated from the notion of culture in business economics. Because of not being part of the business where the aim of maximising profit is the “blood of every company” (Moore 2006: 46), cultural sciences offer more independent perspectives. Götz (ibid.) describes this approach as being able to see a company as a social subsystem with set work standards, job profiles, mediated values and habitualized behaviour, as well as official constructs of meaning (e.g. the corporate image for the symbolic super elevation of the business reality). All of that is happening coincidentally, and in dynamic interchange with the world outside the company.

In this sense the question is not whether a company *has* a culture, and how weak or strong it is, but rather whether a company *is* a culture, ruled by cultural forms of expression. Or in the words of Jordan (2003), as I mentioned before, a system of shared ideas, behaviours and material artefacts. In the case of Starbucks those are founder myths (Howard Schultz from the visionary poor working class child to the

successful millionaire), visions (Schultz 1997: 52 “If we could re-create in America the authentic Italian coffee bar culture, it might resonate with other Americans the way it did with me. Starbucks could be a great *experience*, and not just a retail store”), rituals (“values walk” of Starbucks), products with symbolic meaning (“*Pour your heart into it*” Schultz 1997) and so on.

The main difference according to Götz (2000: 63), between cultural concepts of business economics and cultural concepts of cultural sciences is that culture is not understood as a conglomerate that consist of single elements such as stories and rituals, but as a complex net of meanings, the elements of which can only be understood within the whole context. In Götz’s view (2000: 68. referring to Habermas) the responsibilities of the cultural scientist therefore are: “*auf der Seite der Lebenswelt im Sinne von Habermas, deren normen- und bedürfnisorientiertes Handeln es inmitten des zweckrationalen, zielgeleiteten ökonomischen Denkens zu vertreten und zu schützen gilt*” (“directed towards the ‘lifeworld’ in the words of Habermas, whose actions aimed at norms and needs, amidst the goal and purpose oriented rationality of economic thought, is meant to be represented and protected”, translation: Author).

The following section mainly relies on the book by the business consultant Joseph Michelli *The Starbucks Experience* 2007. The book is introduced by Jim Elling (President until 2008), and consists of Michelli’s research in Starbucks and beyond. It is important to note that Michelli’s book is some kind of guideline on how to be successful in a business corporation, as so many of this sort of books that were published in the US with the popular emergence of concepts such as corporate culture, corporate identity, etc. in the 1990’s (see Götz 2000). Although Michelli follows this tradition, his research is very broad, and consists of internal Starbucks papers, inaccessible to anyone outside the company, including myself.

Michelli sees the exceptional success of Starbucks, its ability to continue opening so many stores (without becoming a franchising company), based on two levels. The unique corporate culture of Starbucks, lived by the managers gets passed down to its *partners*, who help the customers in having a unique experience. In Starbucks every employee is called a *partner* to flatten the hierarchy, and to express the involvement of every member in the success of the company. Since 1992, when the company

became public, partners who worked twenty hours or more per week could buy stock options at a specific discount and become shareholders of the company. Through this unconventional way employees, according to Michelli, became real partners, and appreciated “the direct link between their effort and the success of the business enterprise” (Michelli 2007: 7).

In addition to that, partners working for twenty hours or more a week receive full health insurance, but “the treatment that partners receive at Starbucks goes well beyond stock options and health insurance. For example, partners are given extensive training in product knowledge, guiding principles for success, personal empowerment, and the importance of creating warm customer experiences” (ibid.: 8). According to Michelli (ibid.) Starbucks spends more on training every year, than it does on advertising. The strong emphasis on the employees puts partners on the one side of Starbucks’ Mission Statement, on the other side, are the customers. Starbucks furthermore invented the notion of the “Third Place”, that “must capture a unique warmth that sets it apart from the first two places in most people’s lives: work and home” (ibid.: 12), that will become important later.

The Five Ways of Being

“When staff members understand how their efforts spark the business and uplift and change lives, they are more likely to exert the creative and passionate energy that gets noticed by customers” (Michelli 2007: 13)

Every employee in Starbucks is called a partner, and as soon as they begin to work at a coffee shop they receive the *Green Apron Book*. “It’s a pocket-sized book that puts into words some of the core ‘ways of being’ that you need in order to be successful at Starbucks”, writes Jim Alling, president of the Starbucks Corporation, in his introduction to Joseph Michelli’s *The Starbucks Experience (2007)*. The *Green Apron Book*, according to a barista in Starbucks (B fieldnotes: 05/08/2009), is only for internal use and employees, and thus not accessible to public view. I will therefore refer to Michelli’s descriptions.

The five ways of being, as they are referred to by Starbucks, are: *be welcoming, be genuine, be considerate, be knowledgeable* and *be involved*. They are meant to

show “how to personalize relationships with customers by giving to, connecting with and elevating customer interactions” (Michelli 2007: 21).

Starbucks provides the ways of being in the *Green Apron Book* and “the same marketing they use for selling the coffee to the people, ... it’s the same marketing for selling the values to the workers” (Interview Rob).

Be welcoming consists of assignments such as caring about customers with the key concern of “offering everyone a sense of belonging” (ibid.: 22). Remembering the name plays an important role because “customers long to have their uniqueness recognized” (ibid.). Starbucks developed a training game called the *Starbucks Experience from the Inside Out* for its partners. “The goal of the game is to secure a human connection with the customer. To do this, the partner tries to understand more than just the customer’s external presentation and attempts to understand the customer’s internal experience” (ibid.: 65).

The game is meant to create a playful workplace, where partners are placed into certain situations to judge not only the external presence of the customer but to put themselves into the internal experience as well. “Starbucks success alone should be proof that where there is detailed attention to recognition, training, and play there is profit” (ibid.: 75).

Be genuine forms a “quality of relationship” and is directed towards connecting, discovering and responding. “Ultimately, by connecting on a personal level, both customers and employees find enhanced meaning in ordinary moments” (ibid.: 27).

Be considerate: “For Starbucks, at the corporate level, ‘being considerate’ means exploring the long-term wellbeing of partners and those individuals whose lives the partners touch, all the while being mindful of the earth’s ability to sustain the demands that Starbucks places on it” (ibid.: 31).

For Starbucks, at the corporate level, this is summarized in the business term social responsibility “building schools and health clinics to supporting coffee farms”, “5 percent of Starbucks energy is wind energy”, etc. For Starbucks at the store level, consideration is meant to maintain a sense of community and respect for each other.

Be knowledgeable: “In the information age, no matter what we do for a living, we add values to our efforts when we gain work-related knowledge. More important, as we become more informed, our value to the business, our self-confidence, and the real impact we have on others all increase” (ibid.: 34). As mentioned above

Starbucks, according to Michelli, spends more on personnel training than it does on advertising.

Be involved refers to active participation in Starbucks. “Leaders encourage employees to go beyond just doing their day-to-day job, and instead invest attentive, creative, and passionate energy” (ibid.: 37). Howard Schultz (1997) sees people as willing to be part of something bigger than themselves. Involvement refers to community participation as well as engagement in innovative product design, store design and so on.

“It doesn’t matter what your business is; people want to make a difference. When leaders encourage involvement and the sharing of ideas that affect both the business and the community, the staff is given more opportunities to be more engaged and more active” (Schultz 1997: 43).

To keep the five ways of being in practice, “Starbucks partners, at the barista level, have access to something called Conversations and Connections, a tool used to facilitate discussion and regular storytelling about behaviours, actions, and language consistent with the Five Ways of Being. Conversations and Connections is provided so that in-store partners can read, analyze, and discuss customer stories” (Michelli 2007: 65). Referring back to the model within the anthropology of organisations, (Figure 5) the question for the ethnography is how much the organization, the cooperation Starbucks influences the workers perceptions of their “work”, as well as their “everyday life”.

7 The Place and The Store

The following descriptions are an excerpt from my fieldnotes (11th May, 2009) to introduce the store:

“I live in Chicago in an area called *Little Italy*. The area encloses the campus of the University of Illinois Chicago. It is only a five minutes walk, from the flat where I live to my field, a little Starbucks store in Taylor Street. The store is placed at a small piazza across from the *National Italian American Sports Hall of Fame*. The area’s name and its museum follow a tradition of Italian immigrants who settled in Taylor Street as of the late nineteenth century (Grinnell 2005). Numerous Italian shops, Pizza Restaurants etc. can be found here.

The piazza, one crosses when entering the Starbucks store, has a small fountain at its centre encircled by benches. In summer the piazza becomes a small gathering place for the neighbourhood and is also used by the Starbucks employees for their smoking breaks.

