

Dahl, Dorte Boesby

**Doctoral Thesis**

## The making of the public parking attendant: Dirt, aesthetics and inclusion in public service work

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THE MAKING OF THE PUBLIC PARKING ATTENDANT

Dorte Boesby Dahl

# THE MAKING OF THE PUBLIC PARKING ATTENDANT

**DIRT, AESTHETICS AND INCLUSION IN PUBLIC SERVICE WORK**

PhD School in Organisation and Management Studies

**PhD Series 02.2016**

**CBS**  COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL  
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

PhD Series 02.2016

# **The making of the public parking attendant**

Dirt, aesthetics and inclusion in public service work

Dorte Boesby Dahl

Supervisor: Steen Vallentin

Doctoral School of Organisation and Management

Copenhagen Business School

Dorte Boesby Dahl  
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*Dirt, aesthetics and inclusion in public service work*

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♥♥♥♥.

## Preface

This dissertation is article-based. It consists of:

- a frame which outlines the topic and the ontological and epistemological premises of the thesis (Chapter 1-4),
- three articles (Chapter 5-7) and
- a concluding chapter (Chapter 8).

The articles and their progress in the reviewing process at the time of thesis-submission are listed below.

“Dirty Work and management in the Public Sector: How public parking attendants and their managers deal with stigma” is under preparation for submission.

“Looking Neat on the Street” was published in Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies – a special issue on work in the public sector, Vol. 3, No.2, 2013, pp. 59-78

““Making Up” Workers in an Inclusive Organization – Inclusion and diversity in Danish parking patrol” was published in Journal of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion, Vol. 33., No.3, 2014, pp. 249-246.

Parts of the dissertation, including earlier versions of the articles have been presented at different conferences. One conference paper (in Appendix 3):” Stories of Professionalization and Social Inclusion in public parking services” was printed in: John Chandler; Berry Jim; Elisabeth Berg (eds.) (2012) Dilemmas for Human Services: Papers from the 15th Research Conference 2011. London: Royal Docks Business School, 2012.

Other unpublished conference papers:

- “Socially Inclusive Management”, presented at The 25th Conference of the Nordic Sociological Association: Power and Participation, Oslo, Norge, 2011.

- “Working in a merciful and contested organisation: The Case of Municipal Parking Officers”, presented at The 6th Nordic Working Life Conference. 2012, Helsingør, Danmark.
- “Looking Neat on the Street” was presented at “Workshop on Diversity and Difference in the Contemporary Workplace”, hosted by Department of Intercultural Communication and Management, Copenhagen Business School, January 31st-February 1st 2013 5



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## 1. The making of a new occupation in the public sector

“That Mr. Nice Guy, who walks down the street, well [I mean] ‘nice guy’ in quotation marks. I try to be the human face, which of course also needs to be there, but I also try to be consistent and authoritative and all that I preach that we are .... But I try to explain: it is part of our job, and you can say, my big challenge is the balance.” (From interview with a Danish municipal parking attendant)

## 1.1 Introduction

In 1992 a new type of municipal employee entered street life in Danish cities. Officially titled “parking service assistants” but in daily talk referred to as parking attendants<sup>1</sup>, these employees in green uniforms began to patrol the streets while checking parking tickets and licenses and enforcing parking law. Their job as parking attendants was—and still is—to carry out a public policy which has the dual purpose of regulating traffic and creating revenue for the municipality. Many members of the public disliked the new policies, and the parking attendants soon became objects of public scorn. Their derogatory nicknames were several, including “green-jackets”, a reference to a Danish gang with racist attitudes who happened to wear green jackets, and the simpler “frogs”.

This dissertation examines the construction and development of this new sort of municipal employee and thereby presents an example of the development of new work-based identities in the public sector. I regard the construction and development of work based identities as a process of ‘making up’ a new sort of person (Du Gay, 1996, 2007; Hacking, 1986, 2004, 2006, 2007). This ‘making up’ involves both abstract discursive processes, which can be found for instance in formal and informal management strategies and personnel policies and in the mundane, everyday processes, face-to-face interactions and artifacts that are involved in being such a person.

My empirical investigation of the organizing of parking attendance is a sociological, qualitative case study in a Danish municipal center responsible for parking patrol, which I call Municipal Parking (MP). The empirical investigation studies the constitution of the parking attendant as a certain sort of person, by

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The Danish term *parkeringsvagt* contains the component *parkering*, corresponding to the English parking, and the English term *parking attendant* is therefore a close approximation of *parkeringsvagt*. Another common term used in Britain is *traffic warden*. In addition to being used (both in British and American English) in the same sense as British *traffic warden*, *parking attendant* is frequently used to refer to persons whose job is to park cars belonging to others. In this dissertation, the term *parking attendant* is used solely to refer to persons whose primary responsibility is to check parked cars for compliance with parking laws.

studying the relation between management strategies and how the individual “becomes” a parking attendant in the practice of everyday work.

This introductory chapter argues for the importance of analyzing the construction and development of public parking attendants by 1) accounting for the analytical insights we can gain from the study, 2) stating the central problem, which is pursued in the thesis, 3) considering the significance and relevance of the study, 4) outlining the study’s methodological approach, 5) accounting for the study’s delimitations and finally 6) providing a brief outline of the thesis chapters.

## 1.2 Analyzing parking attendance

The establishment of public parking patrol at the beginning of the 1990s was part of an effort in the Danish public sector to seek out new ways to create public revenue. The consequences of new management strategies in the public sector for employees in the public sector have often been depicted as problematic. For instance, the “wave” of New Public Management strategies (Greve, 2002; Hood, 1991; Osborne & Gaebler, 1992) have been criticized for devaluing the work of those engaged in what was traditionally known as ‘public service’ (Hoggett, 2005, p. 168) by neglecting the ethical and moral purposes of the public sector. Others have found that front-line public sector professionals have lost legitimacy in the eyes of the public and thus have to redefine their profession in order to restore the lost legitimacy of their occupation (Newman & Clarke, 2009, p. 117).

However, we know little about how the development of new management strategies in the public sector has contributed to the development of occupations, such as that of the parking attendant, that are not tied to a particular formal profession. This dissertation is concerned with how low- and unskilled occupations in the public sector respond to developments in public management by studying the organizing of the identity of public parking attendants. I argue that within this context three particular aspects of the construction of the work-based identity should be investigated: the management of tainted work identity in the public sector, the use of aesthetic labor in the management of work identities in the public sector, and the relation

between managerial strategies to promote inclusion and diversity and work identity.

First, as indicated at the beginning of this chapter, the making of the occupation of public parking attendants was challenged by disregard from the public at the outset. Holding the job involves holding a tainted work-identity and being exposed to the risk of physical and verbal assaults. Many studies have attended to such “dirty” aspects of various occupations (i.e. Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999; Ashforth, Kreiner, Clark, & Fugate, 2007; Hughes, 1962; Simpson, Slutskaya, Lewis, & Höpfl, 2012). The strength of these studies of dirty work is that they come very close to the actual work situation, but they do this at the expense of understanding the wider structures, which contribute to how workers manage taint. Several studies of dirty work consider jobs which are typically held in the public sector, for instance those of correctional officers, firefighters, and police officers (Dick, 2005; Tracy & Scott, 2006) but they have not consistently related dirty work to the particular developments of and conditions within the public sector.

Second, as mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the parking attendants carry the official title of “parking service assistant”. This is in accordance with the movement from regarding the citizen as a recipient of public policies to regarding the citizen as a consumer of public services (Clarke, Newman, Smith, Vidler, & Westmarland, 2007), but it also appears to be an ironic attempt to transform a disgruntled car driver, who is charged a fine into a receiver of a service. How does the representation of parking attendance as an act of providing parking service combine with the exercise of authority? And how are they combined in a meaningful way in the shaping of the identity of parking attendants? Both the exercise of service and authority concerns how the worker presents him or herself towards citizens. The fine line between authority and service was for instance described by Arlie Hochschild’s study of flight attendant’s and the use of ‘emotional labour’ in order to manage confrontations with passengers (Hochschild, 2003 (1983)). However, in the analysis of low and unskilled private sector service work, recent studies have uncovered how managers recruit and train workers to possess particular aesthetic qualities in order to accommodate

their customers. Research has shown that 'aesthetic labour' (Warhurst, Nickson, Witz, & Cullen, 2000) through the use of uniforms or of particular ways, looks and manners may also be used to establish authority (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007b). Given that the aesthetic labor associated with service work in the public sector has not been attended to before, it is important to consider the possible significance of particular aesthetic qualities in the making of a new sort of employee in the public sector. By coming to understand the representation of this sort of worker to the public, we can learn about the use of aesthetic labor in the public sector. Again, we are interested in whether and how aesthetic labor contributes to the production of the work-based subject in this sort of work.

The third issue relates to the fact that the organizing and management of low-skilled work in Denmark often involves the organizing of people who for one reason or another are on the edge of the labor market, for instance because they have suffered burnout in another occupation or because they lack formal and informal skills that are required in other jobs. Meanwhile, employment policies in the Danish context involve the use of active labor market measures, such as temporary subsidized jobs, which may be politically enforced by demanding that certain parts of the municipal administration employ a certain number of people on special conditions. Moreover, the growing attention to the efficiency of the private versus the public sector has brought in discussions about why absence due to illness is higher in public than in private organizations. Do public sector organizations wear down employees, or are they just more "inclusive" than the private sector (Labriola & Lund, 2009)? Meanwhile, public sector management strategies to become an inclusive workplace have been inspired by the private sector's management strategies to frame inclusion as "diversity management". This is, for instance, what we can see when large Danish municipalities appropriate strategies for diversity management and incorporate performance measurements of diversity in their management strategies. The question here is how these strategies, which are promoted and designed to simultaneously pursue "inclusion" and bring down the rate of absence due to illness, contribute to the shaping of the work-based subject. Recently, diversity scholars (Zanoni,



Janssens, Benschop, & Nkomo, 2010) have called for more attention to the unintended consequences of strategies to promote inclusion and diversity.

### 1.3 The problem

For the reasons outlined above, this dissertation seeks to answer the following main research question:

**How have changing management strategies in the public sector affected the ‘making up’ of parking attendants?**

In my efforts to answer this question, I relate the ‘making up’ of parking attendants to three different perspectives in three different articles:

- Parking attendance as dirty work
- Parking attendance as aesthetic labor
- Parking attendance and the organizing of inclusion and diversity at work

### 1.4 Relevance: The complexities of formally unskilled work

I have argued above that the study of the “making up” of parking attendants in the context of changing management strategies in the public sector is relevant because it can contribute to the analysis of the development of unskilled work in the public sector, and particular to knowledge of the construction of work identities in such jobs. The thesis addresses a gap in our knowledge of the making of new occupations in the public sector. Research on street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010 (1983)) of various kinds has recently neglected the study of formally unskilled work in the public sector. While there is a vast literature on identity and work in public sector jobs, the identity and work here practically always relies on a particular educational background. But there are still jobs in the public sector which require no particular formal skills, or only basic formal skills, of entry-level employees. In terms of their status in the eyes of the Danish public, many of these jobs occupy low positions. In the latest survey, which is from 2011, A4, the newspaper of LO, the Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, asked 2014 Danes how they would rank the prestige of 99 different occupations. Many of the occupations that were ranked low were low-skilled or

unskilled occupations, and such occupations are typically public-sector occupations. For instance: correctional officers were number 61 on the list of the 99 occupations, while pilots were number one, that is, enjoyed the highest job status. Health care assistants at hospitals were ranked as number 64, hospital orderlies as number 72, child-care workers in daycare centers, care workers in old-age homes, and home helpers as numbers 79, 80, and 81 respectively, and kitchen-assistants as number 84. No typically public occupations were evaluated as being as low in prestige as that of the parking attendants, who were number 96 in the rankings, followed only by advertisement distributors (Ugebrevet A4 & YOUNGOV, 2012).

Given that low-skilled jobs in Denmark are important entry-points to the labor market, for people who are “on the edge” of the labor market (Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004), it is important to recognize how these jobs change and develop in order to adjust to new demands on the public sector.

In the Danish context, there has been a professionalization of work in the public sector. Care-workers, who twenty years ago were formally unskilled, are today regarded as professionals. The labor market parties are influential, and labor unions have made agreements with regard to up-skilling and the development of new job profiles. Nevertheless, according to a review of the Nordic research on the consequences of New Public Management for workers, little knowledge is available about employees in the technical areas of public administration (Kamp et al., 2013).

The study of parking attendance is also relevant due to the common misconception that there is little to organize and thus little to study in terms of identity in unskilled settings. For instance, a range of studies have attended to the “identity regulation” going on at the workplace (Alvesson & Willmott, 2002). Managers, it is argued, control and promote employees’ self-management by regulating their identities. This identity regulation has been characterized as an iron cage maintained in tandem with the maintenance of the technocratic structure of work organizations (Kärreman & Alvesson, 2004). However, in this realm of studies, identity regulation has primarily been regarded as a significant

trait of highly knowledge-intensive workplaces, that is, of the management of knowledge workers (i.e. Kärreman & Alvesson, 2004).

Parking attendants have not received much attention in research on organizations. There is, however, one exception. In 1983, Joel Richman published an ethnography: "Traffic Wardens – an ethnography of street administration" (Richman, 1983). In this work, Richman provides a rich account of the everyday work of traffic wardens in a British suburb during the 1970s. Richman quotes Peter Berger:

*... the job of a night watchman may involve nothing except that its holder be present. As one ascends the occupational hierarchy, the psychological demands obviously increase, the socialization process becomes more complex, and wider sections of the personality are touched upon* (Berger, 1964, p. 232).

Richman contests Berger's statement:

*Perhaps Berger is mistaken about the extreme simplicity of the night watchman's job in the same way as the public is deceived in its thinking about traffic wardens* (Richman, 1983, p. 39).

Berger expected that jobs become more complicated the further up you go in the occupational hierarchy. Through his ethnography, Richman shows that the traffic warden's job is not uncomplicated. Given more recent descriptions of dilemmas, paradoxes and ambivalences of the public sector, there is no reason to think that this job, which has come into existence more recently in Denmark than in Britain, is less complicated here and now.

Finally, parking attendance is one of a number of examples of how the public sector plans to undertake new tasks with new means. We usually think of this as a matter of outsourcing tasks to private actors or bringing in the voluntary sector, but in this case, a piece of authority work has been kept in public hands but passed on from a traditional profession—the police—to formally unskilled workers. Knowledge of the unintended or unanticipated consequences (Merton, 1936) of such a setup is important to our understanding of work in the public sector.

## 1.5 Research design

The research design consists of a basic analytical approach to worker identities, which relies on Ian Hacking's concept of the 'making up' of people (Hacking, 1986), combined with a reflexive approach to the empirical study of a municipal center responsible for parking attendance. In the following, I outline the process of carrying out this research design.

Ian Hacking developed his concept of 'making up' people for the purpose of understanding how new categories of people somehow are invented and systematized through the positive sciences. The central strength of using Hacking's theory lies with its attention to how people interact with their categories and also contribute to changing them. Paul du Gay has drawn upon Hacking's notion of 'Making up' people within the field of service work studies and shown how the identities of consumers and service workers in the retail sector are 'made up' by the dual process of "labelling from above" and "the actual behavior of those so labelled" (Du Gay, 1996, p. 75).

To uncover the 'making up' of people, we need to uncover the abstract discursive processes, which can be found, for instance, in formal and informal management strategies and personnel policies and in the mundane, everyday processes that are involved in being such a person: face-to-face interaction and the material equipment involved in being such a person. Empirically, the organizing of worker identities happens through the design of the job, rules, procedures, the granting of authority, material artifacts such as their uniforms etc., but it is also carried out by various human actors; in particular, it is a result of the actions of policymakers, managers, workers, and citizens and the interactions between these individuals.

I have conducted a qualitative study in a municipal center responsible for parking attendance – I call the centre: Municipal Parking (MP). Within this organisation I undertook a case study of the social situation in which the parking attendant developed as a new sort of worker. I shadowed parking attendants in their daily work and interviewed them, their managers, and other relevant employees in the organization. I also participated in job interviews and in an introductory course

for parking attendants and spent a week in the center's shop and call-center. Besides this, the study also draws upon material that I have received from the center, for instance statistics on personnel, internal and external reports from management and work environment consultants, written pieces on personnel policies, and articles from newspapers and magazines written by or about members of the organization.

I was particularly attentive to identifying the development of management strategies, in order to get an idea of their underlying rationales. However, in combination with the approach to "making up" people, it has been important to pay attention to possible important elements of the "making up" of parking attendants and to be able to identify them. This was done by taking a reflexive approach to the research, which involves studying a case, a situation or an observation by framing them within a theory and trying to strengthen the theory by new observations (Alvesson & Sköldbberg, 2009, p. 4). Thus in the practical process of taking this approach, I continuously evaluated the empirical material from the perspective of different theories, thereby testing their explanatory value. In this way, I worked to find the most appropriate explanation of a phenomenon in a reflexive process between empirical data and theory. This was how each of the three particular analyses of dirty work, aesthetic labor, and inclusion in the context of changing management strategies developed.

## **1.6 Delimitations**

First, I would like to emphasize that my starting point is at the empirical level of the particular organization in question. Like any other public organization, this organization has been through administrative reforms, which have applied managerial tools. Quite a few of these can probably be attributed to the influence by New Public Management (NPM) or be seen as adaptations to NPM in what has been called a particular Scandinavian hybrid (Greve, 2002), where NPM has been adjusted to established traditions and administrative routines. This dissertation will not discuss the extent to which the Danish public sector has taken in New Public Management strategies. The study is interested in identifying responsibilities adhering to the public sector today and studying responses to them—whether or not they are directly attributed to NPM and NPM

discourse. Whether or not they express convergence or divergence and how they contribute to political theory of new public management is not the subject of this dissertation. Only those actual reforms, changes, and procedures that contribute to the making of parking attendants are important to the analysis here. This goes, for instance also for the use of active labor market measures to promote inclusion. Indeed, in the Danish context, expectations of Danish municipalities as employers of people “on the edge of the labor market” are high (LO, The Danish Confederation of Trade Unions, 2013). Also relevant, is the fact that in the Danish context, there has been a development toward the professionalization of work in the public sector. Care-workers, who twenty years ago were formally unskilled, are today regarded as professionals. The labor market parties are influential, and labor unions have made agreements with regard to up-skilling and the development of new job profiles (Kamp et al., 2013, p. 15).

Second, the study I present is a case study of the particular social situation in which the parking attendant developed as a new sort of worker. I have been interested in finding and analyzing many different aspects of the construction of parking attendants as particular worker identities (Hammersley & Gomm, 2000). Thus, the knowledge gained from this case study is context-dependent. It does not contribute to predictive theory, but rather to a task, which Paul du Gay describes as follows:

*.. the task for the sociologist of personhood is to describe these instituted statuses and attributes, rights and duties and thus the different forms of person they constitute case by case, each in their own specific terms. (Du Gay, 2007, p. 23).*

The study of the parking attendant can contribute to knowledge of such “persona”. As Du Gay writes: *we need to see how particular categories of person have been formed or “made up” in specific contexts at a particular time and through certain practical means (Du Gay, 2007, p. 25).* Du Gay’s own studies have centered upon the development of the front-line worker in retail and the state bureaucrat. The parking attendant has – as we shall see – certain commonalities with both of these two sorts of person, but also has it’s own particular “attributes”, to be unfolded in this study.

Finally, there are other fields of research with which it would have been relevant to engage. I have chosen the fields presented here, but I have not, for instance, drawn upon the vast research on the exercise of authority, although research from this realm of organization studies might very well have been relevant. I have also limited the literature to what I have found relevant from my sociological point of view. Thus, for instance, although I do draw upon Michael Lipsky's theory of street-level bureaucrats, I do not attend to how it has been used within political science to explain the implementation or lack of implementation of particular policies (Lehmann Nielsen, 2012). Although the implementation of policies is not easily separated from the street-level bureaucrats and their working conditions, I have not followed this path. Finally, a study of parking attendants might very well be expected to be a study of the psychosocial strain of the job. Indeed, the organization members I studied often seemed to expect that this was my interest given that it was an issue they found very important. However, I have not given the psychological factors of encounters with ill-tempered citizens much notice, simply because I am not a psychologist, but a sociologist.

### 1.7 Summary

I have now introduced the subject of this dissertation: How have changing management strategies in the public sector affected the "making up" of public parking attendants? I have argued that by responding to this question, I contribute to knowledge of identity in unskilled work in the public sector. I have introduced my analytical approach as the 'making up' of particular sorts of persons combined with the reflexive empirical and theoretical testing of explanations, which has led me to pursue three particular lines of inquiry into the responses to managerial changes: investigating the understanding of this job as a dirty job, its conception as aesthetic labor, and finally the response to demands for diversity and inclusion in the public sector. I have also provided an outline of the research design and pointed to the study's limitations. In Chapter 2, I describe the analytical approach and relevant strands of research in detail. Chapter 3 explains the design of the study and the methods used in it, while Chapter 4 provides an introduction to the case organization, which displays the

changing management strategies in Municipal Parking and leads up to the three articles. Chapter 5 consists of the article “Dirty Work and management in the Public Sector: How public parking attendants and their managers deal with stigma”, Chapter 6 consists of the published article “Looking Neat on the Street”, and Chapter 7 consists of the published article ““Making Up” Workers in an Inclusive Organisation”. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes and points to perspectives for further research.



## **2. Analyzing the “making up” of parking attendants**

## 2.1 The relation between identity and work

This chapter accounts for the analytical perspectives in my study. In Chapter 1, I explained that the construction and development of the parking attendant as a new sort of municipal employee serves as an example of the development of new work-based identities in the context of changing management strategies in the public sector. I posed the following overall research question:

**How have changing management strategies in the public sector affected the “making up” of parking attendants?**

This research question implies that I regard the construction and development of work-based identities as a process of “making up” a new sort of person, in the sense in which the term in question is used by Ian Hacking (Hacking, 1986) and Paul du Gay (Du Gay, 1996), and that this ‘making up’ involves both abstract, discursive processes, which can be found for instance in formal and informal management strategies and personnel policies, and the mundane everyday practices that are involved in being such a person. The question also implies that there are changing management strategies in the public sector to which this process of “making up” responds.

