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Beyond authenticity:
A visual-material analysis of locality in the global redesign of Starbucks stores

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Abstract

In this article we examine the global store design strategy launched by Starbucks in 2009 in the wake of the economic crisis, increasing brand dilution, and growing competition. We offer a visual-material analysis of the corporation's efforts to create a global aesthetic grounded in locality, with an in-depth focus on meaning potentials of materiality and community found across the four store redesigns that were unveiled in Seattle, the coffee company's hometown, and which functioned as prototypes for store design across the United States, Europe, and Asia. We then critically engage Starbucks' rhetoric/discourse of locality in relation to the more widespread notion of authenticity. We argue that while authenticity is rooted in textual and symbolic arrangements, locality operates in the realm of emplaced and embodied claims of difference. Shifting from authenticity to locality in design and branding practices alters critical engagements and everyday relationships with global consumer capitalism, insofar as this may be increasingly entrenched with vernacular expressions of cosmopolitanism.

> Sustainability. Green. Organic. Recycled. Repurposed. Local. Community. And, of course, coffee. These became the creative watchwords for Starbucks' new store designs. (Schultz with Gordon, 2011, p. 271)

Introduction: Onward and back to where it all started

In 2009 architect and real estate developer Arthur Rubinfeld was hired back by the Starbucks Coffee Company as president of global development. In Onward, the pathos-infused book telling the story of Howard Schultz's decision to return as the CEO of Starbucks in the wake of the company's growing financial problems, Schultz himself states that Rubinfeld was given the demanding task to fix "two significant problems: Starbucks' bloated real estate portfolio and stale store designs" (Schultz with Gordon, 2011, p. 270). According to Schultz, Starbucks had lost its soul and needed to return to its roots. For this to happen, not only did the coffee company's core values and their related "creative watchwords" need to be redefined, but its "innovative, brand-defining aesthetic" (p. 270) ought to be resurrected.

Rubinfeld had initially been hired by Starbucks as executive vice president for store development in 1992, just before the coffee company went public. During the decade of his initial employment (he left in 2001), the number of Starbucks stores grew from around 100 to nearly 5,000, and expanded from North America to over 20 other countries. To help fuel this growth, Rubinfeld had devised a 'Kit of Parts' store design model, which included a customizable if limited range of colours, furniture, light fixtures, murals and artwork. This kit enabled designers to create stores that were aesthetically consistent but also responsive to different locales, creating seemingly distinctive looks in the quirky spaces of the characteristic or historic buildings of the downtown and central areas that Starbucks privileged in the heyday of its spread across North American and European cities.

In a 2008 interview with the New York Times, Rubinfeld defended Starbucks' coffee quality, environmental stewardship and labour relations. Nevertheless, he acknowledged that "in its relentless expansion to around 17,000 stores, Starbucks overlooked the costs to its reputation of generic, cookie-cutter designs and of placing stores in dreary suburban strip malls" (Stone, 2008). In the 2000s, the Starbucks brand was weakened by the rapid growth of its chain stores, the progressive diversification and standardization of its products, and the debut of other global food retail corporations into the business of espresso beverages (most famously, McDonald's

McCafés).[1] For this reason, the corporation has increasingly been preoccupied with ensuring that the Starbucks brand is unique, expresses a recognizable identity, and remains highly competitive in terms of global presence and sales.

Responding to these priorities, Starbucks placed the design of its stores at the forefront of its new strategy. Rubinfeld's new approach focused on the introduction of palettes balancing a globally consistent Starbucks aesthetic with details pointing to the specificity of the locales and communities in which stores are placed. In a preview of his new role that was featured in the online architecture magazine Dwell, Rubinfeld explained: "When we're opening new stores, these elements will be interpreted by in-house designers around the globe and infused into local store designs connecting with the neighborhood" (Walker, 2009).

In this article we examine Starbucks' new strategic approach to store design, with a focus on the dialectic between homogenization and heterogenization inherent in the corporation's efforts to create a global aesthetic that relies on local substance. We offer a visual-material analysis of the four store redesigns launched in the coffee company's hometown of Seattle between March and November 2009, which functioned as prototypes for similar redesigns in other parts of the United States, Europe, and Asia. In this analysis, we will gain an in-depth understanding of how an emblematic contemporary corporation such as Starbucks actively deploys a visual-material rhetoric/discourse of locality within the globality of its brand to communicate distinctiveness in the global marketplace.