The store has no more than about seventy square meters with windows on both sides, facing the piazza and Taylor Street. The inside walls are painted according to Starbucks’ corporate design: the colours of the processing coffee bean: green when harvested to yellow, blue and red when roasting, to dark brown when ready to use. The store can be sketched as follows:

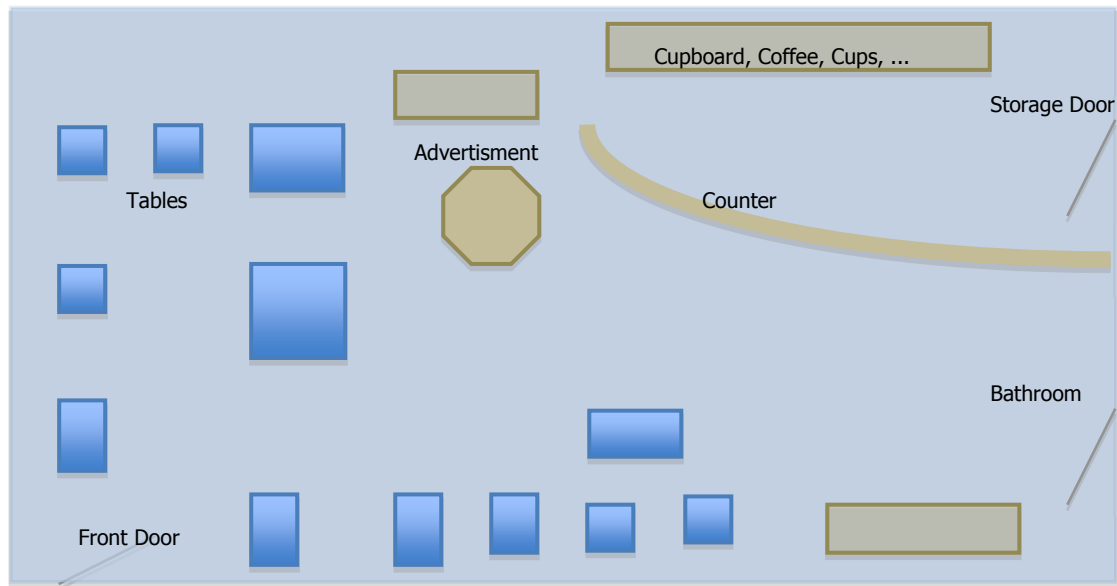


Figure 6. The Store. (Source: Author)

It is Monday the eleventh of May 12:24pm. Momentarily there are twelve customers sitting at the tables and three baristas working behind the counter. Nobody is cueing. Slow Jazz music is in the background, intermingled with a few voices of customers. Six out of the twelve customers are working on their laptops or reading books. At two tables there are people talking to each other. The baristas are cleaning the counter, disposing waste and refilling the espresso machines.

Right on the opposite of the entrance is a six square meter painting, very colourful with *Starbucks* handwritten in the middle. The painting is a mixture of abstract forms and circles together with people, figures and ornaments. On the bottom left side is the semitransparent Starbucks logo. The store is divided into two areas from the entrance to the back. In the area opposite the entrance in front of the painting, there are seven tables three of them right beneath the window that face Tailor Street. The entrance is localized at the left bottom corner of the store. When entering and approaching the counter that is in the other corner of the store (takes about one fifth of the whole place), one passes another assembling of tables to the right, alongside the wall. To the left one passes the retail items that Starbucks sells. On the first wooden shelf standing free in the room there is tea, chocolate, instant coffee and “Custom Flavours”. Right after that is a smaller shelf that looks like made out of cardboard with instant coffee and behind both are mugs and other coffee related items placed on a rack that is part of the wall. At the counter on the left side of the

register is packed coffee with games like chess and playing cards on top, alongside with pastries and orange juice. On the other side of the register is the espresso machine with a little counter where the made drinks are handed out. On the opposite of this counter at the other wall a side table offers milk and sugar. The restrooms are at the very back of the store.

At this time of the day it's not very busy. The queue at the counter grows to no more than three to five people. In the morning between nine and eleven it can reach up to ten people, waiting for their coffee, mostly to go. On weekends it can be difficult to find a free table, because many UIC (University of Illinois Chicago) students are studying and preparing for University in the store. The UIC Campus is around the corner and most of the students I met seem to be from there. The Internet is not free but the main provider in Chicago is *AttWifi* and if it is purchased privately one has free access in all Starbucks stores. Saturday and Sunday almost every evening, a group of chess players, including two baristas, play from 6pm to 8pm. I have also been invited to participate. The baristas are all approximately between 20 and 35 five years old. Right now three men and one woman are on the job. Each of them is wearing the green Starbucks apron and a black Starbucks baseball cap. Everybody has black shirts and black pants underneath the apron" (*fieldnotes end*).

For Starbucks the physical environment is important: "every aspect of the business that touches the coffee – creating a third place, ensuring the highest level of product quality, excelling at customer service, and building a rewarding culture – must reflect the highest standards possible" (Michelli 2007: 49). The aim of a warm and friendly ambience is meant to be manifest in every detail of the store. Starbucks even hired its own specialists to conceptualise the background music. "Rather than simply being in the background to actively explore ways to enhance the customer's time in a Starbucks store" (*ibid.*). The idea of the Third Place, Starbucks as the "expansion of your front porch", a social place, etc. influenced the way Howard Schultz had his teams design the stores. The third place, as it is used by Starbucks, is a concept of sociologist Ray Oldenburg (1991): The third place stands in between the first (work) and the second (home), and is meant to circumscribe "cafés, coffee shops, bookstores, bars, hair salons, and other hangouts at the heart of a community" (*ibid.*: title) as informal public gathering places.

Jenny Tatsak (2006) wrote an elaborate dissertation about Starbucks as an informal public gathering place. She argues that Starbucks in fact is not a third place, but rather “a mass-produced environment advancing a common image ideal” (128). The image ideal that customers seek, according to her, is realized through consumption.

“Starbucks establishes an image ideal realized in its environment as a mirror of popular cultural codes for style and affluence. These cultural codes are represented in the pages of the magazines sold as well as the style of the furnishings and abstract modern décor” (ibid.: 130).

I began with the interviews in May 2009, and together with the observations that started off in February 2009 (together with research in literature), I completed my fieldwork in June 2009. Unfortunately the timeframe for the ethnography could not be wider because of my limited stay in Chicago during the semester abroad. The baristas were chosen coincidentally, i.e. who ever had time and was willing to give me an interview. The initial aim of getting a broader sample to include gender, age, class and ethnicity variances could not be realised. I had to rely on whoever wanted to give away information, and realized soon that the originally planned range of interviews would anyway go beyond the scope of this paper. The resulting interview-partners, all being introduced in the following, were Caucasian, three female and five male. The interviews lasted from forty minutes up to two and a half hours. It was not problematic to get into the field, because most of the baristas knew me already from my frequent visits to the store.

Sam is twenty-five years old and has been working in the store for about four years as a barista by the time of the interview. At the time he started he was a freshman in UIC studying Political Science and Criminal Justice. He graduated a year ago and is currently holding a secondary employment as well. He is working for Starbucks because of the benefits. Sam is a part-time worker and currently works for about twenty-five to thirty hours a week, but he goes back and forth with fulltime.

Steve is twenty-six and worked before he started at this store at Argo-Tea (a company similar to Starbucks, selling tea). He studies Chemical Engineering in a community college downtown, and is currently working twenty hours a week during the semester and forty during summer. Steve is working to pay off his student loans.

Shaun is twenty-four and has been working for Starbucks for about two years. Before he worked for three years at a coffee shop chain called Caribou (also Coffee and Breakfast), and was a manager for a catering company. He quit the catering because he was working “seventy hours a week” and “did not have any social life in addition”. He currently lives in the neighbourhood (Little Italy) and works as a shift supervisor for about thirty-six hours a week.

Ryan is twenty-four and has been working as a barista for three years. He came to this store as a shift supervisor two years ago. He is employed full-time in summer and part-time during the semester. He studies English Education at the UIC.

Rachel is twenty-four and has worked at the store for three years, she also goes back and forth between full- and half-time, and lately finished an education in media and design. She works at Starbucks as a barista to “make money on the side” and because she got tired of working as a server, as she did “her whole life already”.

Maggy is twenty-one and has been working for Starbucks for one and a half years. Before she started at this store she was employed for food service in various restaurants. Maggy is studying Biology at the UIC and works mainly to pay off her student loans. Since the recession she only works twenty-three hours a week, although she tries to get back to thirty, which is difficult because “everybody is currently fighting for hours”.

Nadja is forty-two and currently working at an art-supply store for five days a week. She is trying to become a professional comic book artist and therefore works additionally on a twenty-page comic book for Blue Water Productions. Nadja was my flat mate in Chicago. She has an Art Bachelor and started working for Starbucks in 1989 in Portland. Back then Starbucks did not even have twenty stores in the USA. She went back and forth for Starbucks as barista and assistant manager in a few stores, but quit the job in the early nineties. After a few theatre jobs in Los Angeles she went to Seattle and got hired as a manager for a store, although she had been away from the job for four years. After ten months being a manager she shifted back to the position of a shift supervisor because “the job was too hard and the benefits could not outweigh the difficulties” (Interview Nadja). She stopped completely in 2004.

Rob is thirty-one years old and was also living together with me in Chicago. Rob has been a manager in Starbucks for about one year but has been working as shift supervisor and barista as well. At the time of the interview took place, Rob worked at the desk in a tutor centre for about twelve hours a week, and is also currently trying to become a professional comic-book artist. He started working in Philadelphia for two years in two Starbucks stores, became an assistant manager for half a year and for a manager of a store for a year, when he moved to Florida. 2001 he moved to Washington and took the position of a barista again because “he could not take the responsibility anymore” (Interview Rob). Although he was offered the position of an assistant manager he refused because he “was burned the fuck out”.

9 Work at Starbucks: A Descriptive Model

The guiding aim for gathering and structuring the information of the interviews in the following chapter is to approach a holistic and broad description of the work at the chosen Starbucks store. The descriptive Model (Figure 7. Descriptive Model: What is Work at Starbucks?) in chapter 0 is the outcome of the seemingly trivial questions that I asked the Ethnography upfront: *What*, *How* and *Why* do the baristas work at this Starbucks store. Following these questions the first aim was directed towards a descriptive construction that had the least possible bias resulting out of any preconceptions.

To bethink to these questions in the course of the whole ethnography kept me on track, helped me to focus on what was happening rather than what I thought should be happening. For example, sitting in the store for six hours and – with the baristas' permission – observing the workday, was a task that I could only master with keeping the trivial question in mind: "What are they doing?".

In the following it becomes obvious that to analytically divide the interview and observation results within the framework of *What*, *Why* and *How* will not prove satisfactory. *What* each barista does, in the course of a workday and *why* he/she does it (out of what interest, out of what relation), cannot be separated. For instance, Rachel is seeing the activity of foaming the milk as some sort of possibility to be "slightly creative". It takes her longer and she does it with more care than Sam, who stopped being careful at all, since Starbucks introduced automatic coffee machines that "do all the work for you that gave once meaning to the job". Foaming the milk (*what*) is an activity that only makes sense together with *how* and *why* it is done.