In chapter 1, I also stated that this dissertation relates the ‘making up’ of parking attendants to three different perspectives in three different articles, namely the perspectives offered by dirty work theory, aesthetic labour theory, and critical theory of diversity and inclusion. Common to these theories is that they regard work as an important field for the construction of identity. But the theories differ in their approach to identity. The differences between the theories lie, for instance, in what is weighted as most important in the relation between identity and work. Is it the actual work task or the occupation in a more abstract sense, which shapes worker identities? Is it the organization itself, which creates the identities of workers or is the organization and everyday work more a field, in which broader social identities, such as ethnicity, nationality, gender and sexuality are played out or perhaps intersect? Another line of differences lies in the conception of the worker’s self. Is the worker’s self a stable entity, which follows the individual through life or is it fluid and changeable according to

organizational and structural conditions? Can the worker's self at all be separated from the organization as such and therefore seen as "belonging" to the individual? The theories that I draw upon in this thesis have quite different answers to these questions. However, they have all attended to empirical settings, which in some way or other are relevant or comparable to the setting of public parking attendants. As the research question also indicates, the weight of my investigations lies with the importance of organizing and management for the creation of worker identities. I regard the theories of dirty work and aesthetic labour and critical diversity studies as relevant companions to the 'making up' of parking attendants. Their value particularly lies in their ability to analyze elements of work life which are relevant in this particular setting and also in the dynamics that arise from the challenges presented by investigating how the theory of "making up" workers in the particular setting of parking attendants can collaborate with these other theories of work identity.

In the first section of this chapter I broadly consider the different positions in sociology on the relation between identity and work, showing how differences lie in how theories weigh the role of an organization against the role of immediate others (Leidner, 2006) in the shaping of worker identities. I also introduce Hacking's philosophy of "making up" people. This philosophy was not developed with the purpose of studying public sector workers, but has been drawn into the field of the sociology of work and identity by du Gay. Finally, I turn to du Gay's analysis of "making up" people and particularly to his analysis of 'the entrepreneurial self'. The second section of the chapter considers the changing management strategies in the public sector to which we might expect the "making up" of parking attendants to respond. This section considers how the relation between work and changing management strategies in the public sector has been depicted by others, but also includes some empirical observations on the Danish public sector and the work of parking attendants. In the final section of the chapter, I introduce the analytical premises of the theory of dirty work, the theory of aesthetic labor, and critical diversity and inclusion theory in regard to their view on the relation between identity and work.

## 2.2 Identity, work, and the 'making up' of people

The question of how and from where people derive their identities is central to sociological theorizing and empirical study. The centrality of work to identity has been at the center of these efforts. In Robyn Leidner's overview of how sociologists have theorized the relation between work and identity, she points to some common threads and typical variations:

*Virtually all sociologists regard the sense of self as socially structured, so personal identity and social identity are inevitably intertwined, but theoretical traditions vary in the degree to which they emphasize individual and collective identities (Leidner, 2006, p. 426).*

The most significant strands of theory of the relation between work and identity within sociology are the Marxian strand, in which the focus is on the alienation of the worker, and the Weberian strand, in which the bureaucratic organizing of work is central to the formation of identity. Both Marx and Weber's theories center on the structural and organizational premises – capitalist and bureaucratic organizing respectively – for the development of worker identities. In a Durkheimian view, the division of labor in society (Durkheim & Coser, 1997) was deeply related to morality and to providing individuals with a shared sense of meaning. Finally the Chicago School Sociologists pay close attention to the micro-levels of identity formation. Symbolic interactionists move focus from the structural conditions to how identity is created in and transformed by symbolic interaction (Blumer, 1986; Mead, 1974). And Erving Goffman attended to the face-to-face everyday interaction, the local setting and roles (Goffman, 1990).

Leidner shows how there has been a shift of interest from how *occupations* shape identity to how *organizations* contribute to the shaping of identities. Moreover, the centrality of work and the organization of work to identity has more recently been implicitly called into question by the increased attention paid to other sources of identity such as gender, ethnicity, and consumption.

How general societal, economic, or technical developments change or influence work identities is a central concern of sociological studies of the relation between

identity and work. The increase in (often low-paid and highly standardized) service work in recent decades has led to concern about the “self” in service work. An important, classic example here is Arlie Hochschild’s notion of “the managed heart” (Hochschild, 2003 (1983)). Relying on an understanding of the self as an entity lying outside of the organization – a personal matter belonging to private life, in direct opposition to or to be protected from the interference of management or customers, Hochschild studies how managers interfere with flight attendants’ selves. Other studies do not make the same distinction between the worker and the organization and between the worker and the customer in service work (Leidner p. 431). This goes for instance for du Gay’s study of consumption and identity (Du Gay, 1996) and for the studies by Korczynski et al. of call-center workers, which show that workers are trained to use their experiences as consumers in their interaction with customers (Korczynski, Shire, Frenkel, & Tam, 2000).

Central to rejecting the worker’s self as something which can and should be disentangled from organizing and general structural conditions is the Foucauldian approach to the “self at work”. The use of a Foucauldian approach to the formation of work identities entails regarding the worker as a worker-subject, thereby drawing upon the two meanings of the word “subject”, described by Foucault as: *...subject to someone else by control and dependence, and tied to his own identity by a conscience or self-knowledge. Both meanings suggest a form of power which subjugates and makes subject to.* (Foucault, 2002, p. 331)

In 1989, an article by David Knights and Hugh Willmott questioned previous understandings of the relations among identity, power, and work, framing identity at work as “subjectivity”. They thus took issue with the basic sociological “problem” of actor and structure – they wanted to combat the typical understanding *that “society” or “the individual” must be taken as the unit of level of analysis. If the former, the focus is upon “objective” structures or constraints; if the latter, then attention is concentrated upon “subjective” interpretations or dispositions* (Knights & Willmott, 1989, p. 535).

Knights and Willmott's purpose is to focus on subjectivity as something which is not merely imposed on humans from an external force of power, but which is also about what the subject imposes upon itself. According to Knights and Willmott, *post-war industrial sociology had a tendency to focus upon action and consciousness (e.g. orientations to work) while neglecting the structures which condition its expression* (Knights & Willmott, 1989, p. 537). Particularly, they want to react against the sociological understanding that workers have some sort of real wants or real identities that are repressed:

*If, as we shall argue, power is an inherent and intractable part of social existence, then to speak of the "real" interests of subjects as if these could be identified outside of power-knowledge relations is a contradiction in terms. It is also to fall into the dualistic trap of perceiving the individual as separate from society* (Knights & Willmott, 1989, s. 539).

Thus, as we have seen, the relation between work and identity has been theorized in quite different manners. Moreover, the construction of identity through abstract discourses – either of management or of broader societal discourse – has not, in the above-mentioned perspectives on work and identity, immediately been regarded as compatible with theories which regard the self as something which is derived from everyday, face-to-face interaction. However, as we shall see, Ian Hacking has argued that such perspectives in fact need each other to provide a full account of how identities are 'made up' (Hacking, 2004).

#### *"MAKING UP" PEOPLE*

This section introduces Ian Hacking's philosophy of dynamic nominalism, in connection with which he has presented the notion of 'making up' people. He introduced the notion in 1986 (Hacking, 1986) and has built a large range of studies upon the theory. I direct my attention to those parts of his work which have been used in relation to the study of work and identity and which consider the relation between the notion of "making up" people and sociology. First, I explain Hacking's central interest and how he analyzes it. Hacking is interested in categorizations of people and how people interact with the categories in

question. Next, I discuss the immediate possibilities and limitations of this approach.

The empirical jumping-off ground for Hacking is his wondering about how new classifications of people arise. The classifications he has in mind are particularly found in what he loosely describes as the “human sciences”, including the social sciences, psychology, psychiatry, and clinical medicine. New classifications of people appear, for instance, when sciences define and order new categories of people, such as “the homosexual” or “multiple personality” in order to analyze them statistically (Hacking, 1999b). Ian Hacking coined the notion of “making up” people (Hacking, 1986, 2006) as a way to explain how new ways to classify people open up or close down possibilities for action (Hacking, 1986, p.99). In several of his writings, Hacking illustrates his point of interest by using variations of the two following statements about the simultaneous appearance of a new category of deviant persons and an epidemic:

*(A) There were no multiple personalities in 1955; there were many in 1985.*

*(B). In 1955 this was not a way to be a person, people did not experience themselves in this way, they did not interact with their friends, their families, their employers, their counsellors, in this way; but in 1985 this was a way to be a person, to experience oneself, to live in society. (Hacking, 2007, p. 299)*

Hacking’s analysis relies on Michel Foucault’s archaeology (Foucault, 2002). Like Foucault, Hacking draws upon historical descriptions of discursive events when he uncovers the making of new categories of people. The discursive events are: *particular utterances, such as statements made or questions asked, diagrams drawn or inscriptions chiseled – and, for anyone concerned with the past, the recorded versions of such events, so often the printed word* (Hacking, 2004, p. 278). Hacking refers to this approach as the analysis of “abstract discourse” in the “*sense of being abstracted from those who speak*” (Hacking, 2004, p. 278).

Again, basing his argument on the work of Michel Foucault on the relation between knowledge and power (Foucault, 1998; Foucault & Gordon, 1980), Hacking contends that these abstract discourses which provide knowledge by

defining categories of people in terms of particular properties offer the possibility of acting upon them. Hacking describes this as follows:

*... We think of many kinds of people as objects of scientific inquiry. Sometimes to control them, as prostitutes, sometimes to help them, as potential suicides. Sometimes to organise and help, but at the same time keep ourselves safe, as the poor or the homeless. Sometimes to change them for their own good and the good of the public, as the obese. Sometimes just to admire, to understand, to encourage and perhaps even to emulate, as (sometimes) geniuses. We think of these kinds of people as definite classes defined by definite properties. As we get to know more about these properties, we will be able to control, help, change, or emulate them better.*

Importantly, categorizations of people also influence how people conduct themselves. As Hacking writes: people spontaneously come to fit their categories (Hacking, 2002, p. 99). In Foucauldian terms, categorizations of people are the performance of the “conduct of conduct”. However, an essential assumption underlying Hacking’s theory is that people do not just take upon themselves a certain fixed category; rather, they interact with their categories. Hacking writes: *They are moving targets because our investigations interact with them, and change them. And since they are changed, they are not quite the same kind of people as before. The target has moved. I call this the looping effect* (Hacking, 2006, p. 23).

Thus, Hacking is not just interested in the classification of people as such, but also in how people interact with the classifications. He asks: *how do classifications of people affect the people classified, and how do the ways in which we change have a sort of feedback effect on our systems of classifications themselves?* (Hacking, 2002, p. 99) .

Hacking’s theory does have limitations, some of which he himself has noted and defined. These are particularly a consequence of Hacking’s own delimitation of his interest and (again) his own urge to provide the abstract focus on discourse with the mundane practices and interaction of everyday life:



First, Hacking's studies have been confined to historical studies of the human sciences, grounded in his studies of official statistics of the nineteenth century, which, as Hacking shows, particularly focused on the statistics of deviance.

Second, Hacking insists that his notion of dynamic nominalism is philosophical. However, this limits his ability to focus analytically on what he calls the ordinary dynamics of human interaction (Hacking, 2002, p. 100). As noted, the "making up of people" also involves the interaction between the category and the persons categorized. Hacking does not see the individual as someone who is passively labeled as one category of person or the other:

*Does one feel different, has one a different experience of oneself if one is led to see oneself as a certain type of person? Does the availability of a classification, a label, a word or a phrase open certain possibilities, or perhaps close off others?[...] It seemed to me that a new way of describing people does not only create new ways to be, but also new ways to choose – in the existentialist philosophy, new ways to choose who one is (Hacking, 2004, p. 285).*

Thus, categories are not only labels we are given or put onto others, they are internalized and cannot be internalized unless the individual somehow by him- or herself becomes a person in the category. Hacking here points to the fact that people on the one hand tend to identify with their categories, but that they may also resist their categorization.

When does a new category become interesting – when do the interactions between people and their categories become interesting and important? Hacking developed his notion of "making up people" in relation to the scientific categorizations of people for the purpose of counting particular types of people and subsequently taking action on the basis of the statistics thus generated. The categories in question are created through a "top-down" process. But in everyday talk we often invent new categories via a more "bottom-up" process. Are these also relevant categories?

Hacking emphasizes that his interest is in new classifications and, as he puts it, in *important social and human concept[s]* (Hacking, 2004, p. 280). Hacking insists

that the classifications do need some kind of solid and persistent structure: *All classifications that stick exist only within practices and institutions* (Hacking, 2004, p. 285). Although Hacking does acknowledge that new categories of people are “made up” at a more local level, his philosophical interest is directed only toward the above-mentioned solid categorizations. Thus, he omits the type of categorization which may not (yet) be represented as a category of scientific interest.

In the article “Between Michel Foucault and Erving Goffman: between discourse in the abstract and face-to-face interaction,” Hacking links the abstract “making up of people” to the face-to-face interaction studies carried out by Erving Goffman (Goffman, 1986, 1990). Hacking describes how he has drawn upon Foucault to study how classifications of people interact with the people classified but maintains that Goffman’s methodology can and should complement Foucault’s. Both Goffman and Foucault were interested in how individuals were shaped by the institutions they were part of, but Foucault did not provide a way of understanding how people actually begin to act according to such prescriptions. Conversely, Goffman did not provide the understanding/methodology to understand how structures and institutions came about at all. Hacking describes the difference between the two as Foucault: Top-down and Goffman: Bottom-up: understanding how people were constituted, defined themselves and were understood by others – starting with individual face-to-face exchanges.

Hacking writes about his own earlier Foucauldian approaches as follows:

*There is something missing in those approaches – an understanding of how the forms of discourse become part of the lives of ordinary people, or even how they become institutionalized and made part of the structure of institutions at work. Of course there is something absolutely missing in Goffman too: an understanding of how the institutions he described came into being, what their formative structures were (Hacking, 2004, p. 278) .*

For Hacking, it is important to recognize that people themselves have some sort of bearing on the persons they become – or, to put it in more Goffmanian terms,

on how they act their categories or roles. Thus, following from this article by Hacking, the methodology needed to comprehend how people are “made up” should include both the abstract discursive events and following Goffman’s methodology, the close observations of and notes recording the words, tone, accent, body language etc. of people observed in particular settings and circumstances.

#### *“MAKING UP” WORKERS*

In spite of Hacking’s own delimitations of the theory, it has been developed to suit the sociological study of identity at work by Paul du Gay in his book on “Consumption and Identity at Work” (Du Gay, 1996). Du Gay wants to analyze how particular discourses of work create worker identities, and he interprets this interest as an interest in “how people are presently ‘made up’ at work” (Du Gay, 1996, p. 92). Like Hacking, du Gay is interested in the subjectification of people, and thus in the “making up” of the “work-based subject”: *“Workers” and “managers” have been “made up” in different ways - discursively re-imagined and reconceptualized - at different times through their positioning in a variety of discourses of work reform* (Du Gay, 1996, p. 55).

When writing the book, du Gay was particularly concerned with the emergence of the discourse of ‘the enterprising self’. This was the category of person which du Gay identified as a sort of person who “takes initiative and accepts responsibility for constructing his/her own identity”. This sort of category derives from the culture of consumption, but does not apply only to consumers but rather also to workers, who are expected to regard work as *one more arena for self-development, self-expression, and identity construction* (Leidner, 2006, p. 431).

Du Gay’s interest in Ian Hacking’s notion of ‘making up’ people stems from the inclusion of what those subjected to the discourse make or do with it (Du Gay, 1996, p. 75). Du Gay describes how Hacking’s notion of ‘making up’ people consists of two mutually constitutive vectors: *labelling from above and the actual behaviour of those so labelled, which presses from below* (Du Gay, 1996, p. 75). Although Du Gay does not directly use the terms of ‘looping’ or ‘moving targets’, I

regard the 'actual behavior of those so labelled' in Du Gay's writing as covering these ways in which the individual may interact with and perhaps seek to avoid a certain categorization. Hacking in fact does not approve of the term 'labelling' because he finds it leaves the persons labelled too passive in regard to how they are labelled (Hacking, 2004).

Du Gay's analysis here is of identity in the retail sector. His aim is to explore the *current dislocation and to examine how people are presently 'made up' at work*. Du Gay moves a bit closer to the idea of "looping", when he in line with Knights and Willmott (Knights & Willmott, 1989), uses the notion of "consuming work identities:

In his analysis of retail work, du Gay shows how management strategies to promote the "entrepreneurial self" are "consumed" by employees, meaning in effect that employees take upon them the entrepreneurial self, but also use it actively and perhaps even waste it. The result is often ambiguous. Mid-level managers over-work themselves because they are measured by performance, but they also find opportunities to avoid or work around some strategies in ways that give them some space to maneuver in. Management's attempt to encourage the workers to identify with their work or "feel as if they owned the company" – symbolized by providing free drinks for employees in meetings where they are to talk about common goals for the company – is resisted. By the end of the book, du Gay considers the spread of the culture of entrepreneurship to all spheres of society and particularly points to the public sector and the problem complex related to making the public bureaucrat up as an enterprising self. (Du Gay, 2000, 2007)

### **2.3 Work, management and identity in the public sector**

So how does the theory of "making up" workers apply to work as a parking attendant in the Danish public sector? As the research question implies, the focus is on how the 'making up' of parking attendants responds to changing management strategies in the public sector. What sort of managerial strategies might there be in the sort of organization which I am studying?

While du Gay has studied the state bureaucrat as a “certain sort of person”, at the other “end” of the public administration: on the ground floor in the municipalities, we find other sorts of bureaucrats. In 1980, political scientist Michael Lipsky published the book “Street-level bureaucrats – dilemmas of the individual in the public sector”, which has been a central reference to anyone occupied with understanding the working conditions of front-line workers in the public sector. Lipsky relied on studies of many different kinds of workers, who in spite of their different professions and work tasks shared the common ground of administering a set of rules in direct contact with those citizens who are affected by those rules. Thus, jobs which apparently had quite different purposes, for instance the jobs of social workers, doctors, policemen, and janitors working in apartment buildings could be subsumed under this category. Michael Lipsky defined these street-level bureaucrats as: *Public service workers who interact directly with citizens in the course of their jobs, and who have substantial discretion in the execution of their work* (Lipsky, 2010 (1980), p. 3).

Lipsky’s study has had a significant impact on the understanding of street-level bureaucrats work as “full of dilemmas” related to the front-line workers’ discretion to provide resources or sanction citizens. Lipsky described the fundamental dilemma as follows:

*On the one hand, the work is often highly scripted to achieve policy objectives that have their origins in the political process. On the other hand, the work requires improvisation and responsiveness to the individual case* (Lipsky, 2010 (1980), p. xii).

The understanding of *dilemmas* as a central working condition in front-line public sector work is today widespread, but the content of these dilemmas may change as the public sector changes over time. Issues that caused dilemmas when Lipsky defined “street-level bureaucrats” may be different today. Moreover, another aspect of the street-level bureaucrats work has often been at the centre of attention, namely their contribution to the shaping – or, we might say “making up” of citizens, and ‘educating them’ in how they should act and who they

should be in relation to the public service system (i.e. Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2003; Prottas, 1979).

Since the early nineteen-eighties, the public sector at large has come to be characterized by many major changes related to the notion of New Public Management (NPM), which encompasses a range of public initiatives and reforms that were developed within the Anglo-Saxon countries by the late nineteen-eighties and early nineteen-nineties and have been applied in different versions elsewhere in the world (Greve, 2002). New Public Management as defined by Christopher Hood (Hood, 1991) involves the combination of

- a market-driven approach to public services, relying on the understanding that marketization is a more effective way of regulating than the traditional bureaucratic administration, for instance through increased decentralization and managing through contracts,
- an increased focus on management rather than administration, which seeks to introduce management ideals from the private sector focusing on the employees' personal responsibility, development, and performance.

Perhaps new management strategies such as those situated under the umbrella of New Public Management change the nature of dilemmas for street-level bureaucrats. Moreover, to a researcher who adopts a view based on the Foucauldian understanding of the worker-subject, the question may not be which dilemmas the individual worker has to deal with, but rather what the significance might be of "making up" this sort of worker subject as a street-level bureaucrat and thereby imposing upon the worker an understanding of being in a dilemmatic situation. More recently, however, the discussions of the street-level bureaucrat have been about how this sort of worker/person has changed in relation to the development of New Public Management, and whether the power which the street-level bureaucrat typically has been depicted as having has been contested (i.e. Evans & Harris, 2004).

Given that New Public Management was initially developed in the Anglo-Saxon part of the world and has been developed to a wider extent in Anglo-Saxon countries than elsewhere, much of the normative critique also comes from here. For instance, John Clarke and Janet Newman have followed the development broadly, in *The Managerial State* (Clarke & Newman, 1997) and *Creating Citizen-Consumers* (Clarke et al., 2007); both titles refer to how NPM brings together discourses/vocabularies of enterprise with the vocabulary of bureaucracy in new categories: management and state, citizen and consumer. Paul Hoggett has also critically analyzed the public sector as full of dilemmas and paradoxes or, as he puts it, as having multiple, contested, and ambivalent purposes (Hoggett, 2006). Some of the problems, according to Hoggett, are attributable to the lack of recognition in recent management reform of the public official's need to balance value contradictions: the need for a balance between universalism and particularism.

Thus, according to Hoggett's bleak description, the lack of acceptance within new management reforms of the particular moral purposes of the public sector and of its ability to contain anxiety leads to high levels of stress among street-level bureaucrats.

Another description of the development of the public sector and its consequences for workers is provided by John Clarke and Janet Newman. While Hoggett's analysis is directly related to the British context, Clarke and Newman seek to describe the changes in the public sector in a more generalized way. Their point of departure is an understanding that the public sector in general is characterized by being simultaneously in decline and proliferating its activities.