Researching Starbucks stores

Our investigative approach is aimed at tracing and evaluating the 'rhetorics' and 'discourses' at work in globalizing (con)texts of everyday life such as Starbucks stores. We explore claims made by store designs in relation to the bodies and subjectivities of patrons. How do the symbolic and material features of these stores interpellate and compel, but also limit and constrain specific actions and identities? Concurrently, we ask: What are the major 'ways of knowing' and therefore also communicating locality in these store designs? In asking these questions, we examine the ideological implications of the resources that are deployed to signify and produce an experience of locality.

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[1] In the wake of its increasing brand dilution, the economic crisis, and growing competition from McDonald's and Dunkin' Donuts, by 2008 Starbucks' stock had dropped to less than $12 from $26 a year earlier (Stone, 2008).

Our analysis is grounded in field photographs and direct observations that we collected across physical sites, intersected with our reading of media interviews, press releases and news articles. We focus specifically on the visual-material resources deployed across Starbucks stores to communicate locality. Although store design involves a variety of sensorial stimuli, including smell and sound, our focus is justified by the significance of the visual (and broadly multimodal) in relation to the material composition of redesigned stores. As an operation aimed at renewing Starbucks' overall 'image', Rubinfeld's store design strategy was developed with an eye towards the global circulation of images portraying the 'local' stores for publication in social media as well as generalist and specialist media, including design and architecture magazines. This push to visually publicize the new stores was also reflected in the fact that, whereas taking pictures inside Starbucks stores is typically forbidden, we were allowed and even encouraged to liberally photograph the interiors of the four Seattle stores.[2]

Using this analysis, we critically engage this rhetoric/discourse of locality in relation to the more widespread notion of authenticity. Shifting from authenticity to locality in design and branding practices alters critical engagements and everyday relationships with global capitalism's assertions of difference. In particular, we argue that while authenticity is rooted in textual and symbolic arrangements, locality operates in the realm of emplaced and embodied claims of difference.

From customizable to stealth: Store design and the Starbucks brand

With nearly 20,000 stores in 63 countries, nowadays Starbucks can hardly be equated with a local coffeehouse. When bohemian entrepreneurs Gordon Bowker, Jerry Baldwin and Zev Siegl opened the first Starbucks store in the Pike Place Market in 1971, they did not imagine that their business – which was so emblematic of Seattle's 'post-hippie' economy (Simon, 2009) – would become a world-wide presence and the leading corporate retailer of coffee beverages. By 1987, Howard Schultz had acquired Starbucks and he began its relentless transformation into a global corporation, opening the first stores outside Seattle in Chicago and Vancouver (Canada).

Through the 1990s and well into the 2000s, Starbucks kept opening new stores across the world, and increasingly in locations such as drive-thrus and malls. Again and again, Starbucks

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[2] Nowadays Starbucks advertises through social media, television, radio and print media ads, but for many years it solely and purposefully relied on the visual distinctiveness and appeal of its branding, as this was widely circulated through its products (especially to-go cups) and the sheer presence of Starbucks stores in cities the world over.

stores combined visual references to nature (for example, through colour palettes ranging from browns to greens) with allusions to Italian and European coffee culture. Materially, these stores' surfaces, edges and fixtures were smooth or soft, spotless or uncluttered, and often rounded or transparent. Across sensorial stimuli, Starbucks stores evoked cleanliness, which in turn "represents an important emotional marker of sameness" (Simon, 2009 p. 67). At the same time, and within a clear framework of comfort and familiarity, the Starbucks 'experience' was customizable in relation to ambience, service and products alike.

Eventually, this 'mass customization' approach became equated with McDonaldization and mass-produced, mediocre goods, which led to the 'dilution' of Starbucks' brand identity (Simon, 2009). In 2009, with Rubinfield charged again with store design, Starbucks announced its new global store design strategy, aimed at "setting the stage for a reinvigorated customer experience" (Starbucks reinvents, 2009). Starbucks' fresh strategy linked its newly established aim to "source materials and employ craftsmen on a localized basis" (Starbucks reinvents, 2009) with environmental and lifestyle principles.[3] This new design strategy expressed Starbucks' social responsibility initiative, Shared Planet, organized around areas of activity like ethical sourcing, community involvement, and environmental stewardship.