The resulting descriptive model below can therefore be only understood as a tool to analytically summarize the ethnography. Within section 10 the dynamics underlying the developed categories come to the fore.

Systems of Categories

The contents of the interviews are structured within four systems of categories (layers). The systems together create a descriptive model of “work” in Starbucks and are meant to be interdependent (see chapter 10). The four layers (see Figure 7. Descriptive Model: What is Work at Starbucks?) in this model, embracing all categories, are circles, one encompassing the other, getting larger in context, and surrounding the former. Again, the layers are meant to be analytical, in praxis one can see that they overlap very much and are not easily separated from each other.



Figure 7. Descriptive Model: What is Work at Starbucks? (Source: Author)

In the following I will shortly describe all systems of categories and define them within the model guided by the ethnography.

First layer: System of category **TASKS**



Within this system all the predications and observations were structured according to the categories *Coffee*, *Customers* and *Cleaning etc.* The interviews that I conducted with the two former managers have an additional category named *Employees*. This system is meant to describe all tasks that a normal workday at Starbucks embraces.

It is therefore purely descriptive. The tasks are separated from the second layer *work environment*, through the criteria of action. Tasks are only specific activities that take place within the working hours. Problems arise for example when the making of coffee was described, and within the evaluation of the activity the employees referred to the Starbucks culture in saying that e.g. “coffee making used to be an art” (Interview Rachel). In this case the categories overlap and the results are defined within both systems.

Each Starbucks store has four different kinds of positions: *Barista*, *Shift Supervisor*, *Assistant Manager* and *Manager*. Lately the tasks of the assistant manager were delegated to the shift supervisors, due to the recession and the cutback on working hours (Interview Maggy). The position of the assistant manager was mainly to learn from the manager in order to take his or her position in the future, as well as to act as liaison between the manager and baristas/shift supervisor (Interview Rob). The tasks of the baristas and shift supervisors only differ in handling money, which is the supervisor’s job. The supervisor is also in charge during their shift (customer complaints, employee complaints etc.) and he should make sure everybody gets their breaks etc. An assistant manager or manager can take over this duty as well, when he or she is working on the floor.

The workday for the barista and shift supervisor starts at four thirty a.m. with the values walk. With a checklist the team goes through the store starting at the very left upper corner (Figure 6. The Store) and moves to the very right bottom corner. They make

sure everything is in order and clean. Points at the checklist are for example “is the milk fresh, are the tables clean, does everything look nice and welcoming, and so on” (Interview Shaun). The store opens at five a.m. after everything has been prepared (calibrating the espresso machine, preparing the dripping coffee and the pastries, etc.) and cleaned respectively checked whether the nightshift left it as clean as they are supposed to. The shift that ends at eleven a.m. consists of two baristas working on the espresso machine and on the coffeemaker (filter coffee) and one at the register. When it gets too busy, they open the second register. The barista at the register takes the order and forwards it to the others or if possible, makes it her/himself. The tasks at the espresso machine are pushing the button for either one or two shots of espresso, and foaming the milk, as well as crushing ice for the *Frappuccinos*⁷, and adding flavour and all sorts of milk or cream to the ordered drink. An example of the drink menu that each store has for Frappuccinos (although it can alter monthly) is the following:

Caffè Vanilla Frappuccino (Light) Blended Coffee, Caramel Frappuccino (Light) Blended Coffee, Chai Frappuccino Blended Crème, Cinnamon Dolce Frappuccino (Light) Blended Coffee (or Crème), Coffee Frappuccino (Light) Blended Coffee, Double Chocolate Chip Frappuccino Blended Crème, Espresso Frappuccino Blended Coffee, Green Tea Frappuccino Blended Crème, Java Chip Frappuccino Blended Coffee, Mocha Frappuccino Light Blended Coffee, Mocha (Light) Blended Coffee Frappuccino, Strawberries & Crème Frappuccino Blended Crème, Villa Bean Frappuccino Blended Crème

Source: www.starbucks.com

Taking the order from a customer is connected to giving away information, if desired, about the drinks and the coffee beans used. So each employee has to be familiar with the terms above and know all differences and additives. This is part of the Starbucks value (or *Way of Being*) *be knowledgeable*. I will refer to that later within the system of category *Starbucks Culture*. Thereby Starbucks obviously has to emphasise the baristas’ training process previous to working on the floor, in making them knowledgeable about what they are actually selling.

⁷ A Starbucks registered brand name for iced flavoured coffee

The tasks for the managers are to decide who is going to be hired, drawing up the schedule and accounting, and controlling by means of checklists. Furthermore they organise team meetings, as well as overlook and make sure the Starbucks principles are fulfilled. A district manager can check the store monthly to verify the manager's duties (Interview Rob).

Second layer: System of category **WORK ENVIRONMENT**



The categories of the system *Work Environment* are *Community*, *Identity*, *Place* and *General*. This system refers to all the relationships that surround the activities that are not official Starbucks values, and thereby not “controlled” by Starbucks training, advertising etc.

Within this system notions of friendship, social relationships, neighbourhood, etc. as well as their evaluations are described. The category *Place* is part of the observations in section 7. The *work environment* encompasses all tasks of a workday, all activities within the store and around (smoke breaks, etc.).

“It’s almost like you had to know people to get in or you get lucky, you know, they just hire people that know people” (Interview Steve). All but two of the interviewed baristas were hired in this store via friends. The neighbourhood was mentioned, for the most part as being responsible for the uniqueness of the store. Within this neighbourhood “everybody knows each other”, and the baristas are familiar with the drinks and names of a lot of their customers (Interview Shaun). This is part of a Starbucks value called *be welcoming* that will be interesting later in light of the baristas altering it according to their own definitions (chapter 10.3).

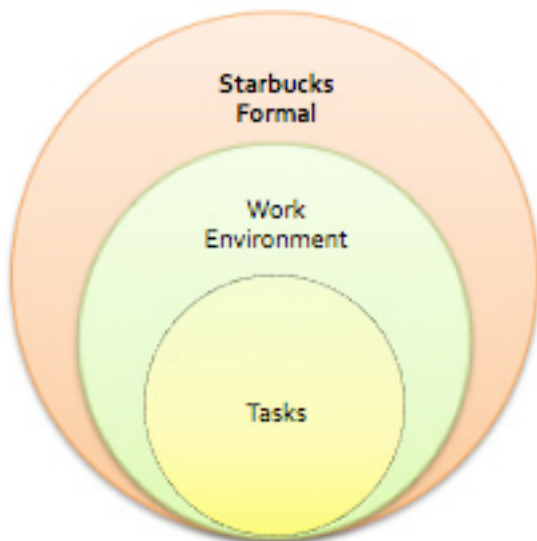
Hanging out after work together, or even living together (Interview Ryan), is common in the store. Shaun said, meanwhile sitting with me on the piazza in front of the store,

“if you go in right now, there are about three guys that work here that are sitting out in the café”. The baristas mentioned more than once that it was the community that kept them going at Starbucks, in addition to the need for money and benefits. Starbucks took pictures of the baristas playing guitar on the piazza once, and placed it on their website (Interview Ryan). The corporation thereby takes credit for the good community that emerged in this store that to some extent, according to the baristas, has nothing to do with Starbucks (Interview Ryan). This notion will factor in, and be discussed soon for the emerging question relating to credit and individuality between the worker and the work.

The store had a manager that was quite “laid back” that “made the community strong”, because the employees had to talk to each other instead of simply work according to checklists, which “he [the former manager] didn’t really use” (interview Shaun). The current manager is “more corporate” (Interview Rachel) but still able to keep the good community and the team together. Also Rob and Nadja the two former managers of Starbucks stores in Florida and in Washington also mentioned more than once the aspect of community and friendship that was important to their work. Rob made two best friends that he met while working at the store. That friendship remains even now, five years later. Nadja even spoke of “certain types of persons” that “tend to stick with Starbucks” and therefore became friends to her. “We all appreciated a system of rules in our work environment, which you are a specific type of person, if you like their guidelines to follow, you follow these guidelines” (Interview Nadja). The emphasis that Starbucks puts on the community and on the employees to become friends, is very special to the *Starbucks Culture*.

The identity of the baristas as a category within this system (identity within the community) overlaps with the category *Image* (corporate identity) in the *Starbucks Culture* system. I will therefore refer to that in the appropriate system.

Third layer: System of category **STARBUCKS FORMAL**



The system *Starbucks Formal* refers to all findings that are part of *Wage, Benefits, Stock* or *Shift Management*. Everything in connection to money and scheduling as well as their evaluation are part of this category.

The positions mentioned in the system *Tasks* of *Barista, Shift*

Supervisor, Assistant Manager and *Manager* are remunerated differently. For example, a shift supervisor gets “paid a few dollars more” (Interview Sam). Nevertheless, the most important thing is not the wage, which is “seven dollars after taxes a little above minimum wage”⁸ (Interview Maggy), but the benefits. For working twenty hours or more in the store the employees receive full benefits that are “health, vision and dental” (Interview Sam). For all of the baristas this is one of the main reasons for working for the company. “I have my entire mouth, every single tooth filled because of Starbucks” (Interview Najda).