Clarke and Newman explain, that the extended use of market-like organizational structures has contributed to this decline by contesting the legitimacy of services delivered by public organizations in the eyes of the public. They argue that workers in the public sector undergo a re-professionalization in order to adjust to this contested legitimacy. In regard to the proliferating activities, Clarke and Newman refer to the public sector having more and more issues to attend to and thus becoming involved in new types of activities. They point to many tasks to

which the public sector, in proliferating its activities, needs to attend. Among these, they include: earning money and not only spending it and responding to diversity externally, with regard to the diversity of the citizens, and internally, with regard to the diversity of public sector employees (Newman, 1996; Newman & Clarke, 2009). As we shall see, these sorts of activities can indeed be recognized in this study of Danish parking attendants.

In the Danish context, the legitimacy of the public sector as a service provider has been contested, and “competition” between different providers of public services has to some extent been established, for instance within the care sector. Nevertheless, we should be cautious about perceiving the public sector as in decline in Denmark specifically or in Scandinavia generally. The Danish welfare state is characterized by a strong role for the public sector as service provider and by a favorable public opinion of the centrality of the public sector (Green-Pedersen, Klitgaard, & Nørgaard, 2004). In regard to the proliferation of services, one should take into consideration that proliferation in Denmark may not have been as extreme as in the Anglo-Saxon context.

However, given that NPM strategies have had significant influence in the Danish setting, and not least given that a central part of the parking attendant’s *raison d’être* is to provide an income other than taxes to the municipality, there is reason to achieve an understanding of what NPM is about.

Within the Scandinavian context, researchers argue that the implementation of NPM has been more adjusted to the original bureaucracy and not as sweeping as in the Anglo-Saxon world (Rennison, 2007). This means that NPM has been adjusted to established traditions and administrative routines. The new initiatives supplement and complement the already existing work methods and procedures. Thus, government by rules, professional expertise, justice and equality norms, political control and loyalty, and a corporative model of decision making are still important.

*... the movement from previous traditional administration and in the direction of new modern management has been less intensive, has taken longer time, has*



*been less encompassing and has had another character in Scandinavia than in many other countries* (Rennison, 2000, p. 17).

In the Danish context, NPM has developed alongside a professionalization of work in the public sector. Care workers, who twenty years ago were formally unskilled, are today regarded as professionals. The labor market parties are influential, and labor unions have made agreements with regard to up-skilling and the development of new job profiles (Kamp et al., 2013: 15).

In this context, it is particularly the development of new welfare professions such as social care assistants and social workers which have received attention (Kamp et al., 2013).

For example, the parking attendants in this study are termed “parking service assistants” in their employment contracts, which is an indication of their organization’s approach to the external encounters with the public. But the word service also indicates that not only knowledge from work and professions in the public sector is relevant to the study, but also research on service work more generally. As mentioned, the sociology of identity and work has established, that service workers performance is adjusted to the type of customers that they serve (e.g. du Gay 2006). Moreover, just as the role of the customer changes, for instance from a customer receiving service from over the counter to a self-servicing person, so do the role of the citizen and the expectations the citizen has of the public service representative.

Clarke and Newman pointed to expectations that the public sector will earn money and not only spend it, that it will act morally and on the other hand intervene authoritatively to change citizens’ behavior, and that it will respond to the challenges created by social diversity. Again, these developments are recognizable in the Danish context.

Andersen and Andersen and Born (J. G. Andersen, 2002; N. Å. Andersen & Born, 2007) have described a renewed relation between employees and managers in the public sector, which involves new expectations of employees. Employees are expected to feel part of the organizational whole and contribute actively to the

organization as a whole – we can recognize du Gay's description of the enterprising self here. They are supposed to act by thinking ahead and anticipating the organization's needs. Andersen and Born analyze this as a relation between employee and management which presupposes an emotional attachment.

Another development of the public sector's role in Denmark has to do with cost containment: Sickness absence in the public sector has become very targeted and debated – with the awareness that such absence not only costs the employer lost working effort, but also expenses to sickness benefits, which are paid for by the municipalities and the state. The growing attention to the efficiency of the private versus the public sector has resulted in discussions about how the public sector wears down employees, but on the other hand also employs people in jobs that are traditionally hard and cause burnout (Labriola & Lund, 2009). In 2003, the Danish government issued an action plan to bring down absence due to illness (Regeringen (The Danish Government), 2003), and statistical reports on sickness absence have continuously compared four sectors: the state, municipalities, regions, and the private sector. The sickness absence in the municipalities and regions is continuously higher than in the private and state sectors (Beskæftigelsesministeriet, 2008; Danmarks Statistik, 2013). The focus on sickness absence has come to be evident in the contract management of municipalities including, as we shall see, in connection with the municipal organization of parking attendance.

Finally, approaches to diversity both in the citizen population generally and in the cohort of public sector employees specifically are relevant in the Danish context. In a Danish study of diversity management in a municipality we see that the implementation of diversity management focuses on numbers:

*...the municipality has a policy of reflecting the diversity of the local community, and, for example, a concrete goal (10 percent) for the representation of ethnic minorities in the workplace has been agreed upon. Success is measured by counting, for example, the number of employees with a non-Danish ethnic background. Each department is requested to report how well they are doing in*

*relation to their percentage of refugees/immigrants and what they are doing to improve their performance (Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004, p. 541).*

Finally, the use of scientific methods for monitoring a population is not only an activity associated with a scientific community. Indeed in many institutions, including Danish public workplaces, the use of surveys and other statistical material is widespread, not only to monitor the output of production, but also to monitor the composition, well-being, or sickness absence of the workforce. Thus, local organizational use of general categories or even locally developed categorizations should be studied as a contribution to the “making up” of people.

Thus, although Ian Hacking’s philosophy of dynamic nominalism was not directly written with the 21st century public workplace in mind, the use of statistics, particularly social statistics designating and categorizing the workforce, contributes to “making up” people. Indeed, Hacking does on one occasion consider the “making up” of people in the workplace:

*People spontaneously come to fit their categories. When factory inspectors in England and Wales went to the mills, they found various kinds of people there, loosely sorted according to tasks and wages. But when they had finished their reports, millhands had precise ways in which to work, and the owner had a clear set of concepts about how to employ workers according to the ways in which he was obliged to classify them (Hacking 2002 (1986): 100).*

It is tempting to draw a parallel between these factory inspectors and today’s external workplace consultants, who come into the workplace and provide managers and employees with new ways of categorizing themselves and others in order to create a new organizational order.

## **2.4 Dirt, aesthetics, inclusion, and the “making up” of workers**

As stated above, the basic analytical perspective of this thesis is Hacking’s and du Gay’s approach to the “Making up” of people. I also described above, that Hacking finds that the ‘making up’ happens in a process of abstract discourse and face-to-face interaction: the bottom-up understanding is as important as the top-

down understanding of how people come to think of themselves as particular sorts of persons and how they resist or change the category of person, that they are otherwise designated to be. Drawing upon this perspective, de Gay has studied different sorts of persons: the state bureaucrat, the retail worker. In order to link these perspectives to the study of parking attendants, I draw in sets of theory, which are relevant to the particular context of public parking attendance. The first theory, which I introduce is about “dirty work” and while directly applicable to the unpopular tasks of the parking attendant, this theory also contributes to providing a bottom-up view on how parking attendants interact with their category – and particularly the categorization of them as “dirty workers”. The second theory, which I introduce is about “aesthetic labour”. The notion of aesthetic labour can contribute to identify some of the top-down managerial work to shape a certain sort of worker. The question then becomes how the workers interact with the expectations to their aesthetic labour. Finally, the third perspective, which I couple to the “making up”-perspective is not one particular theory, but rather a field of research which critically analyses how deliberate actions to increase inclusion and diversity at the workplace may carry unintended consequences for organization members.

#### *DIRTY WORK AND THE “MAKING UP” OF WORKERS*

The term “dirty work” was coined by Everett Hughes (1951) to refer to *tasks and occupations that are likely to be perceived as disgusting or degrading* (Ashforth and Kreiner 1999). Such perceptions are, according to this theory, socially constructed, and the occupations are:

*...stigmatized because of associations with problematic physical (e.g., garbage, death, danger), social (e.g. tainted clients, service relationships), and/or moral (e.g. sinful, confrontational, deceptive) issues* (Ashforth and Kreiner 2004 p. 423).

The original work on “dirty work” by Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) proceeded on the basis of a social interactionist view on identity and an investigation of how different sorts of workers managed the taint of their jobs. In this respect, the level of attention in dirty work analysis provides the sort of face-to-face social

interaction, which according to Hacking can and should complement the level of abstract discourse.

More recently, researchers have worked to develop the understanding of dirty work, first and foremost in ways which acknowledge that whether or not a certain sort of work is regarded as “dirty” depends on the context (Ashfort and Kreiner, 2004). This goes for the immediate context in which the worker accounts for the perception and management of dirty work; for instance, as Dick has shown, relying on Goffman’s frontstage/backstage analysis (Dick, 2005) workers present their approach to work differently in interview situations on the one hand and in the everyday work situation on the other hand. It also goes for the broader cultural context, where what is perceived as dirty work in one context is not so in another context (Simpson et al., 2012). Moreover, owing to Everett Hughes’s original observation that those who undertake dirty work are often those lowest in the societal hierarchy, attention is also paid to the intersection of dirty work identities and other social identities, particularly race, class, and gender. In spite of these efforts to include context – including the broader societal structures – in the study of work, which is perceived as “dirty”, the studies tend to perceive management as the necessarily repressive counterpart of the dirty worker – the more ambiguous meanings of the negotiation of dirty work tasks between management and employees are left aside. As du Gay states: *because of a pragmatist attachment to the exigencies of everyday interaction, the interactionists have not developed any consistent theory of the wider social formation* (Du Gay, 1996, p. 34). However, the strength of the dirty work perspective is that scholars adopting this perspective pay close attention to the actual work situation and to how the individual acts and reacts to the sort of work. Given Hacking’s identification of a need to balance/complement the “making up” of people with the face-to-face interaction, this is a relevant theory to add into the understanding of how the “making up” of parking attendants has responded to new management strategies in the public sector. Moreover, the social construction of the ‘dirty worker’ and the categorization as a certain sort of dirty worker is also something which the worker and their managers interact with. The research in dirty work has identified a range of ways in which workers

and managers cope with being dirty workers – and how they retain a positive self-identity in spite of the ‘stigma’ related to their occupation. For these reasons it is relevant to investigate in what sense, the parking attendant is a certain sort of dirty worker and in what sense the various tools to ‘loop out’ of negative perceptions of one’s occupation are used by them and their managers.

*AESTHETIC LABOUR AND THE ‘MAKING UP’ OF WORKERS*

The idea of ‘making up’ people has been taken in to new contexts of work and combined with new ways of analysing the work and identity of service workers – in effect, these can be seen as refinements of the perspective of ‘making up’. One of these perspectives, which has proved to be relevant in relation to this study is the notion of ‘aesthetic labour’. It’s immediate use has been within the private service sector, where it’s focus is on identifying how the notion of ‘skills’ develops and previously unacknowledged skills, that are required in service jobs:

*The labour of aesthetics is, we suggest, a vital element in the production of materialization of the aesthetics of a service organization and particularly of the ‘style’ of service experienced or consumed by customers. The increasing mobilization of aesthetic labour is particularly evident in the ‘style’ labour market of design- and image-driven retail and hospitality organizations. Since the 1980s, these organizations have sought market differentiation via image, initiately through design interiors, but increasingly through ‘making up’ (Du Gay 1996) the embodied dispositions of employees. These employees are thus increasingly regarded by employers as an integral – literally animate - component of the service produced (Witz, Warhurst, & Nickson, 2003)*

Inspired by the focus of New Public Management in improving the service-relation by regarding the citizen as a customer, there might be reason to look into this concept, which is used to analyze how management strategies target the ‘style of appearance’ of workers:

At the turn of the millennium, a group of service work researchers directed their attention to another aspect of service work, which they named: aesthetic labour. Their interest was fuelled by an increased amount of jobs in clothing retail in the Glasgow region. In this sector, employees with customer contact would be

expected to dress and act in a particular style matching the product (Nickson, Warhurst, Cullen, & Watt, 2003). These researchers were concerned about a mismatch between policy initiatives toward the unemployed and employer demands in these jobs which at one and the same time are McJobs and “style jobs” requiring that employees dress in a particular fashion. They questioned the common theoretical understanding that such jobs required no skills and wanted to investigate what type of unacknowledged skills were in fact required (Thompson, Warhurst, & Callaghan, 2001). Through interviews and fieldwork in the hospitality and retail industries, the researchers found that managers expect a “matrix of skills” consisting of technical skills, social skills, and aesthetic skills for these jobs. The technical and social skills were quite developed and articulated, while the last category, aesthetic skills, was not. According to Nickson et al., aesthetic skills represent *an under-developed and under-appreciated form of labour in interactive service work* (Nickson et al., 2003, p. 185). But what is meant by aesthetic skills, and – recalling the different sociological approaches to the relation between identity and work: what is the difference between aesthetic and emotional labour?

The fundamental difference between emotional and aesthetic labour lies in how the social situation is weighted. Hochschild is critical towards Erving Goffman’s classic analysis of impression management (Goffman, 1990). She argues that Goffman’s theatre metaphor of front- and back-stage acting is too focused on the social situation at the expense of the analysis of consequences for the individual self (Hochschild, 2003). The theorists of aesthetic labour defend the explanatory power of Goffman’s theory. They are convinced by his insistence upon the situated character of all interaction (Witz et al., 2003). The service encounter happens in a social world in which references to style, appearance, and class are detectable in social encounters. This social knowledge, or what we can call a “lay cultural sociology”, is what managers and employers of people in the style labour market draw upon when they assess an applicant or train their employees. But the references to style, appearance, and class may just as well apply in public service as in private retail and hospitality. The Glasgow researchers apply Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of distinction as the central component of the theory of

aesthetic labour (Witz et al., 2003). Agreeing with Hochschild that Goffman's analytical framework is very "situated", but drawing on Bourdieu's analysis of habitus and social distinction (Bourdieu, 1998), Witz et al. insist that the situatedness of the scene is central. Aesthetics are socially created and embodied in us all. Where Hochschild focuses on the emotional self, Witz et al. insist on the importance of the fact that this emotional self is situated in a social context. When a flight attendant or a street-level bureaucrat manages own emotions in a particular way to accommodate managers' and customers'—or citizen-consumers'—expectations, the service worker is also accommodating the social expectations with regard to this type of worker's feelings, looks, and appearance and how these distinguish this type of worker from others in the immediate social environment and in society at large. The service worker's ability to embody this distinction depends on the service worker's habitus<sup>2</sup>.

Witz et al. move on from the individual to the aesthetics of organisation: the organisation as such has a socially embedded aesthetic. The employee is required to fit the organisational doxa: the embodied manners in the organisation. The question is "how the physical capital of employees is valorized and converted into economic capital by and for organizations" (Witz et al., 2003, p. 41). They continue, quoting colleagues: *with many front-line service workers now expected to embody the company image or required service, it is the commodification of workers' corporeality, not just their feelings that is becoming the analytical focus* (Warhurst, Thompsen, & Nickson, 2009, p. 104). Thompson et al. view service labour and the issues of interpersonal interaction in the service sector through the lenses of Pierre Bourdieu's theory of distinction and develop the following concept of aesthetic labour:

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<sup>2</sup> Paul du Gay sums up the content of "habitus": "By 'habitus' Bourdieu is referring to the unconscious dispositions, the classificatory schemes, and taken for granted preferences which are evident in the individual's sense of appropriateness and validity of his or her taste for cultural goods and practices, and which not only operate at the level of everyday knowledgeability, but are also inscribed onto the body. As 'habitus' the distinction between the Kantian and anti-Kantian aesthetic is both derived from material conditions, and, in turn, provides an insight into the classificatory scheme which may be applied to an infinite number of actual consumption domains" (Du Gay, 1996, p. 83.)



*Aesthetic labour is defined as a supply of embodied capacities and attributes possessed by workers at the point of entry into employment. Employers mobilize, develop and commodify these capacities and attributes through processes of recruitment, selection and training, transforming them into competencies and skills which are aesthetically geared towards producing a “style” of service encounter deliberately intended to appeal to the senses of customers, most obviously in a visual or aural way. Aesthetic labour encompasses individual attributes and task requirements to produce a favourable interaction with the customer and complement social and technical skills (Thompson et al., 2001, p. 931).*

By bringing in aesthetics in the matrix of skills, drawing on Bourdieu, aesthetic labour scholars illustrate that *“the value of the habitus concept is that it expands our purview beyond the labor process, on to the larger field of experiences and meanings that workers bring with them to the workplace”* (Sallaz, 2010, p. 297).

Finally, we may note that the theory of aesthetic labour indeed does – by relying on the concept of habitus – take account of those broader social structures and formations, which the above described ‘dirty work’ theory by focusing on the very specific everyday interaction was not immediately ‘geared’ to do.

The theory of aesthetic labour has an underlying interest in inclusion and exclusion, by considering how people are covertly in- or excluded at work on the grounds of their look by management strategies of aesthetics. The final perspective I present in this dissertation has a quite different approach to issues of in- and exclusion, namely by focusing on overt management practices of inclusion and diversity and their unintended consequences.

#### *‘MAKING UP’ PEOPLE IN ORGANIZATIONS WITH “INCLUSIVE” MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES*

Some of the new management strategies that have found their way to the Danish public sector recently concern – as mentioned above – diversity and inclusion. In consistency with the purpose of this dissertation, management strategies of diversity and inclusion should be analysed in regard to how they contribute to the “making up of people”. Hacking’s writing has been drawn into the field of diversity management by Gastelaars (Gastelaars, 2002), who critically points to

“positive action” as a way of making up people which does not fit more recent developments of individually targeted management. While Hacking studied the “making up of people” in the development of national statistics in the 19th century (Hacking, 1999b), the “making up of people” also happens at the smaller organisational level. For example, HR departments categorise and count personnel in line with personnel policies, as in the empirical example of absence due to illness, when managers draw on social or physical attributes in the “social engineering” of the organisation, when organisation members contribute to the making up of new social categories in their mundane practices (Miller & Rose, 2008, p. 21). Recently, the notion of ‘making up people’ in du Gay’s sociological understanding has also found its way to studies of diversity in service work organisations (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005).

In many critical diversity studies, the concepts of inclusion and its negative counterpart “exclusion” have been approached as a gender issue. Here, inclusion is, as noted in the introduction, not only about being included in or excluded from an organisation, but also about *how* one is included (Acker, 1990; Ashcraft, Muhr, Rennstam, & Sullivan, 2012; Davies, 1996). Thus, inclusion in a work organisation may grant the “included worker” emancipation from some structural concerns, e.g. dependence on the income of spouses or other family members or on welfare benefits, but it is not necessarily emancipation from status differences and power inequalities within the organisation, given the social embeddedness of organisations in society at large. Recent writings suggest that analysis should focus on the intersections of different types of variances or, as Karen Ashcraft writes, on theorising the politics of difference in ways that capture both the distinction and intersection of particular difference formations (Ashcraft, 2009, p. 320). By considering the “unintended consequences” of diversity management through the lense of ‘making up’ people, I argue, that there may potentially be a way to uncover some of the ambivalences and contradictions related to these sort of management strategies. Doing this, Nair and Vohra in a review of research and perspectives on diversity and inclusion in the workplace find, that *I put forth the possibility that managerial strategies to promote diversity and inclusion may in fact promote new types of differences and*

*exclusions, which can create unintended consequences of exclusion and one which employees may in fact resist* (Nair & Vohra, 2015).

## **2.5 Summing up the chapter**

This chapter has gone through the various theoretical perspectives in the dissertation and related to their basic sociological understanding of the relation between work and identity. I have explained, that I wish to attend to how parking attendants are “made up” in relation to different management strategies and briefly considered the broad ‘trends’ of developments of workers and management strategies in the public sector. Finally, I have pointed to three theoretical directions, which in each their way contribute to our understanding of the ‘making up’ of parking attendants in the Danish public sector.

### 3. Design and Methods

*When explanation, propositional knowledge and law are the aims of an inquiry, the case study will often be at a disadvantage. When the aims are understanding, extension of experience and increase in conviction in that which is known, the disadvantage disappears (Stake, 2000, p. 21).*

### 3.1 Purpose of the chapter

This chapter describes how I have designed the research process, and how the empirical material, which I have collected through a qualitative case-study is appropriate for the purpose of analyzing how the ‘making up’ of public parking attendants is affected by new management strategies in the public sector. As implied in chapter two, the answering of this research question must rely on knowledge about managerial strategies, through which new ways for the parking attendant to be are developed and knowledge of how these new ways to be are handled by or perhaps resisted by the parking attendants. By conducting a qualitative case study, I have sought in depth knowledge of one particular organization. This approach was appropriate, because in order to study the ‘making up’ of people, I needed both to track formal and informal managerial strategies, including material on how they were carried out through monitoring and engaging with the workers’ performance and how organization members interacted with these strategies in their everyday activities and interactions. To this end, I needed to know the organization very well and in quite detail.

However, one thing common to qualitative field studies in general is the large degree of unpredictability: unforeseen opportunities and unforeseen obstacles to gathering data. Much of the challenge for the researcher conducting qualitative field studies lies in embracing this unpredictability and the surprises met in the field in spite of the frustration they may bring (Charmaz, 2004). This sort of challenge has also been the case in this study. At the outset, the purpose of my study was to focus on how management policies of inclusion and diversity contributed to the shaping of worker identities, but in the course of my research the study has broadened its scope to the study of worker identities in the light of a broader range of management strategies. Thus, what was expected at the outset to constitute the analysis in the entire dissertation, at the end is “only” one of several managerial tactics, which are analyzed in the dissertation.