As a highlight of its new strategy, Starbucks announced the opening of three stores which were planned according to the new design principles. These included a newly opened store in the Paris Disney Village, and two stores in Seattle—one in the University Village shopping centre near the University of Washington, and one across the street from the downtown Pike Place Market, which also hosts the first iconic Starbucks store now visited by hordes of tourists every year. The Disneyland Paris store opened in June 2009 within an architectural complex designed by Frank Gehry in 1992. The store is an example of one of the four store design styles–'Regional Modern', 'Heritage', 'Artisan' and, more recently, 'Concept'–developed by Starbucks for its global store design strategy. As a store in the 'Artisan' style, the Paris Disney venue "looks back towards the 1930s-era of European clean, modernist design" (Disney Village, n.d.). Despite their aesthetic differences, all four styles were conceptualized to "source materials and employ

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[3] The strategy outlined material principles such as a "[f]ocus on reused and recycled elements" and "[e]xposure of structural integrity and authentic roots". In relation to more broadly experiential design principles, the new strategy included aims such as the "[e]levation of coffee and removal of unnecessary distractions", "storytelling and customer engagement through all five senses", "[f]lexibility to meet the needs of many customer types – individual readers and computer users, as well as work, study and social groups" (Starbucks reinvents, 2009).

craftsmen on a local basis and incorporate reused and recycled elements where possible" (Store design, n.d.).[4]

The 1st Avenue and Pike Street store (1st and Pike from now on) in Seattle was the first store to be designed in the 'Heritage' style and opened in March 2009. Located just steps away from the first Starbucks store in the Pike Place Market, it "evokes the warm heritage of that first store through its hardwoods, furniture and lighting" (1st and Pike, n.d.). 1st and Pike was branded with a muted and airbrushed version of the original logo, which had first been reintroduced in 2006 to celebrate Starbucks' 35th anniversary. Hence, in the Seattle heritage store the distinctive green colour that has long defined the Starbucks brand was replaced by chocolate brown. This store has "a more rustic look than most Starbucks stores" (Allison, 2009), including a coffee bar covered in scrap leather obtained from shoe and automobile factories, a long community table salvaged from a local restaurant, cabinets made with wood repurposed from fallen trees in the Seattle area, and exposed columns, floor and ceiling details preserved from the original building. This was also Starbucks' first store to achieve LEED certification, consisting of an independent third-party verification of 'green' building and design practices.

In June 2009, Starbucks unveiled yet another newly redesigned store, this time in Seattle's University Village (U-Village from now on), an upscale outdoor shopping mall near the University of Washington campus. As a LEED-certified store designed in the 'Artisan' style, U-Village features recycled and reclaimed materials including slate for menu boards sourced from Seattle's Garfield High School, wood salvaged "from Eastern Washington hop-vine poles" and "from a fallen ash tree in Seattle's Wallingford neighborhood", leather for the bar counter obtained as "scrap from shoe and automobile factories", and burlap coffee bags repurposed "from our local roasting plant" (University Village, n.d.).

In July and November 2009, Starbucks opened two additional redesigned stores in Seattle's Capitol Hill neighbourhood. Although these stores were planned and opened around the same time as the corporation announced its global store design strategy, the Capitol Hill stores were not included in any official announcement or press release. These Starbucks stores went even further than the Paris or the other Seattle stores in their 'revamp'. Both stores were named after their respective locations, namely "15th Ave Coffee and Tea" (15th Ave E from now on) and

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[4] For example, the Paris Disney Village store features wood cladding made with "reclaimed Champagne racks from France", café chairs "found locally in France", wood from "retired barrels reclaimed from the French wine industry", countertops made from "recycled mobile phone parts" (Disney Village, n.d.), and entrance mats "made with recycled rubber from French aircraft tires" (Starbucks reinvents, 2009).

"Roy Street Coffee and Tea" (Roy Street from now on). The stores' logos were grainy, stenciled street signs reporting the name of each café. Except for the "Inspired by Starbucks" byline placed underneath each store's name (as found, for example, on the main entrance door and on branded paper cups), these outlets hid their relationship with Starbucks. In short, the Capitol Hill locales were unbranded or, as critics in the press stated, 'stealth' Starbucks stores. Indeed, Starbucks' Director of Global Concept Design Liz Muller stated that the Capitol Hill stores were designed to "become a true reflection of the neighborhood" (Fawkes, 2009). Both stores fully expressed the new store design strategy's 'Concept' style, which emphasizes locally reclaimed, salvaged or 'vintage' furnishings and the original work of local artists, architects and craftsmen.[5]