Since Starbucks went public in 1992 (See Chapter 6.2) up to now, every employee is eligible to become a Starbucks-shareholder. It was at this point that also the concept of *Partners* was developed. The employees are eligible to participate in *Bean Stock*, a stock option to buy stock at the lowest price of the period in addition to an employee’s discount. Nadja was working for Starbucks when they introduced it in the 1990’s and was “amazed” by it: “work for a company that gives me all these things, just for doing my job, then I am going to do my job really well”. None of the baristas thought much about it at the time of my fieldwork, due to the recession that made Starbucks stock fall about 50% (Interview Steve). Only Sam could explain the *Bean Stock*, but also thinks that it is badly explained and “not very well understood”. The

⁸ The Federal Minimum Wage (July 24th 2008 to July 23rd 2009) is \$6,55 per hour. Although „an employer of a tipped employee is only required to pay \$2.13 an hour in direct wages if that amount plus the tips received equals at least the federal minimum wage.“ (US Department of Labour, 2009).

stock options are meant to give the employees a sense of belonging in terms of *partnership* (Schultz 1997, Michelli 2003). None of the Interviewees confirmed this aim of Starbucks except for Nadja, who had been working when they introduced it. The baristas feel as if those ideas got lost along the way (Interview Rachel). Maggy said the stocks are “not worth the investment”, and she was not “dipping into this billion dollar corporation” in the sense of partnership because of that. The stock options are also part of the system *Starbucks Culture*.

Shift management is the last point in the system *Starbucks Formal*. Changing shifts and working on a flexible schedule is welcomed and easy to achieve in the store. Being flexible makes it manageable for students to work in addition to their studies. Nobody is really fighting for shifts and cares too much with whom they work together. Only since the recession Starbucks cut back the full time working hours from considering forty hours to now thirty-five hours, so everybody is generally looking for more working hours and thereby competing (Interview Maggy).

Third layer: System of category **STARBUCKS CULTURE**



This system becomes defined within the categories *Values*, *Concepts*, *Founder* and *Image*. The categories refer to all predications that have been made in connection to the official Starbucks values (see chapter 0), Starbucks concepts, as well as stories surrounding the founder Howard Schultz, and the

image the company has, according to the baristas.

The overall picture of understanding the Starbucks values that I gained from the baristas was very eclectic. None of them could recite all of the values, or even remember the *Green Apron Book*. Sam thought they are “kind of nonsense”, and Steve said it’s because of the sheer size of the company that there are stores like theirs, “little pockets, little stores that do not follow the rules”. Only Shaun and Ryan, the shift supervisors, affirmed that they are communicated, although they could not recite them. They were more referring to the general knowledge they received in training about coffee than the *Ways of Being* (see chapter 0). Maggy and Rachel both thought that the values are helpful in treating customers (after I repeated them). Again Nadja was the only one who could recite the values, and said “the core concepts of Starbucks are also part of a great way of how to apply this to your life. Consistency, respect in dignity and all that stuff”. When she was working the values were communicated “all the time”, and Nadja is still judging “by the gold standard” she learned at Starbucks. Nevertheless she thinks that it is more a guidebook than any kind of culture or a *Way of Being*. Starbucks, according to her, targets a “complete controlling of an environment”. Rob also remembered the constant education on the values and the importance of them in memos, stickers, pin boards, etc. where they were communicated.

The main Starbucks concepts that came to the fore in the research were the *Make It your own Policy (MIYO)*, *The 3rd Place* and the *Partners*. The *MIYO* basically allows the customer to exactly order a drink exactly as he or she wants it. In each Starbucks store the drinks can be made with flavourings of all sorts and specifications of how to foam the milk, how much milk, how much cream, etc. Nadja summarised the *MIYO* ironically: “we make whatever drink you possibly can concoct, and we will be happy about that, when there is a line of twenty people when we make your stupid drink”. The baristas were taking an ambiguous position when talking about the *MIYO*, some thought it was reasonable and the only problem was how customers utilised it, others criticised Starbucks for coming up with it. The *MIYO* is “America at its worst” (Interview Shaun).

The *3rd Place* concept (see chapter 6.2) was criticised in terms of Starbucks taking away credit for the baristas work. The patron’s appreciation, especially of this store, is only due to the baristas, and not to Starbucks. The *3rd Place* concept does not work, because “If you gonna have a third home environment, it’s gonna look different

at every single store, and they want every single store look the same” (Interview Ryan). Nadja even speaks of a contradiction within this concept, because Starbucks developed the 3rd Place as “an open concept in a complete controlled environment”. As for the *Partners*, being called a *Partner* because of being a shareholder of some sort (be it symbolic or actual stock), the baristas take it on the one hand as a joke (Shaun and Ryan), but on the other they also appreciate the idea of a “flat hierarchy that comes with it” (Interview Rachel).

Howard Schultz again took over the company after the financial crisis in 2009. Some baristas believe that he is able to make the company as successful as it once has been (Interview Nadja). Howard Schultz is omnipresent. In each store the baristas are supposed to watch videos involving Schultz in the storage room that teach about new products and “reinstate values” (Shaun). Shaun said that these videos were sometimes sent to the store even monthly. Furthermore the baristas receive memos and newsletters where Schultz is involved. “He kind of gets the way the company should be, has a good mentality, business sense and human interaction sense” (Interview Sam). Steve said that it was obvious how everybody was happy when he came back, but still some baristas are waiting for him to make changes: “but then they went on this rampage with coming up with these crazy drinks, like right after he came and said that we gonna get simple again” (Interview Ryan). To me it seemed as if the Starbucks founder impressed the baristas, but they still wait for him to prove it. Only Nadja, who was working when he was developing the new values, was convinced of him even on a very general level: “Howard Schultz should be our president, or putting Howard Schultz in charge of economics whatever, something economic stimulus package, he should work for Obama, it would be perfect ((laughing))” (Interview Nadja).

The last category within the system *Starbucks Culture* is the image of the company according to the baristas. Again Nadja was the one who took on a strong position for Starbucks and defended its image. Outside of the work environment the Partners were hesitant to reveal to others that they are working for Starbucks, but rather that they are baristas (Steve, Sam, Maggy) in the sense of a coffee maker. Nevertheless nobody would hide it, or lie about it. They are working for a huge corporation that has a bad image already, only because of its sheer size in times of globalisation (Interview Ryan). On a personal level, nobody is ashamed of working there. Nadja

and Shaun show how Starbucks used to have an image that was respected everywhere. When it started “as a big thing in the West, people wanted to be part of it, it was like a social acceptable thing. Like, oh he has got a Starbucks cup, you know, he is a member of society” (Interview Shaun).

Important to this section, as one can see is the structure within which the ethnography took shape. I started off with asking about the regular workday, as well as observing the regular workday. The most important aspect, as it seems to me, was the work environment that influenced the baristas’ perception of the meaning of their work. The Starbucks values came through, but only when I specifically asked about them. If the baristas started talking about the Starbucks values, or the Starbucks culture they kept referring to the community and how they dealt with “corporate issues”. These interpretative actions are a topic in the next chapter.

Referring back to the model within the chapter on economic anthropology (Figure 4. Work and Economic Anthropology), the perspectives with which one can approach the model above can be illustrated as follows. Placing *Starbucks’ Formal Environment* as the most important aspect of the baristas’ work, as a formalistic point of view could be, the whole dynamics surrounding other equally important aspects would get lost. The same happens in disregarding any formal circumstances and solemnly focussing on e.g. the social relationships within and outside the store. My argument is that all the other layers around or within the formal circumstances of the “work” in the store are not to be taken only as an additional environment that makes the “work” just a little easier, or makes the low income more bearable. I think that these elements are crucial not only for Starbucks making the employees “happy employees”, but also for selling their product. It is not that Starbucks would not be able to find employees in forswearing all cultural concepts, but it would not be able to sell its product, which then was “just coffee”. Furthermore the workers structure their environment independently, and give meaning to their work that is only accessible to them. Also, as other ethnographies have shown (Readers: Jiménez 2007, Mollona 2009, etc.) the work in industry has similar components that emerge also without a given structuring philosophy, as is the case with Starbucks. Work therefore seems to me as embedded into these social dynamics. The layers influence each other and structure as well as restructure themselves. They can only become meaningful in dynamic terms. The

next chapter questions how much the corporation, and how much the workers themselves, give meaning to their work and influence each other. In other words, the focus is on defining “work” in relational terms.

10 Work at Starbucks: A Network of Relationships

How can “work” be understood as a network of relationships? The following approach, defining the activity of “work” in the Starbucks store as interdependent, and only meaningful with and within context, shifts away from the descriptive model above. By interdependent, in this sense, I mean that the activity of “work”, as being performed in the chosen Starbucks store, becomes only meaningful when *first*: looking at all the descriptive layers of the model (Figure 7) at once, and *second*: defining the relationships, the dynamics between all layers in terms of influencing, structuring and thereby defining each other. For example, wearing an apron for Nadja was one reason to quit working for Starbucks because “the apron makes you a slave to the public” (Interview Nadja). The apron, the green uniform of the Starbucks employees, has a dynamic symbolic meaning that is to be found between the layer *Work Environment* and *Starbucks Culture*. Starbucks gives a different meaning to the apron than the baristas do, and in the following I attempt to show how these dynamics influence the perceptions of activities.

The chapter is organised around four metaphors. Each metaphor shows specific extremes that are part of the work of the baristas at the chosen store, as well as their relations. Together, with the model in point 9, the metaphors attempt to fully answer the initial question of “What is Work?” in this specific store. The mentioned layers within the model that was developed for summarising the interview results are now again taken apart. Tasks, Work Environment, Starbucks Formal and Starbucks Culture become meaningful within a network of relationships that are interdependent. I chose the following four metaphors and sub metaphors to demonstrate the dynamics and relations:

The Slave	vs.	The Artist
- Monotonous	vs.	- Meaningful
- Structure	vs.	- Freedom
The Employee	vs.	The Partner
- Homogeneous	vs.	- Unique
The Colleague	vs.	The Friend

- Work Environment vs. - Social Environment
The Customer **vs. The Company**

Each of the metaphors has two poles that are important to the work at Starbucks. In other words, the work in the chosen Starbucks store is somewhere between:

*The Slave, The Employee, The Colleague is **working** monotonously in a structured and homogeneous work environment for the Customer – VERSUS – The Artist, The Partner, The Friend is **working** meaningfully in a free and unique social environment for the Company.*

It is not my aim to characterise the work at the store as enslavement or artwork, etc. but to question the *forces* and *dynamics* that are responsible for shifting its meaning towards one pole or the other.