This chapter accounts for how I have sought to embrace the unpredictability in my fieldwork, how I have taken account of it and reflected upon those things that surprised me. Thus, the account is a frank account of the practicalities of my research: my everyday decisions in the field about methodology and and how

these have led me to a material appropriate for my analysis, and finally the processing of data and analysis. In short this is the 'natural history' of this dissertation (Silverman, 2010)

In chapter two, I accounted for the theoretical strands in the dissertation. The basic consideration of worker identities as the 'making up' of people through 'labelling from above' and the actions of those so-labelled. Chapter two also showed how the three articles in the dissertation draw upon other theory: Dirty work, aesthetic labour and critical theory of diversity and inclusion. The latter was to a large extent implied by the fact that the initial purpose of the study was to focus only on managerial strategies of inclusion and diversity, but the other two perspectives developed in a reflexive process of working with the empirical material and learning and applying different strands of research.

The first section of this chapter outlines the inspiration and epistemology that lies behind my qualitative case study. The remaining part of the chapter is structured chronologically in order to show how my reasoning about methodology developed and finally provided the analysis in the three articles in this thesis. While purely quantitative studies relying on positivist epistemology usually contain quite rigid parameters to assess the quality and strength of a piece of research, qualitative studies are often regarded as more challenged in this regard. However, Kenneth Howe and Kathleen Eisenhardt, have provided five general premises for good research. Howe and Eisenhardt's five premises pertain to both qualitative and quantitative research (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990) and I take them up at the end of this chapter.

### **3.2 Developing the case study**

As mentioned, my original outset for the study, was an ambition to investigate how management policies of inclusion and diversity contributed to the shaping of worker identities. This interest was generated from a series of interviews, that I conducted in another context, for the purpose of studying work environments in companies, where management worked strategically with Corporate Social

Responsibility in the “WIRE project”<sup>3</sup>. In the WIRE project, these “best case” CSR companies were regarded as ‘critical cases’ in the sense that if these cases, which were chosen because they had either won or been nominated to a prize for showing social or environmental responsibility, showed a connection between the existence of socially responsible management strategies and strategies to improve the working environment, then there would be reason to believe that a managerial focus on CSR could promote improvements of the work environment (Flyvbjerg, 2006). These studies of “best case” CSR companies, relied on the positive expectation of being able to develop new tools to improve the work environment by drawing upon the logic and language of Corporate Social Responsibility. However, in this process, my attention was drawn to how managers in some workplaces spoke about how central their strategies to promote social responsibility were to their management of personnel on an everyday basis. This seemed to me to be an unrecognized element of the working environments of these “best case” companies. My attention was particularly drawn to how social responsibility contributed to the shaping of employee identities in cases – three laundries and a cleaning company, where jobs were formally unskilled. For instance, one laundry manager told me, that she had an employee who she called the “care-employee”, who had the task of taking care of colleagues, who had problems, for instance by calling them, if they were ill. In this case, the management of inclusion/social responsibility at the workplace seemed to involve untraditional ways of acknowledging and understanding skill. Another example can be seen in box 3.1. where the same laundry manager told me how she had headhunted a worker because of the workers particular disability. What were the implications of managing in this way?

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<sup>3</sup> the Work in Responsible Environments (WIRE) project investigated Corporate Social Responsibility and work environment in the hospitality industry, the transport industry, small manufacturing industry and in best case CSR companies and developed a model for small and mediumsized companies work on CSR and work environment.

### **Box 3.1. Headhunting**

To understand the quote it is useful to know that Tanja is an employee with Down's syndrome. She works under special conditions in a subsidised job. Tim is a psychologically handicapped employee who has been at the workplace for many years.:

"I headhunted [Tanja] out from Summerville. She has Down's syndrome. I did it deliberately. We are all better and nicer when we are near [Tim], right? And so we are, when we are near [Tanja], and [Tanja]'s parents are happy because she got a job. She is on early retirement, she comes in four hours a day, we pay 20 kroner per hour, which is equivalent to two hours of work performed ... at the same time as we do social responsibility, we feel good and so does [Tanja], she has a job. Her parents feel good, society gets work performance from [Tanja] and there is a whole group out there [in the production hall] that takes care. We are talking social responsibility .... Then there is [Grethe] out there, she has been trained as a mentor, she has [Tanja] as her personal project ...." (quote from interview with laundry manager)

These interviews in the WIRE project came to serve as pilot interviews to this study. They provided insight into different types of organisations and their approach to social responsibility with regard to the workforce. These interviews made me aware of the possible contribution of management strategies of inclusion and diversity to the construction of worker identities in workplaces relying on low-skilled work. It was with this interest in mind, that I decided to conduct a "pilot observation study" in Municipal Parking in spring 2009 to see whether this organisation could serve as an appropriate case in the long run. At this point, given that the centre had worked strategically with socially responsible initiatives, and given that the main part of jobs in the centre required no formal qualifications, I was expecting that Municipal Parking could be a critical case of studying how management strategies directed at social responsibility created new sorts of worker identities. The "best case" interview with the HR/work environment consultant had proved to me, that this workplace had a strong



focus on retention and prevention. I also contacted the manager who had been in charge of the introduction of diversity management in MP and conducted an interview with her in late 2009. I also spent one week in Municipal Parking's shop, where I followed work at the desk and in the call centre. This was where I began to learn, that what I expected to be a case study of one thing moved and changed as I dug into the case and learned about its particularities.

I wrote up my fieldnotes from my days in the shop in a short paper, which I gave the title "Servicing Ungrateful Customers". As the title indicates, the observations that I 'wrote up' concerned the unlikely unity of regarding citizens who arrive at the desk or call the call centre either in order to buy parking licenses or to pay or complain about parking duties as customers who come to buy "parking products". This language-use of course resonated well with New Public Management's hyphen between citizen and consumer (Clarke et al., 2007). Meanwhile, what I wrote up from this piece of fieldwork had little to do with managerial strategies of inclusion and diversity. Had I just got carried away with the curious New Public Management strategies?

I was convinced that further fieldwork here could provide many interesting insights into the construction of worker identities in the public sector, but I also saw that there was much more to this construction of worker identities than the interest in socially responsible management strategies, which I had when I approached the organization. If I were to hold on to this case, which I found immediately unfolded so many interesting issues to study further, I had to adjust the purpose of my study, and I only slowly became aware of this. Bent Flyvbjerg has described his experience of a similar situation, when a case did not turn out to be a case of what he thought it was:

*It was a frustrating experience when it happened, especially during those several months from when I realized I did not have a critical case until it became clear that all was not lost because I had something else. As a case researcher, charting new terrain, one must be prepared for such incidents, I believe (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 231).*

During maternity leave shortly after these “pilot studies” in the autumn 2009, I finally decided to choose Municipal Parking as the locus of my study, simply because it was an interesting case, and I was sure that although a study there might not be as ripe with examples of identity-construction in relation to socially inclusive management strategies, there would still be plenty to learn about the sort of workers, who were in the front line of this organisation. I returned to Municipal Parking on September 1st 2010.

In that sense, what I did was what Robert Stake describes as follows:

*...giving great prominence to what is and what is not ‘the case’ – the boundaries are kept in focus. What is happening and deemed important within those boundaries (the emic) is considered vital and usually determines what the study is about, as contrasted with other kinds of studies where hypotheses or issues previously targeted by the investigators (the etic) usually determine the content of the study. (Stake, 2000, p. 23)*

Finally, we may ask: what is in fact the case in this study? In answering to the overall research question: how do changing management strategies in the public sector affect the ‘making up’ of parking attendants, the case can be described as “the social situation in which the parking attendant developed as a new sort of worker”. But in each of the articles in the dissertation, where particular aspects of the case are investigated, it develops into a case of ‘dirty work’ of ‘aesthetic labour’ and of ‘an inclusive organisation’ respectively.

### **3.3 Approach to data collection**

My approach to data collection was inspired by the ethnographic discipline in the sense that it involves entering a field as a researcher and collecting different sorts of material, such as observations recollected in field notes, interviews, pictures, or documents. Ethnographers provide substantive guidelines and recommendations on how to enter a particular field to collect this sort of material, which is why I draw upon researchers from this discipline in this chapter. I particularly draw on Daniel Neyland (Neyland, 2007), who has provided ten “sensibilities” for the organisational ethnographer to be alert to, and on Buchanan, Boddy and McCalman (1988), who draw attention to the importance

of focusing on how you go through the stages of getting in, getting on, getting out and getting back to the field. This said, the study differs from the traditional ethnography according to the following definition:

*[An ethnography] is based primarily on observational data about how actors work, act and interact in their natural environment as they go about their daily activities. Such research does not rely solely on what people say about their lives in an interview or on what is reported in documents – rather such data are treated with caution. Of course, ethnographers also talk to people, read documents and consider all kinds of artefacts, but they do so only in the context of an observational study.* (Eberle & Maeder, 2011, pp. 54–55)

The case study, which I have conducted has *not* primarily relied on observational data, but rather balanced selected methods of interviews, participant observation and other sorts of data collection. This balance has been important, because – as described in the previous chapters - the analysis of ‘making up’ people in the public sector cannot only rely on the face-to-face interaction and everyday experiences. Documents, statistics and interviews are needed to identify what goes on in abstract management discourse. As I have shown above when describing how my case developed, part of the design phase comes after entering the organisation and involves making use of opportunities that arise along the way. As Neyland emphasizes, it is important to keep things fluid and flexible (Neyland, 2007).

In order to learn about managerial strategies, I have taken a broad approach to what a managerial strategy is. It may be formalized in a personnel policy, or it may be the expression of managers more informal ways of handling personnel management. In my efforts to collect material about how people respond to managerial strategies and the different categories they are classified as, I have been much inspired by the so-called Chicago School Sociology, particularly the work of Howard Becker (Becker, 1991) and Erving Goffman (Goffman, 1990, 2002) and the more particularly work- or profession-oriented studies by Everett C. Hughes (Hughes, 1951) and John Van Maanen (Van Maanen, 2011). These have proved to be fruitful companions in the collection of material relevant to

use in the analysis of how everyday activities contribute to shape certain sorts of people and also, how people interact with their “categories”. In the following, I show how I planned the study and how it worked out.

### 3.4 Approach to knowledge

The question of what sort of knowledge we can gain from a single case study is much debated (Flyvbjerg, 2006). A central part of this debate lies in whether a single case study can contribute to theory development and whether or not this is at all desirable. According to Robert Stake, who is skeptical towards the understanding that the central value of case studies is their ability to build theory:

*Theory building is the search for essences, pervasive and determining ingredients, and the making of laws. The case study, however, proliferates rather than narrows. One is left with more to pay attention to rather than less. The case study attends to the idiosyncratic more than the pervasive. The fact that it has been useful in theory building does not mean that it is its best use. Its best use appears to me to be for adding to existing experience and humanistic understanding. Its characteristics match the ‘readiness’ people have for added experience (p.24).*

Indeed, what Stake describes above – how the case study proliferates rather than narrows was also what I experienced, when I found that there was much more than “inclusive management strategies” to study in Municipal Parking. This is also why I in the introduction to this dissertation stated that my ambition was not to contribute to predictive theory, but rather to the following task:

*... the task for the sociologist of personhood is to describe these instituted statuses and attributes, rights and duties and thus the different forms of person they constitute case by case, each in their own specific terms (Du Gay, 2007, p. 23).*

and to see:

*how particular categories of person have been formed or ‘made up’ in specific contexts at a particular time and through certain practical means. (Du Gay, 2007, p. 25)*

Thus, by studying parking attendants I can provide a contribution to the piecemeal development of our understanding of the development of persons and thereby add to our human experience or 'tacit knowledge' (Stake, 2000, p. 20) which is – according to this understanding – the actual basis on which people act. This sort of knowledge creates – according to Stake – expectation, rather than prediction (Stake, 2000, p. 22).

This said, the dissertation and its articles do draw upon theory, by using theories developed by others to enlighten some of the many different aspects of the case. How can a case and theory be brought fruitfully together? According to Mitchell, who is a proponent of using case studies for theory development:

*The focus of the case study may be a single individual... or it may be a set of actors... what is important is not the content of the case study as such, but the use to which the data are put to support theoretical conclusions.* (Mitchell, 2000, p. 169)

As mentioned, in each of the three articles in this dissertation, the case of manager-employee relations in municipal parking develops into a case of different things. It becomes a case of dirty work, of aesthetic labour and of an organisation where management works with strategies of 'inclusion and diversity'. Each of the articles put different parts of the data to use in relation different theories. The choice of how to "carve out" these different sorts of cases, was done by reflecting upon material and theory along the way:

According to Neyland, the organisational ethnographer should choose among: a) realist ethnography, striving for objective representation; b) narrative ethnography, accepting that different accounts and interpretations are possible; and c) reflexive ethnography that reflects on how the processes of collecting, organising, and analysing the data produce the outcome. As stated in the introduction to this chapter, my approach is reflexive. For instance: Why did I learn so much about the organisation's inclusive practices by interviewing a manager and an HR officer and so little when spending a week among the employees? Was this because I asked more directly about these things in the interviews and the managers were eager to transmit to me a certain image and

impression of their organisation as an inclusive organization? While in the field, I considered the use of ethnographic narrative analysis (Gubrium & Holstein, 2009) in my reflexive processes of interpretation; I experimented with such analysis and presented the results in conference papers (see e.g. appendix III). The narrative approach was interesting and tempting because the actors in the organisation were very eloquent when they told me about the history of the organisation. However, given that storytelling was one of the very purposeful approaches to organisational change used by the management, the strong positive narratives about organisational change that I heard, and which I call “collective stories” (Elliot, 2005) only really became interesting when I reflected upon who told these stories to me, how they were told, and why they were told to me in these versions. The stories contained important information on management strategies, because they were often stories about how the parking attendant’s job had changed over time, but it was particularly how organization members interacted with these stories, which was important to my analysis. This is why I regard my fieldwork in an interactionist perspective (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005) For instance, Jaber Gubrium and James Holstein hold that any analysis of qualitative material should take into account the interaction between the researcher and the researched. Thus, observations of a meeting or interview transcripts cannot only be interpreted as a matter of the studied people’s lifeworlds and be reported as such, but should be interpreted with the researcher as a co-producer of reality in mind (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995).

In line with this interactionist, reflexive approach, I regard my epistemological approach as relying on abductive reasoning. The abductive process of reasoning consists in finding the most appropriate explanation of a phenomenon in a reflexive process between empirical data and theory. This involves studying a case, a situation and observation by framing it within a theory and trying to strengthen the theory by new observations (Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2009, p. 4). I knew from the outset of the case study, that I was studying the construction of worker identities in the public sector, and that the study of worker identities should *at least* involve the relation between managerial policies of inclusion and

diversity and the making of worker identities. But the study developed through the continuous process of theorizing and discovering new aspects of the case.

The proliferation which Stake describes also lead to a certain proliferation of theories in the study, but again, I regard the main knowledge, which we gain from using these theories to enlighten different aspects of the case as an extension of our human experience and ways of thinking.

### 3.5 In the Field

According to Buchanan, Boddy, and McCalman (Buchanan et al., 1988) critical stages of doing ethnography can be characterised as “Getting in, Getting on, Getting out and Getting back”. In my experience reflecting upon these three stages in fieldwork can in itself provide valuable analysis of the organisation as such.

#### *GETTING IN: NEGOTIATING ACCESS AND FORMAL ETHICAL APPROVAL*

The most striking thing in regard to the process of getting in was the ease with which I got into the organisation. After an interview with the in-house work environment consultant, a week of observations in the shop, and an interview with the manager in charge of diversity, I decided to ask if I could come back to the organisation and stay for about four weeks while following the parking attendants. I sent my request in an email to the manager in charge of diversity, and I soon had a meeting arranged with one of the managers of parking attendants, who welcomed me and only asked me to write a bit about myself for the parking attendants to read before I came back to do fieldwork. The manager said that the attendants were quite used to bringing other people along with them on their patrol, sometimes students doing research, sometimes apprentices, sometimes new colleagues for training, so it wouldn't be a problem for me to walk with them. We agreed on a date on which I could just show up for a shift wearing good walking shoes and bringing lunch. On the first day on which I came the manager introduced me, and I stood up at the morning briefing and told the parking attendants a bit about myself and that I would be asking them to take me out patrolling. This manager and the in-house work environment consultant explained to me, that their openness towards researchers, students

and others was a general and very conscious strategy they used in order to demystify themselves and the organisation. Thus, this was a clue to how the parking attendant was expected to be a person who was willing to share his or her work openly with the public. If the media were running bad stories about them, for instance, they would also invite journalists in to follow parking attendants on the streets for a day. It was of course very convenient for me that access to the organisation was easy to get.

However, the methodological puzzle arising here was establishing what this “air of openness” meant for the material I could and did collect. Can access be too easy? Several organisation members had received media training and many organisation members would spontaneously tell me that this was a very nice place to work, just as the collective story – including a very positive image - of how the organization had been turned around since a new manager arrived in 2002 was frequently drawn upon. How could I adopt a critical stance to such a place? By adopting a “bottom-up” (Goffman, 2002) approach to the organisation, by beginning my fieldwork among the parking attendants however, I was soon provided some more critical views on the organisation and since I came to the organisation in the middle of changes to the organisational structures there was indeed some discontent among employees and some frustration among managers. Nevertheless, it was also important continuously to reflect upon the organisation’s characteristic openness.

The managers I spoke to repeated the same words: “we can always learn more about ourselves”. The parking attendants were also very willing to let me join them in their work. It soon occurred to me that the parking attendants were very used to being followed around: they were an often used case in university students’ assignments. Apparently, this low-prestige occupation was very interesting for academics to study and write about and I couldn’t help thinking about the possibility that this interest in the field said more about me and other academics who found parking attendants to be a curious and exotic “species” to study than about parking attendants! As Barbara Czarniawska has pointed out, doing fieldwork is to a great extent a matter of being prepared for the time when



the field begins to put you and your own ways of doing and thinking into perspective (Czarniawska, 2007).

*GETTING ON: IDENTITY IN SHADOWING, INTERVIEWS AND PARTICIPANT OBSERVATION*

On the first day, a manager had arranged for me to follow a parking attendant who was the employees' safety representative and asked him to take care of my further stay. However, the first colleague the safety representative called and asked whether I could follow her the day after declined. Sensing that the safety representative felt uncomfortable having to ask his colleagues to take me with them, I suggested that I ask them myself. From then on, I could ask the parking attendants directly and none of them rejected my company.

While other studies using shadowing techniques typically follow only one person, I decided to follow different persons every day. There were two reasons for this. One was, that since my purpose was to learn about a *category* of person, I needed to identify things that were common to these workers, and secondly I wanted to study the issue of diversity. While it could be interesting to follow how one "type" of person interacts within a diverse field of people, it seemed to me more appropriate to shadow different people. The downside to this approach was that I had to "recruit" a new person for shadowing every day. For the first week I asked openly at lunch or at morning briefings, or the person I shadowed would ask a colleague to take me the next day, but realizing after some time that the ones volunteering until now had nearly only been white men and women in their fifties, which would not provide me information on how parking attendants of other ethnic background and age related to managerial strategies, I decided to approach parking attendants of other ages and with different ethnic backgrounds. Moreover, the pattern I observed also called for reflection on the risk of becoming biased towards those organisation members who are most active and visible (Ybema, Yanow, Wels, & Kamsteeg, 2009) Armed with phone numbers of attendants with other ethnic background than Danish and different ages I began to call them directly, and again, none of them declined to participate. I did not seek to calculate and pick out a representative sample of the employees with particular diversity traits in mind. However, when counting up

diversity traits, it turned out to be quite a varied segment that I had been in contact with (see table 3.2)

During the shadowings I spoke to the attendants about their personal reasons for being in the job and about how they had come to actually act and perform as parking attendants. Howard Becker's *Outsiders* (1991) provided a way of approaching this matter. In this book, Becker investigates how people "become marihuana users". I framed my puzzle as how people "become parking attendants". Becker shows how non-marihuana users develop into users by small steps, e.g. by going from not inhaling to inhaling the smoke. It was helpful to think about the parking attendants in this way and ask questions about how one becomes a parking attendant. Following this theme, I would ask managers and attendants: what is a parking attendant, what is a good parking attendant, what is a bad parking attendant? Tell me about your workday, what do you do? How do you do it? In my analysis of the material I continued asking some of these questions.

A central question related to getting in to the field and negotiating access to the 'arenas' where I could gather the needed information was about how I presented myself to the organization members. As mentioned, I chose to begin my fieldwork among the parking attendants rather than among their managers and thereby took a "bottom-up" approach to studying the organisation. My primary reason for this was that I expected the correct place to study the practices and problems of inclusion at the workplace was among the front line personnel. I also found it appropriate to get to know the front line work and workers in this organisation. Although perhaps lowest in the hierarchy, the parking attendants were the heart of the organisation, because everyone else in the organisation had a function related to them. But I also found, as Erving Goffman has noted (Goffman, 2002), that the researcher who has an interest in getting on with those lowest in the hierarchy also acquires more respect and a greater ability to move around in the organisation. Closeness to the parking attendants of course had to be balanced with my interest in the managers and in gaining knowledge of their formal and informal strategies.

After only a few days of shadowing, I heard that job interviews were going on and I immediately sensed that in terms of understanding the ‘making up’ of parking attendants, participant observation at job interviews would be very useful to me. These could give me an insight into what sort of person, the managers thought that the parking attendant should be – what sort of skills did they value? How did they expect to shape new employees after allowing them into the organization? How did they explain the applicants about the workplace and what would be expected from them?

Again, access was easy: I sent an email to the manager in charge of the interviews who immediately answered that I was welcome to participate. And just as the staff at MP were accustomed to having people accompany parking attendants on parking patrol, they were used to having researchers interested in their job interviews: a psychologist had previously worked with them, making video recordings of their job interviews and giving them feedback!

Perhaps, however, the managers could at times feel a bit uncomfortable about my “bottom-up” approach. For instance, when the attendants took me with them for a day they would note it on the daily plan where the districts were distributed. This plan went to the managers, and one of them said that he could see from these plans that I had been talking to some of the very critical employees and that they were not representative of the general opinion among the employees.

Participation in the job interviews did of course change my role from that of a person among the front-line staff to that of a person who also had access to the managerial role of hiring people. I do not know how this change of my role in the organisation during three days of job interviews was interpreted among the parking attendants. But it was my impression that most of them did not notice it, and I did not discuss my participation with them.