Overall, the four Seattle stores described here functioned as 'labs' for the corporation to experiment with various ways to integrate different designs into an overarching strategy for the restyling and refurbishment of thousands of Starbucks stores across the world. Starbucks' previous approach to store design grounded its corporate aesthetic in the communication of authenticity, which entailed claims of truth, originality and closeness to cultural and natural sources that were key to the Starbucks brand. These claims were largely enacted through the representational means of linguistic and visual communication. Dickinson (2002) explained that this rhetoric of authenticity relied heavily on a "bodily involvement" (p. 11) with predominantly symbolic connections to the 'naturalness' and origins of coffee, the company's roots in Seattle, and cultural references to Europe and Art Nouveau. Through a combination of colours, shapes and arrangements, but also smells and sounds, Starbucks stores were designed to offer trustworthy points of attachment to 'authentic' practices, locales and histories that were otherwise removed from patrons' everyday lives.

Starbucks' new store designs mark a shift from symbolic inducements to authenticity toward an aesthetic and experience of locality. The major organizing principles of locality are a firm grounding in the material and social 'fabric' of a given store's urban context. In the next section, we will show how the redesigned stores both visualize and materialize an ethos of locality by deploying major meaning potentials of materiality and community, while also highlighting meaning potentials such as hereness, heritage, and local practices of elsewhere.

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[5] Although Roy Street has remained unbranded to this day, by the beginning of 201 15th Ave E had been 'rebranded', with the Starbucks logo fully visible in outdoor and indoor signage. This said, both Capitol Hill stores still offer the same ambience and local products as they did when they first opened in 2009.

Communicating locality: Materiality and community as visual-material claims of difference

As we stepped into each of the four redesigned Seattle stores, the first most noticeable departure from Starbucks' original aesthetic was a novel emphasis on the store's 'materiality'. The four Seattle locales were filled with knotty and discoloured wood paneling, live-edge granite countertops, organically shaped wooden tables, scratched slate boards, cracked leather armchairs, clotty concrete ceilings, unpolished metal fixtures, stools and sinks, and rustic canvas ropes and wall tapestry. Unlike the smooth, soft and ordered aesthetic that characterized trademark Starbucks stores, the new stores were purposefully grainy, rough and uneven. As a first overarching way of signifying locality, a meaning potential of materiality was achieved through a multimodal combination of cues pointing to the texture and provenance of the woods, slates, metals, leathers and textiles that 'made' the store's surfaces and furnishings.

Djonov and Van Leeuwen (2011) argue that texture is a "synaesthetic semiotic resource" (p. 560), as it can be achieved "across different media and can have tactile as well as visual and aural manifestations" (p. 541). Regardless of its mode, and whether or not one can truly 'touch' it, texture summons us to identify with the experiential rather than merely symbolic implications of its manifestations. Starbucks' previous attempts to mobilize texture as a semiotic resource in its store designs were bound to the creation of an "illusion of tangibility" which was mainly "brought about visually, by shifts in [...] colour and by patterns of lines and shapes" (Djonov and Van Leeuwen, 2011, p. 541).

Starbucks' most recent store design strategy emphasizes the actual presence of 'matter' and the ability to experience and in fact linger on its texture(s), both visually and haptically. For example, at Roy Street, we could distinctly 'feel' the multiple scratches on the cold slate table at which we sat. At the same time, our gaze could not but linger on the reclaimed wood cladding across the room, which covered an entire wall, as its visible texture compelled us to carefully scan the relief obtained from its slightly irregular panels and examine their weathered, patchy and discoloured finish (Figure 1). The dominant colour palette, which combined the natural browns of wood and greys of metal with textiles in warm hues, added to the material 'weight' of the store. Likewise, lower lighting enhanced our perception of texture, through a combination of dramatic angles and deep shadows. Not surprisingly, Rubinfeld redesigned in-store lighting to resemble the 1970s mercantile lamps of the original Pike Place Market store. He also made plans to retrofit all stores to replace incandescent light bulbs with energy-efficient LED bulbs.

This experience of materiality was re-enacted across the four Seattle stores. 1st and Pike featured live-edge counters on the sugar and milk stations, and U-Village had external signage with the Starbucks logo printed on a visibly grooved surface that noticeably looked like wood. In both cases, the textural quality of the materials used was evidently exaggerated. For instance, it was obvious that the jagged edges of countertops at 1st and Pike had been carved into the granite in a repetitive pattern, leading to a 'faux-fray' effect. In other stores similar visual-material resources were closer to organic matter, as in the case of countertops and table edges that followed the 'natural' curves and grooves of the wood of which they were made. Overall, then, the heterogeneity and irregularity of the visual-material texture of redesigned stores contributes to the creation of an 'ambience' that anchors patrons in the materiality of each store while also highlighting the unpredictability and uniqueness of each locale.