The questions of “What is Work?”, defined within *What, How and Why* becomes broader within *Who, How, As What and For Whom*. Whereas the answers to the former questions are descriptive, the latter become interpretative and interdependent. Each metaphor also stands for one specific relationship, either the relationship between one barista and his/her work, one barista with the company as such, one barista with another barista (shift supervisor or manager), one barista with the customers. The following model illustrates these relationships in the store:



Figure 8. Relationships. (Source: Author)

The background of the model above is the upper right corner of the draft I made of the store (Figure 6. The Store) and shows the counter, the back door to the storage and parts of the restaurant. The first arrow between barista and barista is a relationship

described in the metaphor *The Colleague VS The Friend* and the leading question of “*Who is working?*”. In the store the conversations between the baristas mainly took place behind the counter. The relationship barista and customer (over the counter) is defined in the metaphor *The Customer VS The Company*. This metaphor is lead by the question “*For whom is the barista working?*”. The metaphor *The Slave VS The Artist* becomes defined within the relationship between the barista and her/his work. Therefore I chose the coffee cup and placed it at the espresso machine, which is the place where the baristas spend most of their time. The last relationship between the barista and the Starbucks Company refers to the metaphor *The Employee VS The Partner*. The Starbucks is placed near the back room of the store, where the baristas at times get to watch Starbucks videos, where the pin board displays, with Starbucks news, and where the manager (Rebecca) has her office. This metaphor is a question of property. What the employee does for the employer is different than what the partner does for the partner. Where the former is a hierarchical formal relationship, the latter is a personal equal relationship. This is the metaphor to the question “*As what is the barista working?*”. A barista is not meant to work for Starbucks (as employee) but to work with it (as partner). He takes credit for his/her work because of being part of Starbucks; I will show the difference in the associated chapter.

The metaphors, in the same way as the layers from the model above, are not easily separated from each other, because they can refer to the same ethnographic examples. The ethnography for example places a dynamic between the barista and the company (“customers appreciate that we are all partners”), as well the barista and the customer (“who comes to the store because of the store, not because of Starbucks”) due to the relations that happen simultaneously and not consecutively. Important at this point is to understand how I will use the metaphors both as relations and dynamics that affect the work in the store. The following table is to act as a reference for the metaphors, questions and relations, and where they belong:

Metaphor	Slave VS Artist	Employee VS Partner	Colleague VS Friend	Customer VS Company
Leading Question	Working How?	Working As What?	Working As Who?	Working For Whom?
Relation	Barista – Work	Barista – Company	Barista – Barista	Barista - Customer

Table 1. Metaphors and Relations. (Source: Author)

In each chapter I chose specific anthropological and non-anthropological theory to support my argument. The metaphors are therefore hypotheses.

10.1 The Slave vs. The Artist

“Baristas make drinks and clean, that’s what they do” (Interview Maggy).

Metaphor	Slave VS Artist	Employee VS Partner	Colleague VS Friend	Customer VS Company
Leading Question	Working How?	Working As What?	Working As Who?	Working For Whom?
Relation	Barista – Work	Barista – Company	Barista – Barista	Barista - Customer

The relationship between the barista and the activity she/he does in the course of a workday is an activity between “enslavement” (Interview Rob) and “artwork” (Interview Rachel, Howard Schultz 1997). I understand when referring to “the slave” in this sense, “work” as something meaningless to oneself. The meaning of the action is a value, as David Graeber (2005) understands it. Being “enslaved” to the customer in Starbucks does index the non-existing value of the actions taken. In other words the barista is forced to work at the store to sustain her/his livelihood and has no other reasons for being there. Graeber (ibid.) points out that *value* is something beyond economics and not reducible to rational calculation. Referring to Marx he shows *values* as measurements of “the importance not of objects, but of actions” (ibid.: 450). If a barista is referring to her/his work as meaningless, as enslavement, Graeber’s approach becomes very helpful. “[...] ‘value’ as a way people’s own actions become meaningful to them, how they take on importance by becoming incorporated into some larger system of meaning” (ibid.: 453). This is very similar to

the approach mentioned above by Gerd Spittler (2008), who also sees work as a “meaningful activity”. In this sense “the slave” is the negation of work as “meaningful activity”, or work as “selfcreating activity” in the words of Karl Marx (1972). The work at Starbucks is service work. Characteristics of the service as I mentioned above are first the connection between a production and service unit (unlike in factories), and second the similarities to the work within a household.

Work as connected to social value was also an important approach within the feminist anthropology of the 1980s (Moore 1988). “Recognizing the social value given to work, or to particular kinds of work, helps us to understand why some activities are thought to be more important than others, and why, for example, in British society, we are able to ask a non-salaried woman with five children ‘Do you work?’ and receive the answer ‘No’. (ibid.: 43). The devaluation of housework in the anthropological critique, in this sense, is not topic of this paper. Nevertheless it is important to recognize when, as I stated above, we divide work and non-work as Thompson’s approach does within a framework of ownership of time, the work at home is devaluated as non-work. Also Arendt (1958) states with her analysis of the Greek Polis that labour was part of the household, whereas work was creative and action public. Therefore, labour, in the Greek Polis was left to women and slaves. “To labor meant to be enslaved by necessity, and this enslavement was inherent in the conditions of human life” (Arendt 1958: 84). The service character of the baristas work is *labour* in Arendt’s sense, because it does not create any durability of a product. The product is produced and consumed at almost the very same time.

As stated in the introduction, my aim is not to characterise the “work” at Starbucks as enslavement or artwork, but to ask for the forces that were coming to the fore within the ethnography, that shifted the work in the store between the two poles. “The company has always been good, as far as benefits and stuff like that, but it was killing me, being a slave to the masses. Because no matter how good the philosophy is, you are still a slave to whoever walks through the door” (Interview Rob).

Starbucks gives meaning to the work of the baristas by applying “the same marketing they use for selling the coffee to the people ... it’s the same marketing for selling the values to the workers” (Interview Rob). Rob compares the world that Starbucks creates for its employees to Disney World: “an entire way of thinking”. The term Starbucks uses for the baristas work is “crafting a drink” (Schultz 1997). This is

obviously leading away from just making a drink, because it is a handicraft. In Arendt's words the "labour" is made "work" to upgrade its value. Schultz's vision as I have shown above was to create "Italian espresso bars" with baristas that know the "art" of crafting coffee. The work at Starbucks, resulting in the product "Starbucks Experience" (section 6), is turned into artwork with complex cooperation and appreciation. Starbucks can thereby be seen as creating an *Art World* in Becker's sense (1982). The art is "not the products of individual makers, 'artists', who possess a rare and special gift. They are, rather, joint products of all the people who cooperate via an art world's characteristic conventions to bring works like that into existence" (ibid.: 35). Therefore, artwork that is meant to be produced in each Starbucks store is a combination of all elements such as music, interior design, products, etc., as well as the input of every single barista. Thus, the baristas receive training accordingly, again as Becker (1982: 5) puts it: "People must learn the techniques characteristic of the kind of work they are going to do, whether it be the creation of ideas, execution, some of the many support activities, or appreciation, response and criticism. Accordingly, someone must carry on the education and training through which such learning occurs".

2007 Starbucks introduced the automatic espresso machine in the store where I did my fieldwork. This was an essential disruption of the kind of *Art World* Starbucks emphasises. The automatic machine was introduced for the sake of efficiency, and an espresso is produced within seconds (Interview Shaun) at the push of the button. The only purpose of the automatics, as Shaun puts it, is "to bang out drinks as fast as possible. Like no one wants to wait four minutes, five minutes for a Latte. They want it in one, one and a half minutes". The automatics brought about not only a "downturn in quality" (Interview Ryan) but also the loss of the craft. Nadja remembers her making espresso at Starbucks as "one of those things where there is a pride. Like I am gonna take control over this art form, because it is an art form, you know, creating a perfect espresso. I miss that". Some baristas perceive it as a need of efficiency, and are glad to serve the queuing customers faster. Nevertheless the automatics present a small example of *alienation* that happened to this store. To some extent baristas felt betrayed by the contradiction of their work, supposedly to be a craft, now becoming only a push of a button. The work is monotonous. Starbucks in their sense of meaning, fights this alienation in trying to keep the

baristas work meaningful. The five core values that I mentioned in chapter 0 are interchangeably called values and “ways of being”. They all start with how, or even who you should be (welcoming, considerate, knowledgeable, genuine, involved) and are meant to keep the unique existence of the barista (instead of just a coffee machine) intact.

The forces that are part of the baristas’ own perception of their work can be independent of the Starbucks values or even contradictory. This comes to the fore through the metaphor “The Colleague VS The Friend”, because the meaning of work thereby gets defined in terms of social relationships.

10.2 The Employee vs. The Partner

“I don’t feel part of some large agenda, and a lot of people do, it’s creepy sometimes, stores like that can be really creepy” (Interview Ryan).

Metaphor	Slave VS Artist	Employee VS Partner	Colleague VS Friend	Customer VS Company
Leading Question	Working How?	Working As What?	Working As Who?	Working For Whom?
Relation	Barista – Work	Barista – Company	Barista – Barista	Barista - Customer

The relationship between the barista and the Starbucks Company is defined in terms of identification and property. The employee stands in a formal homogeneous relationship to the company based on a contract, receiving wage and benefits for time-oriented work. In the Starbucks literature the concept “the partner” becomes defined in terms of an essential unique part of the company, he is supposed to work not *for* but *with* the company (see Schultz 1997). The formal circumstances drift into the background, resulting into baristas who feel “part of something great, something larger than oneself” (Interview Nadja). Whereas the *partner* (at the one theoretical extreme) “absorbs” the *Five Ways of Being* and is fully a Starbucks barista selling the Starbucks Experience (*considerate, involved, knowledgeable, welcoming and genuine*), the *employee* is placed on the other extreme, as Maggy puts it: “When I see a paycheck of minimum wage, I am not dipping into this billion dollar corporation”.