My closest contact during as well as before and after the fieldwork was the HR and health and safety consultant. She readily answered any questions I had and set up contacts with people I wanted to talk to. Moreover, her position as neither manager nor “ground floor” employee, as a mediator between the two, was an

advantage: she had a very great deal of knowledge of what went on in the organisation.

### **Limits to access**

As described above, managers as well as employees were strikingly willing to let me in on their work. I did, however encounter a limit to this, when I asked the managers whether I could observe their annual development/assessment interviews with employees. The answer I got was that these were regarded as personal and confidential talks between managers and employees and that therefore I could not be given access. Reflecting on this, I concluded that—given my bottom-up approach and given that the managers wanted to protect the employees by not giving me access—it could perhaps have been better and easier to ask the employees about this access.

Another issue related to access was about confidentiality. The conduct of an in-depth study in this quite rare sort of organization would make it difficult to anonymize it. Thus, I did not promise the MP or management anonymity and explained this with the fact that this organization was so unique that it would be difficult to anonymise. However, I decided to keep the organization anonymous as far as possible, particularly because I realized how many news-stories the morning papers presented about unrighteous parking tickets. Important however, is that the individual employees cannot be identified. The information that I gave to the employees at first hand was what the managers asked me to provide, namely a short description of myself and my purpose of being there, including a picture of me. Such a description was made when I did the first period of participant observation in the shop, the second period of participant observation among the parking attendants and their managers and again when I came back six months after. When shadowing the parking attendants I informed them that their talks with me were confidential and that they would only be referred to in anonymised form.

I did encounter some questioning of my use of the material by one of the managers, whom I rather spontaneously asked if I could possibly shadow him for a while. He said that he would only do this if I could provide him with a piece of

paper that said that he would not get into trouble with his vow of confidentiality in his employment contract by telling me about his personnel. After this, I decided to provide a piece of paper with an “informed consent”. While this perhaps seemed the most ethical thing to do, it did however become problematic, when I provided the written information about the project and asked for a signature at two interviews with parking attendants, who – as it turned out - for language reasons were not able to read the information. They both signed, but they should have had the written information beforehand so that they could have had time to have it translated to be properly informed before the interview.

### **Shadowings**

To become able to interpret how parking attendants were affected by changing management strategies and to analyze how they interacted with such strategies, I needed the employees’ active accounts of what happened and what they were doing. How was their relation to the public ‘staged’ in the street? How did their relation to the public/customers contribute to shaping the way they acted and performed in the street? How did their relation to the public contribute to how they thought of themselves? For instance, how did they relate to the dilemmas of street-level bureaucrats, described by Lipsky (see chapter 2)? How did they relate to the stigma of the job? And importantly, how did they in the work situation reflect upon what management expected of them?

The best way of getting knowledge of this was through shadowings of the employees while using these opportunities to talk to them about their work, their relations to managers and other employees, and their broader work-lives and to some extent also private lives. For instance, an important theme was whether all parking attendants should be able and willing to patrol in all areas of town. Some areas were rougher than other and involved a higher risk of verbal or physical assaults. Management held that everyone should be able and willing to patrol everywhere, but employees had very different ways of handling these expectations. Thus, morning briefings with all attendants in the beginning of a shift showed the negotiations between employees about who was to patrol in which areas of town, and walking the streets with the attendants showed how

they managed to fulfill (or resist) management's expectations to their patrol in the rough areas of town. Another example of how shadowings provided knowledge of how parking attendants related to management's expectations was that in spite of the fact that management focused on the *quality* rather than the *quantity* of the bills written by the individual parking attendant, employees in the street had very different ways of interpreting these expectations. Some would work eagerly to and be proud of writing a large amount of bills. Others would tell me about colleagues whom they found wrote too many bills and thereby provided the managers with too large expectations to how many bills the attendants should write. Such different approaches to the job, managerial expectations and the underlying conflicts were readily observable as I shadowed them in their daily work. Rather than interviewing the attendants in a more formalized interview setting, shadowing them on the job gave me an insight into the job, what was expected of them and how they managed themselves, their attitude and appearance and their routines in the street.

During the shadowings, I was dressed in my own civilian clothes. I would perhaps have been able to get closer to the work situation had I dressed as a parking attendant, which would be particularly appropriate if I were to make a naturalist account of my observations (Järvinen & Mik-Meyer, 2005). This would of course also have required me to go through training before I entered the streets. The fact that I shadowed officers on the street before I participated in job interviews and before I actually participated in training, however, provided me with knowledge that helped me understand and reflect upon the recruitment and training processes. Moreover, as Barbara Czarniawska suggests, one of the reasons that my access was easy was probably that I did not ask to wear a uniform and be enrolled in the corps in that sense (Czarniawska, 2007, p. 13). This could of course have provided a deeper knowledge of many things, for instance the personal experience of "having to punish people", as one attendant spoke of, but it might also have created a distance to the managers. Observing in my own clothes provided me with some neutrality in the organisation. I needed this because I attended my analysis to include both the labelling from above and the 'actions of those so-labelled'. Thus, my identity in the field had to be

balanced, so that I could gain information of parking attendants as well as their managers interaction with and perhaps resistance to different, changing management strategies.

Moreover, I was – referring to the interactionist approach- looking for interaction with the parking attendants and not the “natural insiders perspective”. As Czarniawska writes: *The attitude of outsidership replaces a sentimental idealization with mutual respect between strangers, a symmetry; rather than taming them to become like us, we expect differences. These differences, in turn are seen as a source of knowledge, not least about ourselves* (Czarniawska, 2007, p. 21).

I did ask myself: Can I *actually* understand what is going on in such an organisation? For instance, in my own shadowing of parking attendants, I experienced, that I could become upset by verbal harassments on the street, where the parking attendants would just shrug their shoulders.

During my research I was given David Lodge’s novel “Nice Work” as a present. The novel contains the story of a female middle-class enthusiastic academic teacher at university who is enrolled in a programme to increase the mutual understanding between university and “the world outside” by having to “shadow” a male manager of a medium-sized factory. The novel humorously describes not only hers but also his meeting with another world. I immediately identified with her eager ideological but also far-from-reality analysis of what went on in the factory. Coincidentally I read the novel just before I read Barbara Czarniawskas book on ‘Shadowing’, where Czarniawska precisely refers to this novel. This is of course because it precisely describes the sort of frustration that lies with transgressing boundaries to understand what goes on in spheres of life which you are not normally part of. As Herbert Blumer has written: *almost by definition the research scholar does not have a firsthand acquaintance with the sphere of social life he proposes to study....His position is almost always that of an outsider; as such he is markedly limited in simple knowledge of what takes place in the given sphere of life* (Blumer, 1986, p. 35). Given this basic ‘working

condition' for the social researcher, the 'outsider's view' should rather be used as an engine to drive the research process than as an obstacle to it.

The advantages and challenges I found in shadowing are listed in table 3.1. What I particularly experienced was that the flow of talk was very different from that in an interview situation. It is a good way to get people to reflect upon, how they understand who they are and what they do not want to identify with, while they are performing their daily activities.



**Table 3.1.: Practical advantages and challenges of shadowing**

Advantages	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural and friendly relationship: as a guest</li> <li>• Clear role</li> <li>• Physical and emotional experience of actual parking patrol is shared by the researcher</li> <li>• A good relation to the whole organization</li> <li>• Respect from all parties/ removing critical distance</li> <li>• A good situation to get people to talk: while going through their everyday routines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Difficult to take notes on the spot (on the move)</li> <li>• Difficult to structure questions and interviews</li> <li>• Talking during work may take some of the researchers attention from the observation of the work process</li> <li>• Singling out employees for shadowing may divert attention from possible groupings among the employees,</li> </ul>

**Participant observation**

In this section I will reflect upon my role during participant observation at the job interviews—where some ethical issues came up—in particular and also upon how I went about the everyday talks at lunch/in the corridors. After a week of shadowing and on-the-job interviewing at Municipal Parking, I decided to ask the manager, who was my first contact there, and who conducted the job interviews, if there was any chance that I could sit in at the job interviews that were going on. He immediately permitted me to participate. The result was three days as a participant observer at the job interviews. This part of the fieldwork gave me a lot of information about the process of hiring at the Municipal Parking. The interview situations and the discussions between managers about who to hire, observing and listening to how they presented the organization and the job to potential new employees, could provide valuable information. But the participant observation at these job interviews also gave me a lot of food for thought in regard to ethical dilemmas of participant observation in such a situation.

The primary ethical dilemma had to do with the fact that due to the limited time from when I was granted permission to attend the interviews, it was not possible to inform the applicants about my presence at the interviews before they showed up. Moreover, the unequal power relation in this situation, where an

applicant came in the hope of getting a job, put the applicant in a difficult position if he or she would prefer not to participate in my research.

When the participant observation at job interviews began, I was expecting to take on a quite passive role. I expected to be more an observer than a participant although of course —recalling the interactionist approach I had chosen—such passive observance would not mean that the observed situation would not be influenced by my presence. However, the situation and thus the collected data were influenced by my presence to a greater extent than I had anticipated:

When the applicants arrived, they were greeted in the reception by a female secretary who took them to a room beside the interview room where she told them about the interview and that there was a researcher in the interview. The applicants were handed a piece of paper with a greeting and an assignment to write a story about something important that had happened to them in their lives and then they were left alone. After about fifteen minutes here, a manager from the hiring committee would invite them into the interview room, where I sat at a table together with the hiring committee, which consisted of a shop steward and two managers. We would all get up and shake hands with the applicant and then we would all sit down and present ourselves by turn. Since the job interviews were tightly scheduled, I couldn't take up much time in this row of introductions. It would divert attention from the job interview in an inappropriate way if I said too much about myself and my project, so I just introduced myself as a researcher working on a project about diversity management and work environment and asked for the applicant's acceptance that I listened to the interview. I intended to just observe the interviews and take notes. However, this position was difficult to maintain. For one thing, I sat with the hiring committee at a table in the middle of the room, thereby getting a chance to get close to the committee's experience of the situation. However this position meant that taking a lot of notes during the interview could make the applicant feel uneasy. Moreover, the hiring committee became curious in regard to my thoughts about the applicants and particularly one manager stated that he felt uneasy about my being present without saying anything. At this point I still wanted to keep as low

a profile as possible, but the next morning it became clear to me that it would be very difficult to maintain an observant position for such a long time.

What happened was that the secretary who welcomed the applicants came in before the applicant and told us that he had not wanted to shake her hand because he was a practicing Muslim. The manager who led the interviews, who had experience from other interviews at Municipal Parking, said that it would be easy to decide whether this applicant was suitable for the job: If he did not want to shake Dorte's (my) hand—I was the only woman in the interview room—the manager would turn him down straight away and follow him to the exit. I realized that since I was the only woman in the room I was suddenly drawn very much into a situation, which might influence the applicant's job prospects. When the applicant came in, and we all got up to shake hands with him, he did—as expected—not want to shake hands with me. Immediately, before the applicant sat down, the manager in charge of the interviews said that he had to tell him that it was impossible for them to employ him, because as the manager said: “at this workplace, we treat everyone as equal” and he followed the applicant to the elevator. When he came back, he said that he felt provoked by this man and his approach to women. The manager also explained that Municipal Parking had previous experience with hiring very religious Muslims and that it had become a problem when for instance they had to work together with women or just drive in a car with a female colleague. While it is possible to regard this incident as an instance of discrimination, as my audience immediately did when I related it at a “Workshop on Diversity and Difference in the Contemporary Workplace” (CBS, February 2013), it is also an example of how unexpected things occur in participant observation, which in itself is an interaction, which by no means can be controlled by the researcher.

After this incident, I acknowledged that it was impossible to stay as much in the observing position as I had expected. I slowly started to participate more in the discussions between the interviews. But I still found that it would be unethical if I in any way influenced an applicant's possible job opportunity and thus remained silent during the interviews.

## **Interviewing**

The interviews were semi-structured. I created individual interview guides which contained themes for the interviews and more precise questions (Kvale, 1994, pp. 129–147). The interview guides are included in appendix. These were adjusted to each interview according to my current interests or the particular informant and the information I wished to obtain at this point in my fieldwork. For instance, two managers had been recently hired and it was quite relevant to ask them about first impressions and being a newcomer and ask them to compare their new experiences in Municipal Parking with their experiences from managing in other types of organisations. Other managers had been employed in the organization for more than ten years, and it was appropriate to ask them more historical questions about the development of the organisation.

Three of the sixteen interviews were with parking attendants. These parking attendants were chosen because they had a particular role: one was a shop steward who also was part of the hiring committee at the job interviews I observed. The two others were hired on special terms in subsidized jobs, which provided the opportunity to learn about how they experienced work on these terms. These interviews with parking attendants also provided the opportunity to provide material informing about how they related to their job, which could be used as direct quotes in the analysis, given the difficulty of writing notes on-the-spot while shadowing in the street. Thus, the three interviews could supplement the knowledge I gained in the shadowings.

I view the interviews as a common production of meaning in the interaction between me and the interviewee (Holstein & Gubrium, 1995), and this is also how the interviews have been treated in the analysis.

## **In search of practices of inclusion and diversity**

As explained above, I embarked on the project and fieldwork with the expectation that knowledge about diversity and inclusive workplace practices could quite readily be acquired on an everyday basis, by entering the life of a public organisation where management had a strong focus on inclusion and diversity.

In previous interviews with managers of low-skilled workers in other trades, I had noted how managers connected their employees' skills to the managerial strategies of inclusion and diversity. Box 3.2 provides an example of this phenomenon.

#### Box 3.2

During an interview, a manager of a publicly owned laundry, who organised repetitive production work undertaken by formally unskilled workers, told me the following story of the density of the issues of workplace-retention, that they were dealing with at her workplace and how she approached inclusion by engaging co-employees in retention efforts:

"We had a lot of long-term illness in one period... we asked the employees... [what they wanted to do about] the long-term illness. I said: Here you see what we've got: We have Ernst, there is no secret [about his disease], I think it means something that there is openness and honesty around those who need extra support and care. Ernst has had a disc operation, he is long-term ill. We are working to find a flex job for him here. Ivan has had his hip operated, he is also long-term ill. He has come back; he is one of the production managers. Vibeke, 62 years old, she got run down by her husband and broke her knees and her arm. She damned well didn't want a pension. She came back. Else has had a bad work accident. A crushed big toe. She came back. Then we had Adam with the heart [disease], well he got fired. There was no hope for anything. Anita, Annette with breast cancer. You can say: should we fire them all after 120 days of sick leave? Damn it we can't! Let's try something else... the goal is to get them back to the extent that they can manage at the workplace." (Interview with laundry manager)

With this in mind, I expected a parallel situation in the organizing of parking patrol: the everyday negotiation of work tasks and the expectation that employees would show willingness to be flexible in order to help for instance, an

employee with disabilities. These expectations were soon shown to be false; the everyday organization of work here was simply not dependent on the presence of particular employees. My first impression was, that if someone called in ill or had a type of “light job”, the inconvenience for colleagues was very small since there was—at least on the day shift—always more than enough staff to cover the needed patrolling. Indeed, the parking attendants could freely choose whether they wanted to patrol alone or two by two—something that was only planned at the beginning of each shift. Thus, I was frustrated by the lack of immediately visible redesign of the workplace or adjustments in order to accommodate people with special needs in the workplace. It seemed to me that the parking attendants were more or less indifferent with regard to whether or not a person showed up for work or not, because—at least on the day shift—this did not mean anything in regard to the workload of co-workers. The degree of interdependency between co-workers was very low. If someone was ill, it seemed to mean nothing more than a little less revenue for the municipality. Comparing to the laundry manager quoted in the vignette’s way of presenting her organizing work in order to be inclusive, in MP, work was organized so as to avoid that the everyday work was dependent on the show-up of particular persons. In this way, the deliberate, practical organizing of the job did not have the same problems as the shop-floor of the laundry. This was on the one hand an important finding in my research: that this street-level bureaucrat job was organized in such a way, that in the practical organization and staffing during the work day, workers were not depending on the presence of each-other.

*GETTING OUT: FINDING OUT WHEN AND HOW TO STOP*

A central issue in qualitative studies is when to stop the collection of material. Having shadowed, followed job interviews, and interviewed managers and a shop steward, I spent a month doing desk work—reading and reflecting on my material before I returned to Municipal Parking to participate in the training of the newly hired parking attendants. An informal talk with the HR manager at this time also led to an invitation to join a court proceeding. Six months after this, I returned for interviews with two employees in subsidized jobs hired during my

previous visits, and finally I conducted round-up interviews with two managers and the HR consultant in the spring of 2012.

When do you have enough material to undertake your analysis? I followed Howard Becker's advice (Becker, 1998): to stop when I felt that I was getting the same information again, when people began telling me things I already knew. This would be the time either to start asking new questions or to simply stop the inquiries. This was when I ended the greatest part of my data collection. But while writing and analyzing after this point I have repeatedly contacted the organization. Such contact has taken the form of both follow-up meetings and requests for particular information about the organization.

#### *GETTING BACK: RENEGOTIATING ACCESS*

According to Buchanan et.al.: "Getting back to continue research is not necessarily simple and automatic. It is a matter for renegotiation, and once again this process has to be managed effectively."(Buchanan et al., 1988, p. 65) My data-collection involved coming back to the organization several times from the first interview with the in-house work environment consultant in the spring 2009, over observations in the shop in the early summer and an interview with the diversity manager in December. Then, I went on maternity leave, and waited for nine months before I contacted them again and set up the more long-term fieldwork, which was conducted in the autumn 2010. After this I conducted interviews with employees who were hired at the job interviews I had participated in after nearly six months and the Head of Centre in the early summer 2010. After this I went back particularly to the work environment consultant through emails, interviewed two managers in the late summer 2012 and finally the Head of Centre in January 2015. Again, I have been continuously surprised and even puzzled about the openness that I met. Meetings were easily scheduled, managers and employees took the time to speak to me and readily provided me the information I asked for.

### **3.6 The material**

This section presents the empirical material. Appendix 2 provides a more detailed overview. The empirical material consisted of:

- Field notes from four days of observing in the shop and call centre. Including descriptions of encounters between front-desk employees and car-drivers, listening in on phone conversations in the call-centre, listening to discussions between employees and talking to them.
- Field notes from 15 one-day shadowings of parking attendants. I shadowed a total of 17 parking attendants. The field notes from these shadowings consist of notes from conversation with the parking attendants and closer descriptions of particular situations and encounters with people – the public - in the street. Sometimes, the attendants would meet with each other for their coffee break and they nearly always met at the cantina in Municipal Parking at lunch. These meetings were also an important source of information to me.
- Field notes from three days of job interviews – notes are from interviews and from the discussions within the hiring committee in between interviews and during lunch. During these three days I participated in job interviews with 30 applicants. I also read and collected their written applications.
- Field notes from three selected days of introductory course for new parking attendants
- Transcripts of 16 interviews with five managers in Municipal Parking, a shop-steward, two of the newly hired, six months after their hiring, an administrative employee, the work environment consultant and a representative from the parking attendants' union. Recorded interviews with managers were typically longer (45 minutes to 1 ½ hours) than recorded interviews with employees (approximately 45 minutes). Three short 15-30 minute interviews with employees provided some practical knowledge about particular subjects: quality assessments (an experienced parking attendant), benchmarking of the organization's performance (an academic in the administrative department) and the practicalities of employing people in subsidized jobs. All interviews were held in offices or meeting rooms at Municipal Parking during the workday. Parking



attendants had to come in from their shift to meet me, and they registered the time the spent with me. During the time I interviewed them, they might have collected several bills on behalf of the municipality. This meant that I had to think carefully about the time I spent interviewing them, and not to spend too much of the interview-time gaining knowledge about things I already knew from shadowing. Interviews with managers were held in their offices. I interviewed four of the managers and the health and safety consultant more than once and also made use of the possibility of talking to them more informally during a normal workday.

- Fieldnotes from everyday situations in Municipal Parking: notes from encounters at morning briefings, lunch-hours, descriptions of the environment, the different offices and rooms in the house, the environment, tools and other material, notes about what hung on the wall.
- Material provided by the internal health and safety consultant: knowledge and statistics about sickness absence, assault rate, articles from newspapers and magazines written by or about the organization and parking attendance, HR policies, diversity of the employees and inclusion and retention initiatives.
- Material found on the municipality's web-site about personnel policies and statistics, traffic policies and environmental policy.

Material from the union, which most of the parking attendants belonged to including descriptions of what it is like to be a parking attendant, and how the union would like the job to develop.

All written material was imported into the qualitative data processing programme Nvivo, in which it was possible to code, analyse, and explore the material. Table 3.2 shows the gender, ethnicity, age and function of the people whom I interviewed or shadowed.

**Table 3.2 Shadowings and Interviews**

	Gender	Ethnicity	Age group	Function (s)
<b>Shadowing</b>	Male	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant, safety representative
	Female	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant
	Female	Rumanian	50-60	Parking attendant
	Male	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant
	Male	Turkish	30-40	Parking attendant
	Male	Danish	60+	Parking attendant
	Male	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant, safety representative
	Female	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant
	Female	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant
	Male	Danish	40-50	Parking attendant
	Male	Cameroon	40-50	Parking attendant
	Female	Turkish	40-50	Parking attendant
	Female	Lebanese	40-50	Parking attendant
	Male	Lebanese	40-50	Parking attendant
	Female	Vietnamese	40-50	Parking attendant
	Female	Danish	20-30	Parking attendant
	Female	Swedish	20-30	Parking attendant
<b>Interviews</b>	Female	Danish	50-60	Secretary
	Male	Danish	40-50	Parking attendant
	Female	Polish	20-30	Parking attendant
	Male	Palestinian	20-30	Parking attendant
	Male	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant, shop steward
	Male	Danish	40-50	Academic member of secretariat
	Female	Danish	50-60	Health and safety consultant
	Female	Danish	50-60	Manager of technicians
	Male	Danish	40-50	Manager of parking attendants
	Male	Danish	40-50	Manager of parking attendants
	Male	Danish	40-50	Manager of parking attendants
	Male	Danish	50-60	Head og Centre

### 3.7 Analysis and Writing Up

I used the qualitative data processing programme Nvivo to keep and explore the data. All recordings and transcribed interviews and all documents (staff reports, newspaper articles, consultancy reports) were entered into Nvivo. Most transcriptions were for time reasons done by others than me although I acknowledge—with Kvale (Kvale, 1994, p. 170)—that transcription in itself involves interpretation and thus involves a great deal of reflection. The transcripts of the interviews were word by word, and in case the transcriber could not hear what was said, she or he would make a note with the time of the passage in question so that I could check the wording.