Figure 1 – Materiality and texture: Indoor wood cladding in Roy Street

This experience of materiality is also linked to meaning potentials regarding the (local) provenance of the materials used for each store's design. On one hand, this is because texture itself typically foregrounds provenance as a key to its interpretation. As we apprehend texture, we automatically generate assumptions and judgments about its physical and cultural sources

(Djonov and Van Leeuwen, 2011). On the other hand, across stores there were overt references to the origin and following recontextualization of some of the raw materials and furnishings used for interior design. For example, both U-Village and 1st and Pike boasted a number of round metal plaques placed on columns, counters and tables alike, which explained the 'reuse' of materials and furnishings under the shared heading "Starbucks™ Shared Planet: You and Starbucks. It's bigger than coffee".

In foregrounding Starbucks' 'green' approach to interior design, most of these explanations made explicit references to the local and emplaced provenance of repurposed items. One plaque read: "This table has had many lives. Before arriving here, it graced a local restaurant and before that, a Seattle-area home. Where will it live next?" (emphasis added; Figure 2). Other plaques named Kent, Washington, the local wine industry, Eastern Washington, and the building itself as the origins of the store's materials, which included repurposed burlap coffee bags, wine barrels and hop-vine poles as well as well as reclaimed columns, floors and ceilings.

Figure 2 – Metadiscourse of materiality as locality: Plaque on the community table in 1st and Pike

This metadiscourse of locality in relation to the provenance of both materials and furnishings is echoed by some of the nonlinguistic cues found in the two 'stealth' stores, which integrate direct stylistic references to the local character of their surrounding neighbourhood. Roy Street is located across the street from Harvard Exit Theatre, one of Seattle's most beloved historic cinemas, and has a 1930s theatrical and cinematic theme running throughout the store's multiple rooms and corners, with features like old film reels attached to walls and heavy crimson velvet curtains used as space dividers. 15th Ave E's façade was designed to resemble surrounding storefronts—to the extent that Linda Derschang, the owner of the neighbouring restaurant Smith, became extremely concerned with the formerly unbranded Starbucks store's 'theft' of the signature look she designed for her own small, Seattle-based chain of cafés and restaurants. Clearly, the four redesigned stores' meaning potentials of materiality are not only achieved through an emphasis on the textures and general provenance of their décor, but also on an emplaced connectivity with the local urban context.

Combined with meaning potentials of materiality, redesigned Starbucks stores also mobilize meaning potentials of 'community'. An evident innovation in the new store design strategy was the introduction of communal tables able to seat five to ten customers. In his 'Kit of Parts' model, Rubinfeld had privileged small round tables, as these were able to accommodate and facilitate the quick turnover of single patrons. This was also a design strategy to make customers feel less alone, since there can be no 'empty' seats at a round table. In other words, Starbucks' trademark approach to store design aimed to create an illusion of community (and therefore of an authentic 'third place') in the absence of actual physical proximity or concrete acts of sharing.

Contrary to this previous strategy, each of the four redesigned Starbucks stores in Seattle has at least one or two 'community' tables, often located near the centre of the space or even outside in a covered area by the main entrance and against the backdrop of the store's front façade. 15th Ave E features an outdoor six-seat table in the front patio and an indoor ten-seat table made from irregularly shaped wood planks salvaged from an old Seattle-area boat (Figure 3). The store's mix-and-match aesthetic adds to the space's 'grassroots' feel, with its assorted local artwork, plants in terracotta pots, reclaimed furniture (old wood theatre seats) and seemingly thrifted household objects like ceramic and metal jugs, tin baking molds and coffee pots 'reconverted' into containers for sugar, napkins, water, and flowers.