The idea of the partnership is related to the Starbucks concept of the *Bean Stock* as I mentioned before (see Michelli 2007, chapter 6.2). Each partner is eligible to stock options, taken off automatically from the paycheck. The options can then be used to buy Starbucks stock at the lowest price of a given period, including an employee’s discount. As shown before, only Nadja was impressed by this Starbucks concept, possibly because she was a barista when Starbucks became public. Although the stock plunged recently, the concept is still important. Sandra Wallman states in her preface to *Social Anthropology of Work* (1979), referring to a political debate at this

time (and still important as the Starbucks case shows), that the question of incentives has two fundamental “human issues”. “While the preoccupations of work are directly concerned with the work of making a living, they are indirectly but equally concerned with the work of personal and group identity” (ibid.: vi). In my view this is what this metaphor is about. The work of a partner in the Starbucks store is the work of “personal and group identity”. As Nadja puts it referring to this Starbucks concept when talking about her philosophy as a manager: “you treat your partners as you treat yourself”.

Wallman (ibid.: 2) goes on by saying that work is about “social transaction as much as material production [...] controls the identity as much as the economy of the worker”. The controlling of an identity in the case of Starbucks is incorporated already in the term *ways of being*. Starbucks produces a “complete controlling of an environment [...] and they call it culture instead of what it really is, which is a guidebook” (Interview Nadja). When asked the question of whether the baristas would say they are “working for Starbucks” or they “are baristas”, all agreed on the latter. Rachel criticises Starbucks for the “robbery”, that the company takes credit for what the baristas built up independently. “This place is where they get their reputation from”. The interviewed baristas’ opinion is that their store is special. It is a “major friend-connection store [...] probably the most incestuous store in Chicago, three of us live together” (Interview Ryan).

10.3 The Colleague vs. The Friend

*“It’s the people and the neighbourhood,
that’s what keeps me going here” (Interview Shaun).*

Metaphor	Slave VS Artist	Employee VS Partner	Colleague VS Friend	Customer VS Company
Leading Question	Working How?	Working As What?	Working As Who?	Working For Whom?
Relation	Barista – Work	Barista – Company	Barista – Barista	Barista - Customer

“The Colleague VS The Friend” is a two-sided relationship. Although I marked it in the model as the relationship between the baristas, Starbucks has an influence. A similar difference that exists between the employee and the partner comes to the fore in this metaphor: Whereas the *colleague* is to be seen as formal relationship between the baristas; the *friend* is informal. On the one side, the “we are all partners” policy of Starbucks does not necessarily aim towards a friendship relationship, but towards some *informal awareness of belonging*. The *partnership* “does not necessarily make people strive harder, but it helped people feel more part of the company” (Interview Sam). The *partnership* flattens the hierarchy between “corporate and non-corporate people” (Interview Ryan). Between the baristas who are partners anyway, because working in the same circumstances, the concept works less. Being a friend instead of a colleague does make the store special, according to the baristas. “We are all friends”, “the major friend-connection store”, “the good community”, the “getting along together very well”, descriptions of the baristas of each other are defining the work in the store on a different level independent from the Starbucks policy. “Starbucks has no influence on the community whatsoever” (Interview Shaun). Ryan tells the story of the former manager who was “laid back” and not “very corporate”. The baristas had to manage the store themselves resulting in a high level of communication. Ryan thinks that even the bad management made the good community because “only therefore the store survived”. The neighbourhood and the customers were aware of this situation and appreciated the style of the baristas. Some patrons were even “afraid with the management change” (Interview Shaun) that the store would get

more corporate and less personal, that however did not happen. (Interviews Shaun, Sam, Steve, Ryan, Rachel). Still the baristas are able to “work self-motivated, do the things in order how they want to do them” (Interview Steve).

The sociologist S.R. Parker (1964: 216) shows in a quantitative analysis how in the service industry unlike the business industry friendship is more likely to emerge due to “contact with customers” and “autonomy in work situations”. Parker (ibid.: 215) explored patterns of friendship within occupational communities and identified two determining factors: “*extrinsic* (those in the work environment) and *intrinsic* (those connected to the work itself or the values attached to it)”. The extrinsic factors special to this Starbucks store are the need for communication during the “bad management style” as well as the policy of being hired “via friend connections”. The intrinsic factors are defined within the work itself: “making coffee for the customers”. Because of the special neighbourhood, according to Ryan when he got to know the customers he “all of a sudden” did not “mind making their drinks all crazy”. The values attached to the work, as being defined by become less important than the values the baristas developed, that are defined in terms of friendship, in terms of social relationships.

Bärmann-Steiner (1957: 188) defines all labour as “social integrating activity” as “activity which thus presupposes, creates and recreates social relationships”. His approach, as mentioned in section 3.2, is to see labour as descriptive terminology, as “interdependent with other activities” (ibid.: 179) that only sometimes refer to the same category. In this sense the friendship patterns (other activities) of the Starbucks store, at work or at leisure, are interdependent with the activities that come by way of being a barista (activity labour: making coffee). I think Bärmann-Steiner correctly points to the importance of social relationships and the relevance of context within which the work is being performed (“integrating activity”). Nevertheless the fact, as Maggy puts it, that “not everybody is blessed with a rich family”, and therefore she has to work for Starbucks to support her studies places the *integrating aspect* of her activities in Starbucks somewhat into the background.

The work in the store as mentioned above does need all the dynamics together to be described properly.

10.4 The Customer vs. The Company

“One thing that all employees will agree on, customers are out of control” (Interview Nadja).

Metaphor	Slave VS Artist	Employee VS Partner	Colleague VS Friend	Customer VS Company
Leading Question	Working How?	Working As What?	Working As Who?	Working For Whom?
Relation	Barista – Work	Barista – Company	Barista – Barista	Barista - Customer

As stated before, the three former metaphors dealt with the questions of *Who* (Colleague, Friend) is working *How* (Slave, Artist) *As What* (Employee, Partner). The relationship between the barista and the customer addressed by the question of *For Whom* the work is being done. This question would not need to be asked if “work” was understood as bare necessity, as simply sustaining a livelihood. The “work” then is being done for no other than oneself, as some micro economic theories suggest in terms of rational individuals maximising utility. Whether this is true or not need not be answered in this paper, only the approaches that I developed and used so far point to the fact that the “work” in the researched store is being done, or at least is meant to be done, for more than oneself. Be it for a “value” or a “meaning” above necessity, be it for some “social integrating” forces. Also the huge efforts made by Starbucks to have their employees indentify with the company suggest more a perception (within Starbucks management) of individuals as social, meaningful and only partly controllable, instead or in addition to individuals maximising utility.

At this point it becomes obvious that there are important determinations and dynamics between the metaphors, such as the question of working *As What* is intermingled with working *For Whom*. When Nadja, working for Starbucks in the early nineties, felt a close connection to the company in terms of a partnership she was probably working for a greater goal (“making America appreciate best quality coffee” Schultz 1997, 10) than Rob when he quit his job because he could “not take the customers anymore”. Whereas Nadja, simply speaking, worked as a *partner* for the *company* (or at least for the company’s stated goal), Rob worked as an *employee* for *customers* that he could not stand anymore.

Working for Starbucks is also a question of image. The same way as deciding to drink a cup of coffee as a customer in a Starbucks store is a question of image and branding. Sam remembers when Starbucks was “like a status symbol” indexing the appreciation of “good fair trade quality coffee”. Shaun thinks that, still to this today, the “Starbucks cup is a social acceptable thing, like ‘oh he has got a Starbucks cup’, you know, ‘he is a member of society’”. Maurice Godelier wrote an interesting research proposal in 1980 on “*Work and its Representations*”, where he (ibid.: 169) illustrates two areas to explore: the representations (of “work”) of the members of a society, varying through categories like age, group, class, etc. and the representations of the workers themselves. The representations are the way in which activities are perceived. Whether, for example, hunting is a “war against animals” or an “exchange with religious beliefs” (ibid.: 169) is manifested in the system of representations. The denominator that Godelier uses is value, although the activities called work “cannot be reduced to their value” (ibid.: 169). He stresses the importance of context as well as the ongoing change of these representations within history, culture, and religion.

Godelier argues (more as a Structuralist than a Marxist), that he does not want to take the semantics or the social relations of production as departure point, when thinking about work, but: “Instead, we hope to make a contribution towards the scientific analysis of the forms of thought which organize social reality at the same time as they give it expression. It is an analysis of the role, an analysis of meaning and ideas (l’idéel) in social reality” (Godelier, 1980: 170). The representations that the members of a society give reflect the social reality. In this sense also the “work” in Starbucks can be questioned as perception of an activity, a reflection of a “social reality”. Whether the representations of the “members of society” are, that a barista is simply a coffeemaker that gets paid for serving coffee (and tipped for being friendly), or the barista is a “craftsman” whose artwork is to be appreciated is a question of representation, that also places the activity in a hierarchy with others, evaluates it. The same way the perceptions of the workers themselves of their work, whether they see it as aiming towards a great goal (Nadja, see above), as artwork or simply as a means to an end is a question of representation.