Although I did not transcribe all the interviews myself, I did of course write the field notes myself and subsequently wrote them up before entering them into Nvivo. Later I translated excerpts of them for use in this dissertation. A great deal of my reflection took place, and much of my analysis of the material was carried out, while I wrote up field notes and in the translation process where I was forced to consider the meaning of the words very thoroughly. Also, importantly, the process of presenting the material to audiences either informally or at conferences—telling the stories from the fieldwork and the reactions they received contributed to developing the analysis.

Using Nvivo as a working tool involves careful consideration of how one uses it to process the material. The programme is a convenient work tool, because it provides the ability to have practically all your material at hand, and the possibility of coding and ordering the material in ways that can contribute to develop your analysis, find patterns across the material and add more material along the way. However, it is also important to use the tool in a theoretically informed manner. As described above, the reflexive process means trying out different theories in relation to the material. How is this done in practice? As I showed in chapter 2, the theories I have worked with rely on differing epistemologies, which shows itself in different approaches to how work identities are constructed. The main line of difference lies between the theory of dirty work, which relies on the micro-sociology of managing taint and the other theories of ‘making up’ people, aesthetic labour and inclusion, which take interest in structural and discursive conditions of identity-formation. These differences can also be traced in the coding processes, where the concepts of most theories need to be translated and operationalized in the process of coding

and working in Nvivo. I regard this translation and operationalization of concepts and theory into codes and nodes in Nvivo as an essential part of 'breaking down' theory to become relevant in the empirical context. The 'breaking down' was a continuous process, which meant that I often created new coding categories to try out what they could bring to the analysis when I coded in them across the material. Thus, I did not follow a chronologically ordered, fixed coding strategy which was prepared from the beginning. Of course, some codes became more important than others, and developed into the basis of the analysis which I present in the articles. However, the potential of a coding category to provide a new insight in a qualitative research project does not lie with its quantity or on how much of the material could be coded by it. On the contrary. Crudely speaking, qualitative research typically takes an interest in investigating many different aspects of the subject or case compared to the quantitative approach, which is interested in showing how outspread few, particular aspects of a subject or case are in a population (Becker, 1998; Bjerg, 2006; Hammersley & Gomm, 2000). Nevertheless, there does lie some work in prioritizing which coding categories to continue working with.

I shall start by showing how the material was coded and analysed for the purpose of identifying the 'labelling from above' and the actual actions of those 'so-labelled'/the interaction with categories. This is about the identification of management strategies which contribute to creating the parking attendant as a certain sort of person, and about identifying pieces, actions and signs of resistance to such strategies either in the sense of overt expressions of discontent for instance in what the parking attendants directly told me, by more indirect/covert expressions of discontent or simply the use of a managerial strategy in a way, which it was not intended, whether or not this 'looping' took place as sign of willful resistance or not.

An important ongoing process has been to grasp, order and analyse the development of new management strategies in Municipal Parking. The purpose was to identify what was going on in terms of the managerial efforts to develop and change the parking attendant as a certain sort of person. This process involved identifying what particularly managers said about the issue and going through municipal documents, HR policies and historical articles about Municipal Parking and then also listening to the way in which the people in the organization

told me about the history of the organization. I 'wrote this story up' many times and as I along the way collected more material, I could also place this in the story and use it to underpin it. The identification of managerial strategies involved attention to formal strategies which came from 'above' in the administration and formal strategies created within the organisation. Importantly, the identification of management strategies was also about how managers in Municipal Parking interacted with such strategies. For instance, some strategies were laid upon Municipal Parking from 'above' in the municipality. The Head of Centre had, for instance to bring down absence due to illness according to his contract. However, as we shall see in chapter 4, his methods of bringing down the absence due to illness diverted from his employers expectations. Another example is that the municipality brings in a policy of diversity, which expects all municipal departments to employ a more diverse segment of the population. Of interest in relation to the 'making up' of parking attendants is how the managers locally in Municipal Parking use this demand 'from above' to shape their expectations to what sort of person a parking attendant should be.

The "largest" category in the material was coded "what is a parking attendant?" By this fairly simple query, I could place any possible utterances, signs, marks of the different actors' ideas of what a parking attendant is, was and should be. It was within this broad category that I could openly explore the 'match' between theories and material and become aware of new aspects to explore. Box 3.3 shows some examples of material coded in this category. Reading about skills in the literature and reading through this category probed my interest in the aesthetics in the job. Then, identifying this field and possible connections between aesthetics and what it is to be a parking attendant, within what was already coded as "what is a parking attendant?", I went through the remaining material to investigate more of the pattern of aesthetics.

**Box 3.3. Example of excerpts of material coded as "what is a parking attendant"**

- "The parking attendants should be seen as the "key employees" in Municipal Parking. It is their executing functions, which to a large degree draws up Municipal Parking in the judgement of the surroundings, just as it is the parking attendants who both guide and meet the customers in the street. Moreover, it is the work of the parking attendants that has the largest direct influence on the income in Municipal Parking." (from consultants' report)

- “In 2003, about 65% of the parking attendants experience that they only “partly” or “to a small degree” have the possibility of learning something new through their work. And about 60% find that their work only partly or to a small degree demands that they are full of initiative. This picture is the same – with a few differences – in 2004 – although there are a few more who find that their work “to a large degree” demands initiative. Adding to this picture, many of the parking attendants do not expect to have the possibility to develop in this work. Therefore, the result is not necessarily negative. And therefore there are also limits to how much, this statistic can be changed although Municipal Parking is making an effort to strengthen the possibilities for development in the job.” (from consultants’ report)
- “By creating space and room for everyone – irrespective of gender, religion, sexual orientation or disability, we have also created a workplace where respect for each other’s differences creates safety and work/wellbeing. And that also affects the quality delivered to the citizens and users of the town.”(Article with interview with manager)
- “The parking attendants ...are recruited from many different groups. They are both unskilled, skilled workers, white-collar workers, academics and young people who want to enroll in an education later on. It is very often the independent and “free” element, which lies with the job, that makes them change from other jobs.” (consultants’ report)

Another large and important coding category was “new categories”. Here, I could go through the material with attention to any ways of naming groups of people in certain ways. To illustrate this, box 3.4 shows a list of some of the categories I found here and which I could explore further. It was in this categorizing process, that I could identify how people were categorized in relation to their record of being assaulted on the street. “Repeaters” were employees who had experienced several assaults. From identifying this category, I could go through the remaining material considering how people interacted with this classification. For instance, some explained repetitive assaults as parking attendants who are more aggressive than others, other explanations would be that they had problems in their private life which lead them to be more easy targets in a conflict and others again found that the explanation was in that they were more willing than their colleagues to patrol in the rough areas of town. I used this analysis of repeaters in the article on ‘Making up’ workers in an inclusive workplace. Box 3.4 provides a list of examples of such categories.

**Box 3.4 Examples of new categories of person coded by “new categories” in Nvivo:**

- “carriers of the old culture” (people who have been working against the changes that have gone on in the organization – described by consultants, managers and employees)
- “the long-term ill”
- “repeaters” (parking attendants who have been assaulted more often than their colleague)
- the key-employees” (the parking attendants are key-employees in the organization)
- The parking attendant who dissents contributing to creating a revenue for the municipality
- Citizens, Car drivers, Clients, Customers, Users

The coding process in relation to dirty work theory was as mentioned different. The theory of dirty work has been developed inductively by close coding and categorizing of material relying on grounded theory (Glaser, 1998). I copied these categories into Nvivo and found the process of coding my material into these already established categories very smooth (See box 3.5). A lot of my material could be placed and ordered by these categories. However, when it came to developing the theory of dirty work, it was difficult to discover new categories or new aspects of dirty work. Was this because the theory was so all-encompassing? Did it exhaust my material so that there was no more to say? My approach or ‘solution’ was to conduct an analysis which paid attention to the relation between dirty work and management strategies. How did workers react to managers’ way of approaching the dirty aspects of work?

**Box 3.5 “Screen shot” from Nvivo showing the coding of dirty work**

Tree Nodes			
Name	Sources	References	Created On
Gallows humor	3	3	02-12-2012 16:29
Group level	23	87	30-11-2012 13:51
Individual level of coping	14	35	02-12-2012 16:40
konduite	1	3	03-12-2012 11:30
Managers handling of dirty work	6	85	03-12-2012 15:27
Moderating social salience of dirt	6	8	30-11-2012 10:44
Moral taint	17	27	30-11-2012 09:44
Physical taint	10	13	30-11-2012 09:44
Recalibration	4	4	30-11-2012 09:45
Refocusing	18	39	30-11-2012 09:47
Reframing	1	1	30-11-2012 09:46
Relation manager employee	26	107	04-12-2012 13:48
Social taint	9	19	30-11-2012 09:44
splitting private opinion from job opinion	4	4	03-12-2012 11:34
Status	2	10	04-12-2012 15:09
Taint from colleagues	7	15	03-12-2012 15:32

Thus, in this process of analysis I have decided what to include and what to exclude from the pool of empirical material. And I have also decided to tell the tale in a specific ‘manner’. John Van Maanen(2011 (1988)) has lined up a number of possible ways of writing up such ‘tales from the field’. Van Maanen particularly outlines three sorts of ethnographic representations: The impressionist, the confessional and the realist tale. Of these three, the vignette presenting the case in chapter II comes closest to a realist tale, characterised by a rather *dispassionate, third person voice* (Van Maanen, 2011, p. 45 (1988)) although the presentation of the story is indeed put together and edited by this author. This voice of the realist tale is what I use most in the articles. An important exception however is two vignettes in the first article which describe ‘just another day on the street’, which are – although brief - ‘thicker’ (Geertz, 1994) than the other vignettes provided in the articles in order to provide a closer description of the



work processes and provide the reader with more detailed insight into shorter periods of time during the workday.

### 3.8 The quality of research

So, on what grounds can we assess this methodological and epistemological approach? Howe and Eisenhardt have set up five standards for research. Their purpose for doing so was the apparent lack of standards in qualitative research as opposed to quantitative research, and they bring this up in relation to educational research, where they found that qualitative methods had been embraced to an extent that researchers in the field did not “provide adequate and clear justifications for their methods, findings or conclusions” (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990, p. 2). They set up five standards, which I shall go through here in the light of what I have accounted for in the above part of this chapter:

1) Data collection techniques ought to be suitable for answering the research question and thus: *research questions should drive data collection techniques and analysis rather than vice versa*(Howe & Eisenhart, 1990, p. 6). Through my fieldwork I have sought to provide the adequate material for the analysis of the research question by attending to the everyday life in the organization. Doing this, I found that I needed to adjust my datacollecting several times in order to achieve the appropriate material. For instance, I took account of the fact that inclusive practices were not as readily observable as I had expected, and I grabbed the opportunity for participant observation at job interviews which provided rich material for the direct study of skill requirements and the ‘making up’ of parking attendants.

2) The techniques of data collection and analysis should be effectively applied, i.e. in accordance with principles for conducting interviews and sampling (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990, p. 7). The interviews and shadowings were conducted in line with an interactionist approach to qualitative methods. Knowledge is acquired in interaction and through comparisons between me and the interviewee or the observed. Interviews were conducted on the basis of guidelines for semi-structured interviews and field notes were written as soon as possible after the event.

3) The researcher should be alert to the *coherence of background assumptions*, meaning that the researcher should judge conclusions *against a background of existent knowledge* (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990, p. 7) - and seek to explain why a study may provide results that contradict those of another study.

The reflexive approach to the research meant that I continuously tried the empirical material against different theories. The process of reviewing the relevant literature was done continuously through the project. In each article more precise reviews of the theories used are provided.

4) The researcher should be able to employ knowledge from outside the particular perspective and to explain well why some arguments or theories are rejected (Howe & Eisenhart, 1990, p. 7).

This is for instance done in the analysis of aesthetic labor, where I show how an analysis within the public sector which was hitherto not analyzed within the theory could enlighten the issue of aesthetic labor and broaden the understanding of what types of aesthetics may be required as a skill. In the third and last article I bring in a new perspective by considering how inclusive management practices contribute to the making of identities.

and finally 5): Value constraints. Howe and Eisenhardt distinguish between *external values* which involve the 'so what question': how does this piece of research matter? What is its context? And *internal values* that are about research ethics. They are about the internal relation between the researcher and the research subjects. I have accounted for the internal ethics above, showing how I continuously related to the subject during the fieldwork.

Finally, as described in the introduction to this chapter, the purpose of the collecting the material was to become able to analyze how the 'making up' of parking attendants is affected by changing management strategies. As I have shown through the chapter, the practicalities of obtaining such material involved reflecting a lot upon how I could simultaneously obtain information from managers about what they expected from their employees and information from employees about what they thought of *and* how they acted upon managerial

strategies. Getting on in the field here was a balancing act to stay in a position where all layers in the organization would be willing to let me in on their thoughts. If I somehow tipped towards identifying more with managers than with parking attendants or the opposite, I would risk becoming incapable of analyzing at one and the same time the 'labelling from above' and the reactions of 'those so labelled'.

The following chapter turns to present some of the content of the analysis, particularly how the management strategies in Municipal Parking developed over time.

#### 4. Changing management strategies in Municipal Parking

“Ah! You know, we’ve had it all: team-management, value-based management, diversity management, you name it... to be honest I don’t care what management does now, I just need to pass these next two years here before I retire.” (Notes from shadowing of parking attendant)

## “Welcome to Municipal Parking”

“Because we would be happy to learn a bit about you, we would like you to write a story about a good experience from your life, whether it for instance is a ride on the train, a major event such as the birth of your child, wedding, birthday or the like.

This story will give us an impression of your language skills, who you are, your background, and we will use it as a starting point for your interview.

Yours Sincerely

Peter Petersen [Manager]”

(Assignment to applicants for parking attendant-jobs, September 2010)



#### 4.1 Purpose of the chapter

This chapter presents the empirical field of the thesis: Municipal Parking. The main purpose of the chapter is to substantiate empirically how changing management strategies affect the “making up” of parking attendants, before each of the three articles of the dissertation provides closer analysis of dirty work, aesthetic labour, diversity and inclusion. As the previous chapters have shown, the “making up” of people is on the one hand a matter of how new categories of person are “made up” and on the other hand a matter of how people interact with these categories. We have seen how analysis of customer-service work shows that the “making up” of the worker is closely related to the perceived recipients of the services (du Gay, 1996). In Chapter 3, I showed how I collected material through interviews, shadowing, participant observation, and collection of written material in order to identify management strategies and establish how they are changing and how they contribute to the making of the parking attendant. I noted the importance of paying attention to the fact that not only employees, but also managers in Municipal Parking are managed “from above”. Thus, when studying the “labelling from above” and the “actual behaviour of those so labelled”, one may identify labelling from above, in terms of management strategies, that comes from municipal strategies, policies, organizational developments, and personnel policies stemming from the municipal administration and the mayor’s office. The vignette in Box 4.1 shows how, at a session in their introductory course, the head of the center explained to new employees what characterized work within a politically administered organization. Management strategies are, however, also created locally and internally by the internal management in Municipal Parking, which is accountable to the administration “above”, but has some degree of freedom with regard to how it meets the administration’s expectations and demands. When considering the “behavior of those so labelled”, the possible loops made in interaction with management strategies, one immediately thinks of the employees – the parking attendant’s responses to and interaction with the management strategies and with the expectations regarding what sort of person a parking attendant is or should be. But the managers of parking attendants – the head of the center as well as direct managers – also interact with management strategies. They are

themselves the targets of management strategies from the municipal administration, but they also actively exercise the various strategies of management whether they are created above in the administration or locally in Municipal Parking. Therefore, in regard to “the actual behaviour of those so labelled” and the possible loops and moving targets to which Hacking draws our attention, it is not only employees at the bottom of the hierarchy but also managers at all levels in the organization that interact with management strategies coming from “above” in the organization as well as those that have been instituted locally.

**Box 4.1: Notes from observations at introductory course session where the Head of the Center spoke to the new employees:**

The head of the center explained that the new employees should be aware that the organization is a public organization – a public authority. It cannot be compared to private parking firms. There is a large difference.

“This is a politically driven company. Do any of you have an idea of what that means? It means that your boss changes every four years, when we get a new mayor .... It is not so important who the mayor is. What is important is the policy. Currently the policy is green while also wanting to promote growth. This is why we have a relatively restrictive parking policy.”

With this in mind, this chapter shows the development of management strategies in MP. Thus, the chapter provides knowledge of the organization’s tasks and the work that parking attendants do and an understanding of how the development of new management strategies within the organization has contributed to the “making up” of parking attendants as a certain sort of public service workers. The chapter also shows empirical examples of how managers and employees interact with new managerial expectations, including controversies between employees in regard to how they should interpret and react to managerial expectations.

The chapter divides the development of the managerial strategies and how they affect the making up of the parking attendant into three phases from 1992 until 2012, which I call phase 0, 1, and 2 respectively. This division of phases marks the most important larger organizational changes in terms of transitions to new managerial structures.

## 4.2 The Setting, tasks, and persons and a history in three phases

### *THE BUILDING*

When I visited the organization for the first time in 2009, the “headquarters” were situated in the middle of town in a newly renovated six-story building. This building constituted the headquarters for all of the municipality’s activities related to parking: the control of tickets, the issuing of licenses, the handling of complaints, the collection of money from parking meters, and the planning and establishment of parking space in town.

Everything was newly restored and painted in white or bright colors. All over the building there were transparent glass walls between corridors and offices. Most offices had workspaces for one or more employees. The center occupied six floors plus the basement. The first floor contained the shop and call center. The second floor contained offices for case officers who consider complaints. The third floor contained the parking officers’ technical equipment, which consisted of hand-held computers and phones; an area for duty-officers, which contained three desks equipped with computers and phones; and finally computer and living room facilities for the parking officers. The living room was decorated in a homely fashion with a rug on the floor, sofas, games, a table with chairs, and a (very) large TV screen. The fourth floor contained more offices for case officers following up on cases (e.g. fines owed by the estates of deceased persons); the manager and the safety-manager also had their offices here. The fifth floor contained meeting rooms and classrooms and a prayer room and the sixth floor contained the cafeteria. Finally, the basement contained the parking attendants’ dressing rooms, which were equipped with lockers and toilets. Most of the parking attendants start their days here, changing clothes before meeting up at the fifth floor for the morning or afternoon briefing depending on the shift. The



basement also contains a workshop and storeroom used by the technical department and a parking basement with the parking attendants' cars, which they use if they are going far away to patrol.

#### *THE TASKS*

The core tasks undertaken by Municipal Parking are: the administration of parking space, including the development of new parking spaces, the removal of other parking spaces, and enforcing parking law; the issuing of parking licenses for citizens of the municipality, ticketing and administration of parking meters, providing citizens with information regarding their parking options and parking rules; and finally handling complaints. These core tasks have remained the same during the period I investigated.

#### *GALLERY OF PERSONS*

Throughout the dissertation I refer to people who are part of the organization. To avoid confusion, I present them in Box 4.2

## **Box 4.2 – Gallery of persons and structure of the organization in Municipal Parking.**

### **The parking inspector**

The manager in charge of Municipal Parking from 1992 to 2002.

### **Management consultants**

External consultants hired to review the organization in 2001-2002.

### **The Head of Center**

The manager in charge of Municipal Parking from 2002 to 2014.

### **Work environment consultants**

External consultants hired to carry out a project with the parking attendants to reduce their level of absence due to illness.

### **Administrative staff**

- The internal HR & work environment consultant (an experienced parking attendant).
- Other staff working with HR.
- Accountants.

### **Complaints department**

- Case workers.

### **Operations department:**

#### **Parking attendants**

- Three managers of parking attendants. One of these was particularly responsible for health and safety (“health and safety manager”).
- Between 70 to 100 parking attendants working day, evening, and night shifts including their shop stewards and safety representatives.
- Duty officers: changing officers who ‘stay in’ to organize things from headquarters. Before them, there were Duty-managers, who were also parking attendants, but with some managerial responsibility.

#### **Technicians**

- One manager, previously manager of the operations department and responsible for diversity management.
- Ten to fifteen technicians, responsible for, among other things, emptying and repairing parking meters.

#### **The customer service center**

- One manager.
- About 10 people employed as shop & call center staff.

### *THE HISTORY*

As mentioned above, I have divided the history and development of the “making up” of the parking attendant into three phases:

- **“Phase 0”** I regard as roughly the period from the establishment of public parking patrol in 1992 until a new manager was hired in 2002.

The main sources for the description of phase 0 are the internal HR / work environment consultant, parking attendants who experienced the transition from phase 0 to phase 1 and the Head of Centre, who was hired in phase 1, but knew about the legal and administrative developments in phase 0. Further, I had access to a consultancy report, which was prepared at the end of phase 1.

- **“Phase 1”** ran roughly from 2002 until 2009 (until about half a year before I undertook most of my fieldwork at Municipal Parking). In this phase, new management strategies worked to improve the organization’s overall performance. These efforts included “value-based management” and “diversity management”.

The main sources for the description of phase 1 are the head of the center’s own account in interviews with me of what he did when he came to the organization, accounts from other employees and managers in the organization who worked there at the time, a consultancy report, annual reports from the municipality, and statistics and other particular information received from the work environment consultant.

- **“Phase 2”** began in 2009, when the organization was reorganized so that a structure with three management layers was replaced by a two-layer structure. Three managers were hired to organize the parking attendants, and the previous manager of the whole operations department was made the manager of the technical department.