Figure 3 – Meaning potentials of community: Communal table in 15th Ave E

In addition to communal tables as materializations of meaning-potentials of community, we observed explicit gestures to neighbourhood residents in the guise of community boards and handwritten messages, especially in the two 'stealth' stores. Scattered across Roy Street and 15th Ave E there were several small free-standing, frail wire picture frames that had a 'homemade' or 'DIY' aesthetic and contained messages written on plain pieces of paper by hand, with a black marker and in neat cursive. Messages like "Please let us know if you would like to reserve this room!" and "The table, stage and patio are for the community. Let us know if you'd like to reserve them" informed customers that the coffeehouse's space is available for group meetings and performances. Other messages explained that the café will share coffee grounds for gardening, that the space provides puzzles and games, and that in-house coffee cuppings are scheduled on a daily basis. All of these messages urge and even incite store patrons to interact with the baristas and each other to build and maintain community. In addition, many of these messages were physically located on or around the stores' communal tables, or in high-traffic areas, for example on or near milk and sugar stations. The combination of these messages' content and the format in which they were presented contributed to making explicit connections

between the material resources offered by redesigned stores and the surrounding social context grounded in the 'local community'.

In keeping with this direct approach to addressing customers as community members and framing Starbucks itself as a major local resource and community hub, both Roy Street and U-Village prominently feature community boards made of recycled slate or plastic, and made for customers to affix their own leaflets and business cards—a practice common in nearby independent coffeehouses, but one that was not allowed or was heavily regulated in 'regular' Starbucks stores. Moreover, in Roy Street, black slate community boards are used to communicate with store patrons about in-store events featuring local artists and opportunities to showcase one's work. Messages like "Get involved! Send your demo, sample reel or letter of interest" and "Roy Street Coffee and Tea has Community Connections [in larger font and underlined] featuring Local [in larger font and underlined] Musicians, Photographers, Artists, Filmakers [sic.], Poets, Actors, Authors and Playwrights" handwritten with chalk and followed by contact information such as the coffee shop's website or manager's email address.

Across the four Seattle locales, then, community is placed at the center of the store and the store asserts its centrality within the larger urban communities in which they are built. As spaces of locality, the redesigned stores strive to foreground and create community within themselves while also directly inviting patrons to bring the surrounding community into the coffeehouse space, whether by using it for group meetings, attending scheduled events, or showcasing their own creative practice.

While meaning potentials of materiality and community are dominant and in fact made explicit through a host of visual-material, linguistic, and quite often metadiscursive means, the four Seattle stores also mobilize meaning potentials such as 'hereness', 'heritage' and 'local practices of elsewhere'. These additional meaning potentials contribute to further amplifying claims regarding Starbucks' grounding in the local material and social context, as they extend such claims both in time and space. Across stores, there are several visual-material references to the 'hereness' of Starbucks as a material and social space. First, there is a stated emphasis on using ceramic cups and mugs, rather than to-go paper cups. While 15th Ave E showcases rows of white ceramic crockery on open shelving located next to the coffee counter, both U-Village and 1st and Pike display (handwritten) messages encouraging customers to use ceramic rather than paper cups. In 1st and Pike, the bussing station where ceramic cups are collected after use is framed by a blackboard sign with the chalk-written message: "Thanks for using 'for here' ware".

Further, 1st and Pike's positioning in relation to the Pike Place Market is such that the market's iconic red neon sign is perpetually reflected in the glass storefront, thus offering a visual-material juxtaposition and a constant reminder of the store's emplacement within the city of Seattle and centrality within one of the city's most visible landmarks. A similar statement is made at 15th Ave E, though with different means. At the time of our research, this store had an outdoor, freestanding blackboard sign for passers-by to see and read as they walked along the sidewalk. The sign exhorted potential customers to "discover" food and drink offerings from local companies such as Beecher's Cheese, Essential Baking Co., Pyramid Breweries, Goose Ridge Vineyards, and Wallace Brook Cellars, while inviting them to "also try" a more properly cosmopolitan selection of edibles such as "World's Best" Spanish sardines and Norwegian smoked salmon. In addition to being handwritten with chalk, the sign featured a pictorial representation of the Space Needle, another major Seattle landmark, standing on a bed of autumn leaves and against the backdrop of a stylized sun surrounded by clouds.

In a similar fashion, Roy Street has a menu that favours locally sourced foods and beverages within a worldly selection of Mediterranean and American breakfast and lunch dishes. Of the eleven wines listed in the menu, five are from Washington state, two from Oregon and two from California, while only two of the wines come from abroad, namely France and Argentina. These menus are prominently displayed on the counter by the cash register and at eyelevel, summoning customers to scan their content and promptly recognize the local food brands that are highlighted in bold. The menus' simple courier font is reminiscent of typewriting and the store's general theme of local creativity. It is through such multimodal references to 'hereness' that Starbucks extends its 'locality' in space, from given locales (each store's space) to the broader contexts of the specific cities (in this case, Seattle) and regions (the Pacific Northwest and the US West Coast) that host its coffehouses.