Now we have Starbucks influencing the representations, structuring them to some level within marketing for both customers and employees. In addition to that the

baristas and customers perceive them independently or altered. Why is the question of representations important within the dynamic of *For Whom* are the baristas working, within the relationship between the baristas and the customers? Godelier's approach fits the question of all other relationships as well (because all are about representations in one way or another), but nevertheless I use it for this metaphor in favour of the term image, *the* representation of a company and image, *the* representation of a standard Starbucks customer.

In the 1990's Starbucks introduced the so-called "Make it your own" – policy (MIYO) that I already illustrated in section 0. As someone not used to the *American Way* of service in restaurants I was overwhelmed by the options one has for e.g. a simple breakfast egg. The MIYO ("we make you every drink you could possibly concoct") is nothing new to this market, but was relatively new to coffee. This concept has a lot to do with the way customers are perceived by the baristas. Nadja refers to it as a policy "that opened up a door of control freakiness from the individual customers that will never be closed". Ryan describes customers that come into the store sometimes as: "can it be anymore individualistic towards disgusting? That's not like, creative". The Starbucks customers are in the position of a scapegoat. Mostly when the baristas complained about the work in the store, it was due to the customers. It is as if there was a considerable gap between the company and the customers from the perspective of the baristas. Whereas the "customers can wear you down" the company is still "pretty bright and shiny" (Interview Nadja). Also Howard Schultz enjoys the baristas confidence because "he is kind of getting the way the company should be" (Interview Sam). Starbucks is selling the Starbucks experience as a "good and meaningful product". It consists of several elements, as stated before, that all circle around coffee. The MIYO for example as appears to not belonging to the Starbucks experience, but rather coming from the customers. When I was asking about one of the statements that Starbucks made about respecting the bean, which refers to using best quality coffee, whether you could still taste this quality in a *Frappuccino* with seven additives, the baristas agreed: "no".

After discussing the role Starbucks has in supporting the customers, in giving them the opportunity to be "individualistic towards disgusting" (Interview Ryan), most baristas still blamed the customers and not Starbucks, for the resulting "enslavement".

The activity of a customer ordering a drink straight according to the MIYO, and even returning it, if it does not taste the way she/he thought it would, is presented by the barista as an *American* customer, not as specific Starbucks customer. Shaun thinks that Starbucks introduced the MIYO “to make those people feel slightly a bit better about themselves so they can do that and get away with it”. In this sense Starbucks only fulfilled a pre-existing market need. Nadja separated Starbucks from its customers: The customers made the work at Starbucks “hard and awful” and Starbucks is only able to control one side of the work “not the side of the customer”.

11 Work at Starbucks: Place, People, Action and Meaning

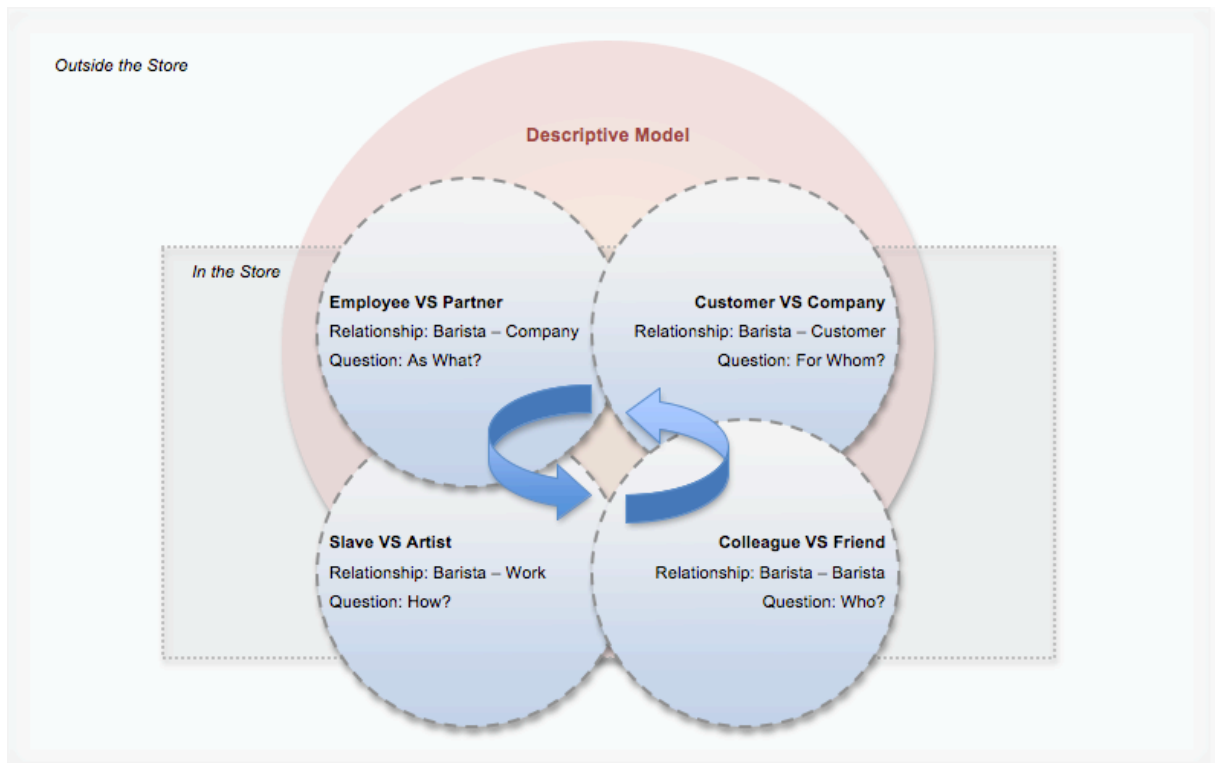


Figure 9. Inclusive Model. (Source: Author)

The implementation of both models together, towards a summary of the work at the store completes Chapter 2. I named this section *Place, People, Action and Meaning* to shift the focus again away from the relations and descriptions towards a bird's eye view.

The very background of Figure 9 is the outside of the store. Physically speaking it is *Little Italy*, Chicago and symbolically it is the life of the baristas, the society, the culture. The store is embedded into this environment and is not a closed system. The place, people, actions and their meaning are part of both environments and in constant interchange. Semitransparent above the store is the red layer of the descriptive model. The systems of categories that described the Starbucks work are also not only to be placed within the store. Only the very centre of the model, that is tasks, can be placed firmly within the walls of Starbucks, but each other layer (work

environment, Starbucks formal and Starbucks culture) is in *and* beyond. The same is true for the metaphors, the very top layer. The blue arrows illustrate the dynamics between them and all other layers.

The sections of the Chapter were structured as the model above. The place where the work of the baristas is performed is the coffee shop, the *Third Place* according to Starbucks. The performances of the baristas are specific tasks in a specific work environment. Starbucks is characterised on a formal level for baristas in terms of wage and benefits. Surrounding the place, the tasks and the environment, is the abstract layer of the Starbucks culture the “shared net of meaning” (Götz 2000: 63). Within all the layers, from the most observable category - tasks - to the most abstract category - Starbucks culture, the relationships form and characterize the baristas’ work. Forces are to be found that give and take meaning, identity, value, etc. to and from the work. These forces originate from different sources, be it the baristas themselves, the Starbucks Company or the customers and influence each other. The section on work as a network of relationships illustrated the complexity of the given dynamics.

The conclusive argument for this section is the importance of looking at work by means of the layers defined above. Only then, in my opinion, the question of *What is Work in Starbucks* can be fully answered. As the last Chapter will show, specific conclusions can be drawn from this perspective.

Chapter 3

Conclusive Thoughts

During one of the interviews with Nadja, she asked me at one point:

N: Can I ask you a question?

B: Yeah.

N: What does work to you mean, I mean you know, I go to work ... and is that more than just going to work to earn money so I have a pay-check? So I can live, so I can pay my bills and do all the things I like to do? ... Is work more than that?

I felt as if I was the expert that had to be able to answer this question, because this is what all my research was probably about. Nadja's direct argument made me question my research to some extent. I decided if I stayed on the level of approaching the concept of work via a *What Is* question, I might get lost in a perspective that seemed to me more of an intellectual discussion that held no actual meaning to persons concerned. A problem that is not rare in anthropological theory, in my opinion. I decided to restructure my approach and developed the current structure of this paper. Although the question still carries a burden of defining my object of inquiry, it nevertheless shifted towards a question of *What Does Work Do?*.

The fieldwork in Starbucks is a small example of approaching the concept "work" (and what it does) in a very specific way. I mainly used literature that I saw as crucial in the development of economics, as well as general economic anthropological theory.

The *Theory Guided Question* was not aimed at *defining* my object of inquiry, but rather to *think of it* in specific ways. This chapter concludes these thoughts. Together with the ethnographic analysis *Baristas in Starbucks*, I will repeat four conclusive

arguments, to then close this paper with a personal reflection in the section entitled *So What*.

12 Conclusive Arguments towards the Ethnography

Conclusive Arguments Two - Ethnography

Adam Smith's theories were crucial to the upgrade of the productive activities that he calls "labor", because he was the first to define it as the source for all wealth of nations. Human nature is responsible for the division of labour that, as the crucial factor, makes human kind prosperous. These considerations aim to think of the concept "work", as changed with Adam Smith, on an abstract level, as source for all wealth.

Karl Marx deals with labour, in terms of labour power, on a theoretical level, to criticise the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist, as the owner of the means of production. These considerations aim to think of the concept "work" as activity that was theorized in Marx's early writing in terms of alienation, and there opened up considerations of "work" as "self-creating activity", as activity of and towards the worker, and thereby questioning Smith's perspective.