Given that I undertook my fieldwork in phase 2, this part of the chapter moves closer to the material, empirical and everyday setting. I present the headquarters and the everyday work in Municipal Parking's customer service center and among the parking attendants. The main sources for the description of phase 2 are participant observation, shadowing, interviews, and documents.

### **4.3 Phase 0: Providing parking service to the customers!**

Phase 0 began at the establishment of a trial period during which two municipalities were granted the authority to enforce parking law. This authorization was related to the fact that at the beginning of the 1990s, two Danish municipalities had begun to require payment for parking on streets belonging to the municipality. But they had no one to enforce the payments. In theory the police normally undertook the enforcement of public parking law, but the police did not have the resources to do so effectively. Therefore, the Danish Ministry of Justice allowed two municipal boards to assume the responsibility for parking patrol within their municipalities (Danish Ministry of Justice, 1991).<sup>4</sup> Thus, the making of the job as municipal parking attendant was related to the establishment of paid parking as a way of regulating traffic and creating revenue for the municipalities: earning money rather than just spending it.

According to the head of the center and the internal work environment consultant, most of the employees hired when the corps was established, were recruited from among individuals who had been porters in a municipal hospital which was closed at the same time as the corps was created and from among individuals who had been municipal bus drivers and whose jobs had been "closed down" due to the contracting out of this service. These employees were employed as public servants and thus the municipality could not fire them. It was convenient to let them move into pre-retirement posts as parking attendants. Picture 1 shows three parking attendants in 1998, when the uniforms were green. This color was – according to the head of the center – chosen to signal

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<sup>4</sup> In 1998 the Ministry of Justice permitted all Danish Municipalities this possibility (Danish Ministry of Justice, 1998).

environmental friendliness. The formal name of the parking attendants was “parking service assistants”, and on a label on their uniforms, which is not visible in the picture, was written “parkingservice”.



**Picture 1 Uniformed parking service assistants in 1998**

*TRANSITION TO PHASE 1: “AN ORGANIZATION IN DISTRESS”*

When the parking inspector retired in 2002, the municipality hired a private management consultancy firm to evaluate the organization. This initiated the first significant managerial changes in the center, and the period in question is therefore the first major focus of interest in terms of how the “making up” of the parking attendants was affected by these changes. The consultants’ descriptions of the parking attendants are a valuable source here, because they “make up” an image of how the parking attendant was seen through the lenses of the management strategies which the consultants found appropriate. Moreover, the

consultant's report became a central management tool, given that the follower after the parking inspector was expected to implement and follow the recommendations from the consultants.

The consultants provided a very critical assessment of the situation in the center. While the situation and status of things before the consultants is interesting, the directions in which the consultants point are just as interesting. The consultants' evaluation identified a number of problems and proposed solutions for the next head of the center to implement. According to the consultants' report, the different functions/departments in Municipal Parking were not sufficiently aware of their common goals. The report criticized that there was not sufficient backup for the parking attendants, and that the customer service center – the other part of the organization in direct contact with the “customers” – was managerially neglected. The front-line work must be recognized as the most important work for the organization, accordingly. The consultants describe these two groups of employees as follows:

“The parking attendants are the “key employees” and front-personnel in [the organization]. It is the parking attendant's executing functions, which to a large extent are responsible for the public perception of Municipal Parking, just as it is the parking attendants who guide and meet the customers in the street. Likewise, it is the work of parking attendants, which has the largest direct influence on the income in [the organization](Consultancy report).

The other front-line employees of Municipal Parking in the “customer service center” were described as follows:

“The customer service center contributes in several respects to drawing the picture of the face of [the organization] to the outer world. And the customer service center has a large degree of customer contact area in that it handles tasks which include direct person-to-person or phone contact with a large number of citizens.”

Thus, by highlighting the centrality of these two groups of employees, the consultant's report works to change the role of the parking attendants and

employees in the customer service center. It is important to note the reasoning behind the move to regard these two groups of employees as “key employees”: their close contact to customers and the parking attendants’ influence on income. In spite of the fact that the parking attendants’ official title was “parking service assistants”, the organizing within Municipal Parking had apparently not been based on a perception of the front-line role and the image of Municipal Parking which they created in their meeting with the “public” as something which needed particular attention. At this point in time, then, the front-line staff receives an unprecedented managerial focus. The front-line employees move from being one among several isolated “islands” of the different sections within the organization to become the central part of an enterprise: they create income and this income apparently relies on the image of the organization which the parking attendants provide to the customers. Thus, this consultancy report “discovered” the worker subject of the parking attendant and made this worker-subject available to new managerial initiatives. As we shall see, this opportunity for management was not by-passed in the following “phase 1”. Before turning to how the new management approached this in phase 1, I will make some further remarks regarding the problems related to parking attendants which the consultants identify in the organization. The consultants identified a large number of deficiencies in the organization. The “lacks” they identify point the way to new management tools and strategies which the consultants suggested be applied in order to shape the new sort of worker. Box 4.3 provides a list of the elements relevant to parking attendants, which the consultants found lacking in Municipal Parking. Besides these lacks, the consultants noted that there was much resistance to management among the parking attendants and a very high level of absence due to illness. According to the consultants, future employees at Municipal Parking should have the following characteristics:

“... it must be important that Municipal Parking employs service-minded employees, who at a minimum are well-equipped to provide advice and guidance about the parking possibilities, and provide the services of sale of the products of [the organization]” (Consultancy report).

This sort of service-minded employees stands in contrast to employees who show resistance, not only to management, but to the “enterprise” itself:

“... management has found differences in the efficiency among parking attendants, which cannot be explained by the time of the duty, the placement of the post, or the day of the week. It should perhaps be considered whether it should at all be possible to be employed as a parking attendant if one to a larger or smaller degree dislikes/resents contributing to creating revenue for the municipality ... there should be demands that parking attendants do their duty with the understanding that as few as possible should be able to park illegally without being charged a parking duty” (Consultancy report).

Concluding the report, the consultants found that there was “enough for the new manager to work on”.

**Box 4.3 According to a consultancy report from 2001, the management of the parking attendants suffered from the lack of:**

- self-management
- shared responsibility
- sufficient backup
- coaching
- control of the parking attendants
- visible management
- knowledge of the overall organizational goals
- homogenous efficiency among parking attendants
- a personnel policy
- appraisal talks
- clear criteria for performance
- a common team spirit
- a company plan
- an alcohol policy

#### **4.4 Phase 1: Parking attendance: an authority task to be managed with “care”**

In 2002, a new Head of the Center was employed to address the range of problems to which the consultancy report pointed. The creation of a certain revenue and bringing down the high rate of absence due to illness were central in



his contract with the administration. Box 4.4 shows a quote from the new Head of the Center about some of his first impressions.

**Box 4.4 Objects of hate**

“Well, you know they were really pushed to the bottom, both at the individual level and at the organizational level. There were lots of assaults on the street, and those green parking attendants, they were such an object of hate, I found out. I had not at all imagined how it was ... well, I was aware that this was of course a huge task, but that it had this size and ... I was really surprised that it could be that way. There were many reasons to it, because for one thing there was the internal position ... the administration surrounding Municipal Parking they all had the opinion, that that is the worst ... and no one really wanted to touch them, right. And it was quite normal procedure, that if you had [an employee] who you weren’t satisfied with, then you could just throw them over [to work] in parking, right.” (Interview with Head of Center)

According to the head of the center quoted in Box 4.4, the parking attendants at this time were “objects of hate”. This apparently surprised him, but importantly he not only points to the parking attendants’ role in the street, and their relation to the public, but also to the other parts of the municipal administration. The job, according to this quote, was stigmatized to the extent that even people in the administration surrounding Municipal Parking disregarded the parking attendants. The quote also suggests that the surrounding administration would make use of the possibility of “getting rid” of employees by replacing them in Municipal Parking.

As described above, the management consultants proposed new management strategies which involved a closer and more intimate interest in the worker-subject of the front-line workers in Municipal Parking. On the other hand, the consultants also noted that there was quite some resistance to management among employees. This view of the situation was shared by the Head of the

Center. In Box 4.5 we see how he describes employees as antagonistic towards management and how he aims to achieve their confidence.

**Box 4.5 Management was an opponent**

“I was very surprised about, also the resistance there was ... it was something I had never encountered before. That resistance to management, just because it was management ... there were some who just thought you should regard it as something bad. [Management] was not a co-player but an opponent, no matter whether it was Per, Paul, or Hans, when it had something to do with management, it was not something you should do. So it was that thing about getting that confidence ...” (Interview with Head of Center)

The new sort of interest in the parking attendant which the consultants wanted the next management to pursue involved overcoming what was regarded as an “old” way of regarding the relation between managers and employees. Management should be regarded as a co-player. But the consultants had also pointed to the lack of policies. For instance, the lack of alcohol policies. Apparently it was an acceptable way of “being a parking attendant” to drink a beer at lunch. Now, focus on the front-line workers’ relation to the customer as the central enterprise in the center involved a ban of alcohol. At that point in time, this ban was apparently not the easiest way to gain some of the employees’ confidence, but it was a very concrete way of managing the parking attendants’ appearance in public.

**Box 4.6 Alcohol policies**

The consultants wrote:

“[the organization] has no written alcohol policy. The dominant attitude is in the direction that it is allowed to drink a single beer during lunch, but that the parking attendants are not allowed to smell of beer, when they go about in the street. How this is possible in practice is an open question. The talks

also show that the employee representative's view on the extent of the consumption of alcohol and the problems adhering to this is much more critical than management's view of the same issue."(Consultancy report)

The Head of the Center's response

"... and I also implemented a total ban of alcohol straight away. ... and I don't at all think that it was compatible with being a parking attendant to go out and smell of beer and then they had these nonalcoholic beers during a transition period up in the cafeteria, but then I had to say that you smell just as much of beer from them, it doesn't work ... and it was really difficult to create an understanding of the necessity of that. People really felt that that was an attack on their freedom, right?" (Interview with Head of Center)

The ban of alcohol was also about taking hand of other issues among the parking attendants which the consultants and the new Head of the Center regarded as problematic. During "phase 0" a certain category of person had developed locally in the organization: so-called "networkers". Networkers were employees who originally had the task of taking care of colleagues who had an alcohol problem. This "function" had developed so that these employees also took care of other sorts of problems, such as the psychological consequences of an assault. Thus these "problematic areas" of employees' personalities were treated in confidence between employees with no involvement of management. Box 4.7 shows how the Head of the Center and the internal work environment consultant look back on these "networkers'" function in the organization and the desirability of the existence of this category of employees. The two quotes show how they find that there was "no management" in "phase 0". The parking attendant's self is now an object of management. Parking attendants should not develop their own ad hoc "systems of care" – caring for employees was to be handled by management.

#### **Box 4.7 “Networkers”**

“... one of the things I observed, was about how [the employees got] attention. I actually found out that you had the management’s attention and also attention from other parties, if you were assaulted. That was actually the time where you as an employee ... received attention. But the attention you got from management wasn’t very well developed, but you had some “networkers”, I think there were seven networkers around in the organization. Most of them were parking attendants. And I found a pamphlet about alcohol abuse, and it was actually there that this concept had arisen. The municipality had decided – it must have been around 2000, ... the network arose because they were to take care of anyone who sort of had an alcohol problem. This situation had arisen in Municipal Parking because the management didn’t bother to get involved. When someone got assaulted then these networkers took hand of the person in question and that was another colleague and then you had an absolutely private room you could go into. That means that they sat there, employee and employee, and spoke about and tried to sort of find out what was the reason for this and what you could do. So it was in no way organized and you couldn’t learn anything or compare one assault with another, or whether there were particular times of day or particular person-profiles or what .... It was absolutely, totally anarchistic, and in reality it was sort of my impression that [the parking attendants] were managed by the shop steward and the safety representative ... and there were many sentiments related to this network, but I had to grab it and say that it: it doesn’t exist in my world ...”. (Interview with Head of Center)

“... and there was no management. The management was extremely afraid of conflicts. In reality it was me and the shop steward who solved the conflicts when they came up. And in the really old days, I think the parking attendants went on strike four times a year. If the mayor said something they didn’t like, they sat on their asses, to put it mildly. They don’t do that today. They haven’t been on strike since we got the new management .... All these new

managers, they have really been working with this. It has cost sweat and tears, I'll say. It has been a cultural shock for the employees .... "(Interview with internal health and safety consultant)

Besides stating that the issues the networkers dealt with should be dealt with by management instead, the quote from the Head of the Center above in Box 4.7 also shows his introduction of the systematic monitoring of assaults, in connection with which there was an investigation of whether persons with particular profiles were more liable to be assaulted than others. Thus, again a new management tool was brought in, the systematic monitoring of assaults, and the parking attendants were to be categorized according to their person profiles. Apparently, resistance to managerial strategies in "phase 0" had relied on distance to management and on "traditional" methods of going on strike or working to promote interests through the shop steward or safety representative.

Besides the ban of alcohol, another important and immediate change instituted by the new Head of the Center was a change of uniforms from the green uniforms shown above to dark blue uniforms resembling police uniforms – with no service logo. The quote in Box 4.8 shows the Head of Center's reflections on the need to change the uniform.

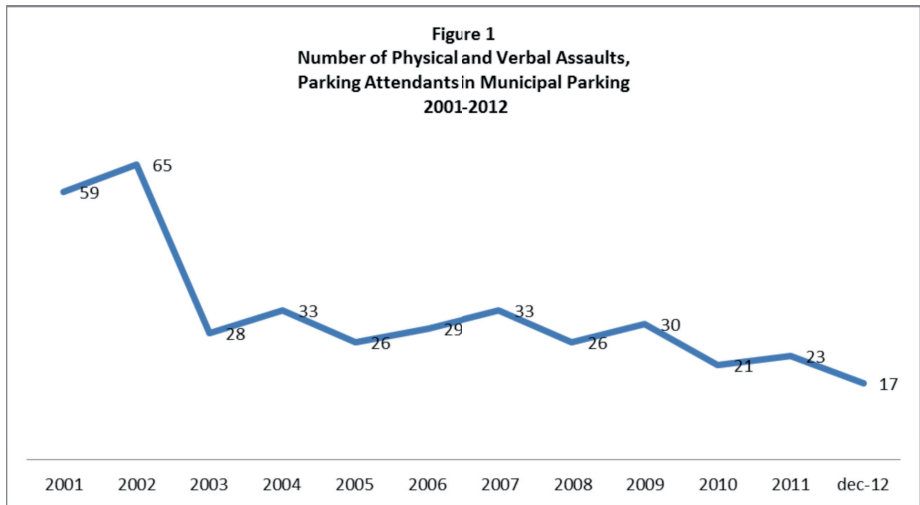
#### **Box 4.8 Uniforms**

"...then there were those uniforms... what was wrong was, in my opinion, not only that they were green. What was wrong was that for one thing they had very low self-esteem, what was inside the uniform. And the design of that uniform was wrong. They looked like they were going fishing when they walked down the pavement, right ... that wasn't very good when you were going out to exercise authority, right. It gave a totally wrong picture for those who sort of stood on the other side, and that may in reality have been the reason that some people got more aroused or got aroused at all, where they wouldn't have been if they had sort of got the correct expectations from the

beginning.”(Interview with Head of Center)

“... then there was that logo saying “Parking Service”, ... well somehow, I understand what they had tried to express, it is actually, it is a very fine rationale, but again, it is mumbo jumbo, when you get out ... in a situation where you sanction a car driver and then he looks at the shirt and it says “Service” and the first thing he thinks will be: “there damn well isn’t much service in this” ... a bill for 500 kroner.”(Interview with Head of Center)

This was a significant change of public image. The number of verbal and physical assaults during encounters with people on the street fell steeply. The exposure to risk is reflected in statistics (Figure 1): About 100 parking attendants reported 59 and 65 verbal and physical assaults in 2001 and 2002 respectively. These figures were the highest ever. However, as we can also see, the number of assaults dropped steeply to less than half of this in 2003 and has stayed around or below this level since.



Source: Internal statistics, Municipal Parking. It was not possible to obtain

statistics from before 2001, but according to the consultancy report, the numbers of assaults in 2002 were higher than ever.

The change of uniforms immediately had an impact on the number of assaults; nevertheless, the Head of the Center found that there was more to work on than the uniform. In the quote in Box 4.6, the Head of the Center said: “What was wrong was that for one thing they had very low self-esteem, what was inside the uniform.” Thus, the parking attendant’s self-esteem became an obstacle to providing the sort of organization and the sort of work that the Head of the Center was aiming for. Box 4.9 provides an example of how the Head of Center accounted for the need to develop the ‘inner’ as well as the ‘outer’ of the parking attendants.

**Box 4.9 The way they walked**

I remember it clearly. I went up to those morning briefings and when I walked back down the stairs, I looked out, because that was when they went on the street, the parking attendants, and the way they walked...you could see the probability that someone would be assaulted, it’s really high, right? Because it is like in the animal world. If you meet fear and weakness and all that, well you are the first one to be hit. And I used those images and said: “well, it is no good walking there with you back in 45 degrees. You have to sort of look up.(Interview with Head of Center)

To do something about what was “inside the uniform”, a project involving work environment consultants was initiated. It was called: “Self-esteem Replaces Absence”, referring to the high rate of absence due to illness. In the Head of the Center’s contract with the administration there was a requirement that the rate of absence due to illness be improved; the absence rate was much higher in MP than in other parts of the organization.

**Box 4.10 42 days of absence per year**

“We had a level of absence that was 42 days on average per employee per year [in 2000]. It was still high in 2001 and 2002. We had external consultants here, who analyzed the company by interviewing a lot of employees, and it came up that the management wasn’t at all visible. The absence due to illness was way too high, there was a lot of bullying and gossiping and high-quality work wasn’t really being done. The employees were a bit too much in control, there was no firm hand.” (Interview internal HR & work environment consultant)

So, the “firm hand” which the internal work environment consultant describes was instituted in the form of a number of managerial strategies. First, as mentioned above, external work environment consultants carried out a project named “Self-esteem Replaces Absence”; once again the worker’s individual feelings and well-being were viewed as the solution to the organization’s central problems. Box 4.11 shows the central elements of the project.

**Box 4.11****Self-esteem Replaces Absence**

The project aimed at improving the psychosocial work environment and bringing down the rate of absence due to illness by:

- 1) breaking up the old culture and attitudes by the development of management,
- 2) providing training in conflicts and communication with customers to the parking attendants, and
- 3) an effort related to the strain in private life: “The project’s third thesis is that this problem can be addressed by building up the needed networks, co-worker relations, and personnel management to support the individual if he or she is fighting with ‘private’ problems.”



In Box 4.11, we see that the consultants want to promote the development of a new culture and to provide the parking attendants with skills to deal with conflicts and communication with customers. But then, they include “private problems” as a target of management:

“Furthermore ..., many parking attendants have what you might call “strains in their private lives” with larger or smaller crises: problems with the children, financial problems, illness in the family, divorces, problems of abuse, etc. This may also have had an influence on the high level of absence.” (Work environment consultants’ report)

This information apparently came from the safety organization and management, and was coupled with the strain of the job:

“Finally, the safety organization and management at Municipal Parking noted that many have what you might call “strains in their private lives”, and that these issues can interact with the strain which the employees encounter at work.” (Work environment consultants’ report)

Thus, in this process of discussions within the safety management group and the dialogue with external consultants, a new attribute of the parking attendant was addressed by management: the parking attendant was now described as someone who potentially had problems in private life and more importantly as a person who could positively gain from crossing a previous line between personal/private problems and management. These problems appeared as something that managers and colleagues should and could legitimately attend to.

#### **Box 4.12 Sofa-Employees**

“... the previous management, there was no trust in that management. And building up trust in a new management, that takes time. You don’t just do that from one day to another. It has taken many years. We have also had a group of employees ... we call them sofa-employees, no matter what you did, it wasn’t good enough ... you see them in all workplaces and it takes time to do something about those sorts of employees. They usually made trouble in October every

year. Then we knew some trouble was coming up. But now, there are not so many left of them, because most of them chose to stop. But when it happens, we activate them, we make them do something, so they don't get time to think that it's time for making trouble ...." (Interview with internal HR & work environment consultant)

Thus the new style of management on the one hand worked to create the parking attendant as a person who goes to work because he/she is interested in what is happening at the workplace and caused this parking attendant to act more as an authority than as a service worker. The goal was for the parking attendants to identify with the overall purpose of the organization of creating "safety and passability" in town and being willing to regard the purpose of creating a revenue for the city as a legitimate purpose of work. This process involved styling the parking attendants, particularly via their uniforms, but also by talking to the employees about their attitudes and style of acting.

The rate of absence due to illness did begin to drop after the new management came. Besides the project "Self-esteem Replaces Absence", a new absence policy was established. This was new to the employees, who were described as not being used to having the management's attention focused on them. Box 4.13 describes the new policy.

**Box 4.13 Policy of absence**

"Well, for instance, a new absence policy was created. It was a bit tough in the beginning in order to get hold of the short-time sick ... [but] it was more about taking care, so that every time a person has been absent due to illness here, even just for one day, then we take them in for a talk or we grab hold of them in the halls and ask: how are you? To make sure that they are ready to start work again and find out if we take it a bit easy today. Especially the parking attendants, because if they are not totally on their marks, and they are involved in an escalating situation in the street, then they react twice as bad as if they are feeling good about themselves. We spend a lot of time

making sure that they are feeling well.

(Interview with internal HR & work environment consultant)

Thus, the new policy on the one hand kept close to the employees, monitoring and reacting to their sickness absence, and on the other hand was about taking care of them. But the rate of absence did not decline as steeply as the administration above Municipal Parking wished. The Head of the Center describes this situation in the quote in Box 4.14. We can see that there was a lot of pressure on the Head of the Center to improve the statistics on absence and that by his local approach to sickness absence, he went up against his superior's expectations.