While drawing attention to their spatial 'hereness', redesigned stores also extend Starbucks' claims of locality in time, and more precisely into the past. Across stores there are frequent references to 'heritage', both in relation to Starbucks itself and more broadly to the practice of coffee making and consumption. Although 1st and Pike is the only store that was properly designed in the heritage style, U-Village displays a large cutout of the heritage siren logo above the main entrance. In the absence of corporate branding, Roy Street displays black and white photographic close-ups of coffee being poured from old-fashioned metal pots into glasses and a pair of hands carefully removing foam from the top of one of the glasses with a

spoon. And as we mentioned earlier, the ceiling lighting fixtures in all redesigned stores are modeled after the original store's mercantile lamps.

Finally, Starbucks stores cannot but also mobilize references to the 'global' nature of their main commodity: coffee. In doing so, redesigned stores frame the far-flung origins of coffee together with the routes it traverses to get to Starbucks as 'local practices of elsewhere'. Most notably, 1st and Pike features an artistic diagram etched by hand into the community table that describes the lifecycle of coffee beans. In explaining the different 'hands' through which the coffee has been to get to its final destination, the diagram emphasizes the emplaced and embodied dimensions of the 22-day, 5000-mile journey taken by coffee beans "to get to your local store". Each stage of this journey is described through sentences like "12 pairs of hands have taken care of this coffee so far", "on a family farm that supports 28 people", "[i]t was picked by hand", "and milled at a community mill", "where it was roasted by a partner with 18 years of experience", and "[n]ow it is up to the barista who brews the coffee for you to enjoy".

In U-Village, Roy Street and 15th Ave E, gestures towards such embodied and emplaced local practices of elsewhere are somewhat subdued, even though each coffee variety is painstakingly displayed and labeled with its specific country of origin (for example, Guatemala, Kenya, and Ethiopia). Both U-Village and 15th Ave E display mural-sized, documentary-style photographs portraying individuals in the act of tending to coffee beans or pouring brewed coffee. These photographs are shot from above and we see these subjects' arms and hands against highly contextualized backdrops, but we never see their faces. This portrayal contributes to indexing subjects as racially 'other', while also drawing our attention to their coffee-related practices in local contexts that are visibly remote.

Beyond authenticity: Locality as emplaced and embodied cosmopolitanism?

Late modern spaces and cultural practices often attempt to locate subjects in time and place and do so, many argue, through appeals to authenticity. Many have written and continue to write about authenticity. From photography and television to branding and advertising, there is no doubt that authenticity is a fundamental form of currency in contemporary media and promotional culture. Here we cannot do justice to the vast literature on authenticity, but we build on this knowledge to further expand our critical reflection on major contemporary forms of "mystification designed to generate a sense of reality" (MacCannell, 1976, p. 93). As a particular

aspect of modality, authenticity pertains to "the semiotic resources we use for expressing 'as how true' or 'as how real' a given representation is to be taken" (Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 396). In other words, authenticity is a judgment of validity based on (often enhanced or fabricated) multimodal cues.

It is in this sense that authenticity ought to be seen as a rhetorical accomplishment rather than "an objective feature of talk, or of any other form of sociocultural production" (Van Leeuwen, 2001, p. 396). In this regard, Blommaert and Varis (2011) explain that the perception of authenticity is obtained by "administering the right amount of specific semiotic features" (p. 8). At the core of authenticity, they argue, are judgments pertaining to the 'enoughness' of such features, insofar as a recognizable or emblematic identity is achieved by dosing a limited set of small details. For example, the authenticity of an Irish pub can be achieved through the right amount and combination of linguistic, typographic, chromatic, and aural cues. Details of this kind are sometimes only noticeable to those who are 'in the know'. Hence, authenticity is an outcome of identity work that varies according to the targeted audience(s).

In the case of Starbucks, standard stores are designed to feature seemingly unique characteristics, such as a specific combination of colours, murals and architectural features. Along the same lines, service practices are 'tailored' to individual customers, who are called by their first names and whose beverages can be assembled according to their preferences, though within a set repertoire of available choices. Meanwhile, systematic references to the cultural and natural 'origins' of Starbucks' coffee are deployed through visual, linguistic, aural and even olfactory means. However, these implied connections are far removed from the stores' locales in their own right, and actual textures are largely characterized by homogeneity and regularity, and therefore also a certain degree of sameness across stores. As such, this aesthetic of authenticity relies heavily on symbolic markers of difference while also remaining firmly grounded in an ethos of predictability.