I referred to Marx's concepts earlier. In this conclusion I question both perspectives, regarding work as labour power, as activity and as part of human nature, that each for itself cannot define the concept, but needs to be placed in the context of time, place and people. Neither Marx nor Smith foresaw the developments of labour, on an everyday level, in a society of jobholders, working in a company, that is a social subsystem with set work standards, job profiles, mediated values and habitualized behaviour, as well as official constructs of meaning (e.g. the corporate image for the symbolic super elevation of the business reality) (see Götz 2000: 58). Work as a complex net of meaning. The view of human nature as such is crucial to their (Marx's and Smith's) theories and crucial to the theories that emerged within business economics. The abstract level on which Adam Smith was able to understand work and economics is to be seen as a theoretical approach where different specific

activities (such as the making of coffee and cutting of hair) can be subsumed under the one term “work” or “labour”.

Awareness of this theoretical perception, which makes certain activities “work” (because they are embedded into e.g. a money market), can put this approach in line among others. The formal circumstances under which the Starbucks work is performed, as it was shown, is to be taken into consideration in addition with all the circumstances independent from it. Only then does the question of what the Starbucks work *does*, become meaningful.

Conclusive Arguments Three - Ethnography

These considerations aim to think of the concept “work” as an activity not (only) reduced from certain circumstances, fully and meaningfully approached with fieldwork.

This argument is to be verified throughout the whole ethnography. As Götz (2000: 63) puts it, ethnography is able to understand “work” as a net of relationships, a network of meaning in people’s *Lebenswelt (lifeworld)*. The evolving forces that structured and defined this network, were the main outcome of the ethnography.

Conclusive Arguments Four - Ethnography

Work is part of economics, the chief unit of production, distribution and consumption. There are different perspectives on economics within anthropology, and thereby different approaches on the concept work. Work is embedded into a cultural order, into a social matrix (Polanyi, Sahlins). Work is controlled by the capitalist, who owns the means of production (Marx). Work is a rational purposive activity, a means to an end, driven by utility maximizing.

These considerations aim to think of the concept “work” in anthropology as dependent from perspectives, various theoretical backgrounds. Much like this thesis is following selected theoretical thoughts, more than others, and is thereby led by a perspective.

Looking at the Starbucks example: is the work in Western capitalistic society de facto as *disembedded* from a social matrix as Polanyi (1957) suggested? Starbucks itself - together with its baristas - produces a social matrix no matter how much the concept of work seems to be led by formal circumstances. Downey and Fisher even state in their introduction to *Frontiers of Capital* (2008: 6), that not only are markets and

corporations embedded in a social context or socially constructed, but rather that “a cultural study of economic institutions and activities demonstrates how technical and organizational discourse literally ‘make them up’”. From the above perspectives, the Starbucks example leads into that direction. In my view the making of the Starbucks experience is closely connected to Starbucks’ work environment and above all, influenced by the baristas reactions.

What happens for example to the worker, confronted with Starbucks values on treating people, Starbucks philosophy of how to perceive each other, formulated not only within the work environment, but as a general worldview? Whether the worker prior to being a barista, was exposed to these values, in a way of learning and practising them has to be questioned. What is *business as usual* can become meaningful above and beyond the job. It can turn out to be a judgement using “the gold standard” that one learns at Starbucks (Interview Nadja).

Conclusive Arguments Five - Ethnography

The considerations aim to think of the concept “work” as embedded into an institution, defined and influenced by corporate as well as social norms of behaviour, corporate cultures, etc.

Within the conclusions of this chapter the questions surround the layers of influence that I illustrated before. Having basic Starbucks values that teach the employees not only to treat each other, but also meaning a specific perspective on relations and values, much like a religion. Although not fundamental but rational (for the sake of profit to some extent), the values are still formulated as ways of being that reach beyond the counter and beyond the store.

The baristas in Chicago have developed a certain resistance against the *corporate homogenizing* of their workplace. That their store was special, as shown above, was in large parts due to this resistance. Being less corporate makes them more personal. The term of *being less corporate* was used as a value as a source of identification aside of Starbucks. In terms of Starbucks financial success, in terms of profit, this cannot be seen as too problematic for the corporate culture. Starbucks takes credit in terms of displaying these activities as possible within their framework that is supposedly open and respectful (diverse).

The “resistance” against *being corporate*, as a source of identity, is only possible through the existence of the common corporate values, rituals, checklists, and *ways of being*. Only then are the baristas in a position of refusing general critique of Starbucks promoting mass culture, globalizing the world, in combination to their store.

13 So What?

Since nearing the finalization of this paper, of my fascination with this topic, theoretically and empirically, by starting to conclude my arguments, I felt the question of *So What* hovering over me threateningly.

As has been obvious, my research method was not driven by hypotheses. The question of *So What* at the end of this paper would need a question of *What For* at the very beginning of my research. In this chapter I illustrate possible *What For* approaches that result in conclusions, in different perspectives. Each led by potential personal research interests. These thoughts are meant to show why, in my opinion, this kind of anthropological research is more likely to demand a *So What*.

As a business consultant, hired by Starbucks management, to analyze e.g. the effect of corporate culture, corporate values on job satisfaction and efficiency, one conclusion (on the basis of this small case study) towards the *So What* question could look as follows:

The *Five Ways of Being* are communicated too little, to be memorized by the baristas, after a few years from the initial training process. The values are seen as “common sense” and not as an official Starbucks policy. Therefore the constant repetition of the exact terms (*be knowledgeable, considerate, etc.*) is likely to undermine the baristas competencies in how to treat customers and each other. The recommendation is to not emphasise the *Ways of Being* (in memos, pin boards, videos), but rather the baristas competences via expressed customer experiences and customer satisfaction. The researched store offers an example of how customers appreciate the close relationships to baristas on the floor (that independently and actively construct the relationships) meanwhile the existence of a corporate setting is only framing this relationship. When baristas have the possibility to resist corporate

opinions (no matter how meaningful they are) they are more likely to perceive their work as *self-creating*, and thereby support the customers' experience.

Conclusive arguments like this could form a list of recommendations to Starbucks management, but would miss the point of this paper. Whether the actions that are taken by the baristas are towards or against the profit of the company was not the topic of my research.

Neither was the critique of the Starbucks Corporation, likewise global capitalistic enterprises, in terms of forced labour, alienation and homogenizing (that could form a *So What* argument), the intended goal of my argument.

The anthropological perspective as stated before in section 2.3: "the observation (empirical) of people's lives as they live them (naturalistic)" (Carrier, 2005: 2), is key to my findings. The aim of the paper was to *observe* the work of the baristas in the chosen store, to then put the findings into the context of the selected literature.

I think Spittler (2008: 12) is right when he talks about the "strong preference for the exotic" within anthropology that made the anthropology of work a neglected field, because it is too strongly rooted in an everyday life. With the familiarity one has with my topic, because of being brought up, being socialized in the world of the labour market, occupations, job satisfactions and so on, the exotic aspects have been lost. It seems to me as if this is the obligations that contributed to the hovering over *So What* and led to my struggling with this chapter for quite some time.

What if the exact same research would have taken place further away and in more alien circumstances? First, I suppose, interest would rise only for the sake of contrasting ones *own* circumstances with those of the *other*. This is the common critique of the gap between the researcher and the researched, or the question "What in fact does the research to the researched?" Second, I would probably have far less of a need to write this chapter, because the aim, the question of *For What* would have been answered: To observe and describe people's lives as they live it. Maybe if more studies about certain anthropological fields would be accessible to the researched persons, they would probably ask the same question to the researcher: *So What?*

As mentioned in the introduction to the *Theory guided Question*, the purpose of the thesis was completing my master's degree. The *work* therefore was a purposive activity. Nevertheless, I probably found out more about the difficulties with scientific

writing and myself, as well as the *workload* (sometimes alienating sometimes creative) that underlies this paper, in addition to that, all the valuable acquaintances (the baristas) than the purpose would have afforded. The *meaning* therefore for this *work* to myself was provided as well with the relationships that I had in the course of the research, with theory, the baristas, friends and myself.

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Appendix

Rough Interview Guideline

General Information

Starbucks

Workday

Describe the last workday in SB from beginning of the shift till the end

What did you like, what didn't you like?

Introduced to Starbucks

How did you get introduced as a barista?

= training, community, values, ways of being, etc

Barista

What is a barista? What does a barista?

Community

Do you like the other employees?

Do you hang out with them outside of Starbucks?

What do you think about the customers, the work with customers

Identity

Is it a good or a bad Company

Do you identify as a Starbucks worker, tell others, be proud, etc

What do you think about wearing an Apron?

Values

What are the 5 ways of being, what do you think about them?

How are values communicated? Stories?

What do you think about the 3rd place concept of SB?

Stock options

Do you have Stock in Starbucks?

Since when?

Did that change your way of perceiving the work at Starbucks? How, Why?

Abstract

This paper is an ethnographic approach of answering the question *What is Work*. By means of a short theoretical overview the dimensions and meanings of the concept “work”, how it is understood in this research, are described. Empirically the paper consists of a three-months qualitative research, conducted in a Starbucks store in Chicago. The work of the Starbucks employees becomes defined within two models, one descriptive and one relational. The ethnography shows a possible approach on the relations as well as dynamics that underlie the concept “work” and how it is *lived* in the chosen field.

Abstract

Dem Thema der vorliegenden Untersuchung, *Arbeit*, wird anhand einer ethnographischen Feldforschung in Starbucks nachgegangen. Theoretisch, mittels kurzer historischer, politischer, ökonomischer sowie anthropologischer Erläuterungen, wird das Konzept *Arbeit* in seinen Bedeutungen und Dimensionen hinterfragt und im Kontext der Forschung angedacht. Die Analyse der *Arbeit in Starbucks* beinhaltet ein deskriptives sowie ein relationales Modell, bestehend aus Beobachtungen, semi-strukturierten Interviews und theoretischen Überlegungen. Das Ziel dieser Ethnographie ist *Arbeit* in dynamischen und relationalen Beziehungsverhältnissen zu verstehen, als einen möglichen Forschungsansatz, um das Konzept, wie es *gelebt* wird, zu beschreiben.

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