In our descriptive and interpretive analysis, we have highlighted that the redesigned stores communicate a rhetoric/discourse of locality largely through visual-material meaning potentials of materiality and community. These two major meaning potentials are enhanced and even extended in space and time through additional references to hereness, heritage and the local practices of elsewhere. The redesigned stores compel patrons to actively experience their material substance through visual and tactile textures, which are "very perceptible" (Stewart and Dickinson, 2008, p. 293) and both look and feel inherently different across stores and even

within the same store. This wealth of visual-material resources pointing to stores' materiality is further highlighted by the active deployment of metadiscourse regarding the repurposed, local provenance of raw materials and furnishings. In addition, customers are heavily interpellated as community members, again, through a combination of visual-material resources and linguistic metadiscourse.

Overall, redesigned stores slow us down and invite us to gaze, touch, recognize and linger, rather than simply move through. They also exhort us to place our bodies next to the bodies of others and to bring our embodied selves and networks into their space, so we can dwell, connect and even perform our creative skills in it. In doing this, these stores also constrain our subjectivities in particular ways, which are shaped by the very ideological aims and assumptions underlying Starbucks' vision/version of locality. Clearly, the emplaced and embodied nature of Starbucks' aesthetic of locality is, at the very least, racialized and classed. Both materiality and community are communicated as unproblematically fluid and open though firmly emplaced in specific streets, neighbourhoods and cities, and embodied in the physical and lifestyle identities of customers. Furthermore, rising consumer values like "environmental friendliness" and local "character", together with the ability to compete "with the nation's independent coffee shops" (Guzman, 2009) are vital to this strategy.

More than an account of some of the strategies of global corporations like Starbucks, this analysis offers critical instruments to engage both the abstractness and concreteness of globalization, and allows us to investigate the material and symbolic processes by which locality becomes ingrained in strategic corporate aesthetics while remaining, to use an iconic definition by Appadurai (1996), "a complex phenomenological quality, constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts" (p. 178). Contrary to authenticity, locality relies on excess, rather than enoughness. A full range of symbolic and material inducements remind us that within these stores our encounters with difference are both emplaced and embodied, rather than omnitopic and virtual.

These encounters with difference cannot be simply ascribed to the top-down diversity and 'worldliness' that is typical of neoliberal or branded cosmopolitanism (Georgiou, 2013; Bookman, 2013). Instead, this highly orchestrated strategy adopts a 'street-level' approach to grounding spaces of globalist consumption into forms of spatiality and connectivity that are typical of vernacular cosmopolitanism, insofar as they are "much messier and less harmonious" (Georgiou, 2013, p. 65) and arise from a specific "set of orientations emerging out of practice"

(pp. 145-146). It is also in this sense that locality cannot be defined under the notion of modality, but needs to be considered as a particular aspect of reality itself. As Appadurai (1996) states, "locality is always emergent from the practices of local subjects in specific neighborhoods" (p. 199). In these stores, it is not rudimentary sketches of the local that are 'plugged' into an overarching global format, as it often happens in glocalization. Instead, a certain vision/version of the actually rather than virtually local is both materially and socially woven into the making of specific places where globalist consumption quite literally 'takes place'.

Tellingly, as it proceeded to cut thousands of jobs and close hundreds of underperforming stores, Starbucks focused on crafting spaces of locality, rather than authenticity. Ultimately, authenticity may be considered as a "space of representation" (Zukin, 2008). In this regard, we agree with Zukin (2008) when she argues that "[t]he more connected we are to its social life, especially if we grew up there, the less likely we are to call a neighborhood authentic" (p. 728). In other words, "[w]e can only see spaces as authentic from outside them" (p. 728).

In suturing each redesigned store into the concrete material and social environment that hosts it (Stewart and Dickinson, 2008), Starbucks moves into a burgeoning territory in matters of global capitalism, where we are invited and even forced to 'see' spaces of global consumption from within rather than from without. In short, while authenticity is represented, locality is practiced. Naturally, this is only an analytical distinction, and there are evident overlaps and contradictions. Nonetheless, this analysis contributes to highlighting the progressive entrenchment of global consumer capitalism with vernacular, rather than simply neoliberal or branded processes of cosmopolitanization. As a form of emplaced and embodied cosmopolitanism, Starbucks' strategy of locality may contribute to further solidifying a capitalism that makes us, quite aptly, feel close to and even become part of its matter.

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