**Box 4.14 Doing something about the high level of absence**

“You know there was a high level of absence. And how do you do something about that? I had the approach ... that what we should do is first and foremost to do something for those who come to work, and not concentrate on those who are ill. It will somehow solve itself this way ... and things we did were in accordance with that philosophy, but then suddenly [...] the administering director who had hired me got a new job, the mayor himself was both the director and the mayor. He had to sort of show force or something and he damn well nearly fired me ... [in my trial period] before I even was hired, because I hadn't done enough about that sickness absence! ... he had the opinion that we should just fire those who were ill ... and I thought we should do that to some extent, but I didn't think that we should ONLY do that ... and I told him “well this will take some time” ... but then results began to come, both in relation to delivery in a totally different way,

the performance of the key tasks really changed and then the absence also began to fall, but you can't do that in one month or six months ..." (Interview with Head of Centre)

The internal work environment consultant worked as a parking attendant at the time when the new management came. She describes the changes as follows:

Well, there wasn't so much focus on the attendants then .... They had to find out why they were all important. So that is why we began to build up a good work environment for the parking attendants, and to spend much more resources on educating much more, so that they became more aware of quality and were better prepared to go out and explain why they imposed those duties. (Interview with internal HR & work environment consultant)

Thus, the parking attendant now was not only to become more authoritative, but also became an object of care. Indeed, one manager of the parking attendants described them as follows: "... well, the parking attendants – they were in lack of care". In Box 4.15, the manager also describes how she herself / her personality gained from this care-work with employees:

#### **Box 4.15 Being a mom**

"And these young guys – it is no secret – that for instance [Name] who is sitting out there, well he says: "You have been more of a mom [to me] than I have ever experienced at home, because you have been there all the time if I needed it, but you have damn well also been there if something hasn't been in order." I say: that's how things go hand in hand, right? I don't need to explain that to you, Dorte, you have kids yourself. You know that. If you are not somehow consistent, then the kids run out of some line and then when you pull them in they ask: "Why are you calling me home now", right? But if you set the frame and it is very wide, it can be widened along the way so you get more and more trust and then in the end you don't experience any

framework, but you know how to act so that you don't go too far.”(Interview with manager in charge of diversity management)

#### 4.5 Inclusion and diversity

Alongside these local organisational developments, the municipality at large developed policies in relation to inclusion: In 1997 the municipality launched a “Personnel-Policy Account” to monitor how the various municipal departments lived up to the personnel policy. Since then, the monitoring of personnel policies has developed significantly; to a great extent it now takes the form of quantitative survey-based information gathering, which can now, through the use of computer technology, comprise the asking of single questions given to small groups of employees. Also in 1997, the municipality issued a report on gender equality among personnel, and in 2001 it issued the first report on ethnic diversity. According to a political decision, the ethnicity of the employees in the municipality should mirror that of the population in general. A goal of employing a total of 15% with another ethnic background than Danish was thus established.

In 1998 there was a political decision in the municipality to the effect that the municipality as a workplace should mirror the public. Box 4.16 shows excerpts from reports on diversity about these ambitions.

##### **Box 4.16 Mirroring the composition of the population**

“the municipality as a workplace should mirror the composition of the population within the society, which the municipality and its employees is a part of, and which the municipality has as its job to serve” (Account of the approach to ethnic diversity from the municipality’s economics administration)

In March 2001, there was a political decision that on top of the annual account of personell policies, a statistic on the employees’ ethnic background should be made:

“The intention is to monitor the development of ethnic equality in personnel

policies quantitatively .... In the municipality. Citizens with another ethnic background than Danish make up 17.1% of the inhabitants of the municipality. Twelve point nine percent of these are from third countries and 4.2% from EUC countries.”

(Account of the approach to ethnic diversity from the municipality’s economics administration)

From this point in time, employees in the municipality at large were to this end categorized in an annual statistical report in terms of their ethnic backgrounds. This new focus and monitoring coincided with the many change management strategies in Municipal Parking. Box 4.17. shows how the Head of Centre learns about and takes up diversity management.

**Box 4.17 Introducing diversity management**

“Well, I was hired in March and then in May we had a seminar. It was the first seminar I participated in with the entire group of other managers in the administration... it was about integration ... and the municipality had embarked upon one of those very many projects about integration, and then they had looked a bit at the technical department. It didn’t look too good, because it was very far from the goals they had put up .... And then sort of what I got from the seminar was that now we should go home and do something about that, right. Ahm, I thought: “Well, but we have to do that then” and I had read some place that the municipal employees, they were supposed to mirror the population which they were servicing and that meant that you should be around 15% of non-Danish ethnic origin and that had the effect that when I came back, I stood up at a morning meeting and said that [...] in the future, when we recruited, then if two applicants who on all other parameters were equally good, then we would choose the one with another ethnic background than Danish, because that was a quality in itself in relation to living up to that decision. That caused some disturbance!” (Interview with Head of Centre)

After this, MP developed into one of the most 'diverse' workplaces in the municipality in terms of ethnicity. In the first account, from 2001, 4.8% of the parking attendants came from "third countries" and 0% from EEC countries. In 2008, 25% of the parking attendants came from "third countries" and 2.6% from EEC countries. Moreover, in 2012, the rate of absence due to illness was below the municipal average, and the number of reported assaults was lower than ever.

**Box 4.18 Talking openly about diversity**

"So, I would say going from wanting to do it to also being able to doing it, that has not been difficult, but it has been necessary to talk openly about it. When we have employed new people here, we have taken pictures of them. It sort of demystifies it ... [we've] taken them up. Thrown up the pictures and said: listen. This is Patrick, this is Sandra, this here is George and then I have presented them in exactly the same way no matter who they are." (Interview with manager in charge of diversity management)



**Picture 2 Uniformed Parking attendants, 2004**

#### **4.6 Phase 2: Being part of the whole: an authority task for the dedicated worker:**

In 2009, when I conducted the first interviews there, the centre had to align itself with a new organisational structure in the municipality. In most of “phase 1”, the parking attendants would rely on colleagues who had been appointed ‘duty managers’, who kept control of things at the headquarters and did not go on the street unless it was particularly necessary. The ‘duty managers’ could manage the daily work and one manager selected from the whole group of parking attendants was responsible for the overall operations of them. Now, instead of the three-layer structure of management, where some of the parking attendants had the role of ‘duty managers’, it was reduced to two layers of management where three new managers were recruited to have the responsibility for the parking attendants divided between them and “over them” was only the head of centre. Thus, some parking attendants experienced that management responsibility was taken from them.



At the same time, the administration introduced a new overall works strategy, which was to compare the citizen satisfaction with services, economic turnaround and employee well-being across the different departments of the municipal administration (Box 4.19) and in that way measure and compare their performance. Not surprisingly, given the nature of the parking patrol task as opposed to that of providing and maintaining playgrounds and green areas for the citizens, for example, it is difficult for the centre to compete internally on these parameters.

#### **Box 4.19 Result-based management**

“[the new strategy] is a result-based management system. It focuses on effects and is measured by outcome in relation to four parameters: citizen satisfaction, employee satisfaction, professional quality and economic efficiency. The purpose with [the new strategy] is on the basis of politically decided levels of service and concrete goal-figures to adjust the works on the background of measurements of the effect on four different perspectives: citizens, quality, economy and well-being – the balanced outcome.” (From the municipality’s evaluation report of the new strategy)

With this new management strategy, new expectations came to the parking attendants. The Head of Centre describes it as a need for a whole new sort of employee, and one of the new managers describes what he regards as a ‘good parking attendant’ (Box 4.20).

#### **Box 4.20 Responsibility and flexibility**

“What has happened to the organization is, among other things, that thing about the levels of management, which makes new demands on the managers, which I think they actually fulfill quite well, but where things are not quite there yet seen from my perspective, is in relation to the employees, and that is what I have weighted all the way through this organizational change, and it is not only in our department, but perhaps most evident in the works administration, because this way of organizing demands some different employee profiles. ...That sort of one-on-one management which was part of the old concept, you can’t have that

when your span of control is around 30 employees, right. And therefore, the employees have to in an even bigger degree – and now we are back at this thing where they were a bit scared and fearful back then, when they were expected to take responsibility, because there are really many of the type we have, they don't want to take responsibility when it comes down to it... but they have to in this setup... We are teaching them that now where we sort of make them more powerful than we have done before... Well, they have to agree by themselves how they want to disperse the routes... and that is actually a huge task. Thinking the city dynamically and so, but it also – in my opinion, gives them some quite new opportunities... but it is difficult, because they sort of don't have the same understanding of how you should cooperate with each other without there being a manager to tell you whether to go left or right. (Interview with Head of Centre)

**Manager of parking attendants about what a good parking attendant is:**

Well, a good parking attendant is someone who takes responsibility for what he does. A good parking attendant is someone who is flexible, whom I can talk to and say: how does it look? Can you meet in here? Can you participate in this operation? Yes I can! In stead of being stubborn and so and so. A good parking attendant is to me someone who doesn't write the same number of duties every day... understood in the sense that if you write forty every day something is wrong and if you write 10 every day something is wrong...because that is not according to how it looks in the street, because that changes from day to day. But we have some attendants who say: I could write 100 if I wanted, but I only write forty because then I think I have done a good job (Manager of parking attendants)

But the administration of Municipal Parking also had some things to fight for with the above administration. Given that the citizen panel used to score the citizens satisfaction gave Municipal Parking lower scores than other departments in the administration, they found that it was unjust that Municipal Parking should be measured on these terms.

### *INTERACTING WITH CHANGING MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES*

Looking back at these three phases, we can see, that if there was “no management” in phase 0, there was indeed lots of management in phase 1 and 2. During these phases a load of different management strategies had been implemented, tried out etc. In my experience in the ‘messy reality’ of everyday life in Municipal Parking, while I shadowed the parking attendants, I several times experienced tensions and conflicts, which seemed to stem from a general confusion with management strategies. The parking attendants would openly discuss whether some or other managerial rule still existed. At one instance, during a briefing at the beginning of an evening shift, where – according to the above described new expectations to the employees in terms of planning their work – the reading out loud of briefings and taking the initiative to ‘get things planned’ was a ‘hot potato’. One parking attendant said that she would not read aloud the briefing because “I am not a manager, I am not supposed to do their work”. Also, there were controversies about who should and could patrol in the ‘rough’ areas of town, where the risk for health and safety were perceived to be high. The problems with the new structure were frequently referred to as problems in regard to the health and safety. The parking attendants told me, that perhaps the two layer structure worked in other parts of the administration, but to them, it meant that they lost the duty-managers, who could be there for them in case of an emergency on the street. The three new managers were on call, but not physically present in Municipal Parking during the shifts. On the other hand, the new managers experienced a clear limit to their appearance in the streets. One new manager who did not have experience from the organization before he was hired as a manager, told me how he had thought it would be a good idea to go out to one of the attendants in the street to deliver a message, but that this attendant had become mad at him, because he or she thought that he was checking upon his work.

Another situation displayed some of the confusion, again during a morning briefing. The theme was the cars, which the parking attendants used. The attendants were introduced to a new way of recording their use of the car, where they had to check the car for scratches or bumps every time they had used it and

write it down. One attendant exclaimed: “I am sick and tired of this collective punishment” The parking attendant, I shadowed after this incidence told me, that in the “old days”, they used to have their own cars, and that you took more care of those cars. He and his partner cleaned their car every Friday so that it was nice when they met up for work on Monday. “But now, people don’t care about the cars after you don’t have your own cars anymore”.(From fieldnotes from shadowing)

Another attendant who also had a long experience (13 years) in the organisation describes how she had experienced the development since she began working there (in phase 0): “It is difficult to say, if things are better now – it was more free then – we did what suited us...but if you compare to how it was three years ago (in phase 1), it is better now. Many of us went to work with a pain in the stomach”. “She was too much over us”. Another parking attendant also described that she felt that she was ‘called in’ to talk to the manager frequently. However, other attendants had a different experience of the care-management of phase 1, for instance by longing for the previous manager, would “always ask you how you felt.”

#### *INCLUSION AND THE NEW FLEXIBLE PARKING ATTENDANT*

Finally another cause of confusion in phase 2 appeared to be how to tackle the policies of inclusion and diversity, which by some of the managers were seen as at odds with the development of the new, flexible parking attendant. As one manager put it: ‘diversity has come too far’. Managers would also wonder how much of their time they spent on personnel-cases. The new sort of parking attendant was depicted as at odds with some of the ways of doing things in the organisation by the new managers. As one manager who was used to working in the private sector stated: it is complicated to fire someone from the municipality, because if you fire them they will probably begin to cost something somewhere else in the municipality (referring to unemployment benefits or other initiatives).

In the latest phase of the development of Municipal Parking the managers, who were working to build up the professional parking attendant, were fairly skeptical towards whether people in subsidized jobs would fulfill the requirements to the

job, and one manager complained that a case worker from the municipal jobcenter had booked his calendar for a job interview without asking him first. While this from the perspective of the municipal case worker may have been an expectation that the other municipal departments were potential workplaces to their “clients”, this expectation was at odds with the managers aim to professionalize the organisation and the parking attendant.

#### **4.7 Changing expectations**

This chapter has displayed some of the empirical material from the case study in order to show how the management strategies and employees reactions to them have developed over time. During this description, I have noted that the actual work tasks of the parking attendants and the general ‘stigma’ of the organisation are central to the self-understanding of the organisation members – their interaction with this stigma can be understood as their taint management of dirty work. I have also shown how management strategies have been targeted at the parking attendants “inner self”, which can be understood as their emotional labour (Hochschild, 2003 (1983)) and their appearance, which as we shall see can be understood as their aesthetic labour. Finally, we have also seen that there is some ambiguity in the use/deployment of strategies of inclusion and diversity. These themes will be taken up in the following chapters. However, perhaps the most important thing to learn from this ‘tour de force’ of the organisation and the case study, is the very many new management strategies that have been introduced over the years. They have been changed – often according to new expectations from the above administration, and perhaps not always quite in accordance with the actual tasks in Municipal Parking. It is difficult for the employees to see through which management strategies they are in fact managed by.

## 5. Dirty Work and Management in the Public Sector: How parking attendants and their managers interact with stigma

“I was really very happy when I got the job. I think it is good because I have to learn the rules, plus I have to work together with Danes. I haven’t worked together with Danes before. And plus it is in the municipality. Parking attendant in the municipality, that is a really big job...

...a cab-driver, he is parked in a crossing, so I had to explain it to him, and then he got very angry. He looked at me and said to me: but you are not Danish? I look at him and say: “what do you mean, I am not Danish?! “but you are not Danish, then why are you writing a fine? ... what do you mean, that if I am not Danish I shouldn’t write a fine or what? It is my job, and I have to do my job and I don’t care if I am a Dane or a foreigner... they are so stupid. He wanted to fight.” (both quotes from interview with the same parking attendant)

## **This article is under preparation for submission.**

### **Abstract**

The concept of 'dirty work' has been developed and applied in a range of different occupations to achieve an understanding of how people deal with socially tainted work tasks. These studies have focused on the micro-process of this taint management within different occupations. Few of these studies have related the study of dirty work to their broader organizational and societal context. While several of the occupations, which have been studied and classified as 'dirty' are typically held in the public sector, few have related dirty work to the particular developments of and conditions within the public sector. For instance, when the public sector takes upon it to earn income and thereby creates new unpopular, risky and also dirty tasks to be undertaken by workers within the public sector. This paper analyses the case of public parking attendants by the use of the dual perspective: 'making up' and dirty work. In the organizing of public parking attendance, management has worked to limit the external taint of the job and parking attendants also have their own strategies of dealing with taint, but meanwhile organizational developments and changing management strategies also provide the context and thereby the limits and possibilities of the organization members' taint management.

### **Introduction**

Work and the conditions of work within the public sector change according to changing management strategies. Sometimes work tasks traditionally held by professionals are delegated to workers with little or no formal training, thereby creating new sorts of workers. For instance, traditional police tasks such as security work and parking patrol have been detached from the police profession, making room for other actors and providers in these fields. This new situation has been described as "plural policing" (Stenning, 2009). With this development comes the design of new types of jobs in other types of private or public organisations than traditional police organisations. Such jobs and organisations deserve attention, because they transfer the exercise of authority from a profession (police) to other types of employees, who may have little or no formal training. While we need to understand how such workers are developed or

“made up” (Du Gay, 1996; Hacking, 1986), the effort to understand what goes on in these jobs should also rely on an examination of the particular traits of the job. For this reason, this paper uses the perspective of “Dirty Work” to contribute to our understanding of how such new sorts of workers are “made up”.

In 1951, Everett C. Hughes described "Dirty Work" as activities that are perceived as disgusting or degrading or as violating our moral conceptions (Hughes, 1951 p.319). He categorised dirty work as socially, physically, or morally tainted (Hughes, 1951). Later, others developed these categories of dirty work and investigated how employees (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999) and managers (Ashforth et al., 2007) deal with dirty aspects of work, and how different types of occupations experience and handle tainted work tasks (Kreiner, Ashforth, & Sluss, 2006). These studies found that stigma threat is related to strong group identities—or "entitativity"—in dirty work occupations in a way that can explain how employees cope with dirty work without being more unsatisfied with their jobs than other people are. The theory derived from these studies creates the expectation that stigma threat is more likely to promote entitativity if other factors conducive to group formation are also present, such as where members are physically proximal, task or outcome interdependent, seemingly similar in demographic and personal attributes, and where they undergo occupation-based socialization. In the case of the parking attendants in this study, their work is managed in a way so that it involves very little direct contact (physical proximity) with colleagues, and for the purpose of increasing diversity, the parking attendants are far from similar in demographic and personal attributes. Thus, following Kreiner et al. we would expect that occupation-based socialisation is of central importance to upholding positive self-esteem among organisation members in public parking patrol.

First, the article discusses how parking patrol can be understood in the framework of dirty work literature and shows how such an analysis can contribute to our understanding of the ‘making up’ of workers. Second, it introduces the case and the study's methodology. Third, the article goes along with the theory of dirty work and investigates how this theory can be used to understand the nature of dirty work in this occupation, including the strategies



for managing taint among employees and managers in this occupation. Fourth, the article broadens the scope of the investigation to the 'making up' of people by discussing examples of how the dirty aspects of the job – and the awareness and identification involved in doing a 'dirty job' with low status - are put into use by organisation members as something they actively interact with.

### Background and theory

This article is part of a study of how Danish public parking attendants have been "made up" (Hacking 1986; Du Gay 1996) in the light of changing managerial strategies. Important to this perspective is the interaction between people and the ways in which they are categorized as certain sorts of persons. This article considers how parking attendants and their managers handle the categorization of parking attendants as dirty workers and how they handle the stigma of their organization as such. The analysis of how they interact with their tainted image can be translated to what Ian Hacking describes as 'looping': People loop out of their categories and perhaps even change their categories by doing so (Hacking 1986).

In Denmark, the first publicly employed parking attendants were introduced in 1992. In Britain, this occupation was established more than twenty-five years earlier. From 1969 to 1972, Joel Richman conducted an ethnography of British traffic wardens. In the publication from 1983, Richman does not attribute to his traffic wardens the "status" of dirty work. He dismisses this theory on the grounds that it was developed by Everett C. Hughes *in the context of the cruelty inflicted by a powerful inner group of the S.S. on defenceless minorities* (Richman, 1983, p. 88) and that thus the status relation in this context is the inverse of the traffic warden's relation to *those of higher status than themselves who by no means lacked the will or means to resist them*. However, Hughes actually coined the term dirty work in another context in an earlier essay (Hughes, 1951) which allowed for the existence of different types of dirty work. Richman also argues that although the public perceived traffic wardens as a tainted occupation "the wardens themselves were convinced about the moral good of their work. No occupation denies the intrinsic worth of its own existence" (Richman, 1983, p. 88). But, according to Hughes: *Dirty work of some kind is found in all occupations.*

*It is hard to imagine an occupation in which one will feel that he is having to do something that is infra dignitae* (Hughes, 1951, p. 319). The theory of dirty work has been developed since Richman wrote his ethnography to comprehend more aspects and different types of dirty work (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999, 2002; Kreiner et al., 2006). The theory has recently been used in relation to a variety of other public services: fire-fighters, correctional officers, and emergency call takers (Tracy, 2005; Tracy, Myers, & Scott, 2006; Tracy & Scott, 2006).

Ashforth & Kreiner (1999) and Ashforth et al.(2007) have developed a framework for understanding how workers and managers handle the taint that others attribute to them. The purpose of the dirty work literature is implicit in the question: how can you do it? (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). How can you take up such an immoral, dirty, or tainted occupation without losing self-esteem? Working to answer this question, Ashforth & Kreiner first focused on the group level at the workplace. They argue, that groups can provide common esteem-enhancing identities that can serve as a buffer against social stigma. The stigma of dirty work is, according to these theorists, socially constructed. "Dirty workers" have two processes working to buffer against the internalisation of occupational stigma. One is the "development of occupational ideologies" by reframing, refocusing, or recalibrating the meaning of work, and the other is "social weighting", where they compare their social position to others in a way that puts their own position in a favorable light (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999). But Ashforth and Kreiner also propose some exceptions to this rule. They find that *the culture of the relevant occupation or workgroup may be weakened to the extent that individuals are physically isolated, turnover is high, and the reward structure encourages competition between individuals* (Ashforth & Kreiner, 1999, p. 421). While formally the reward structure among the publicly employed parking attendants in this study does not encourage competition, turnover is high, as is the case in many other formally unskilled jobs, and the job task involves physical isolation from fellow parking attendants for most of the day. In spite of the circumstances, which, according to this theory, would decrease the potential for creating collective esteem-enhancing identities, parking attendants go to work and somehow get through the day, and some also stay in the occupation for

many years. The question, then, is: what keeps them? How can they do it in spite of low chances of success?

Parking law offences can be described as "mundane crime" (Gibbons, 1983) or a "folk crime" (Laurence Ross, 1973). People who commit this type of crime do not regard the offences as criminal. They regard themselves as innocent. Moreover, people who commit these offences are—at least in American studies—typically white upper middle class. Richman writes: *traffic wardens were often involved with those of higher status than themselves who by no means lacked the will or means to resist them* (Richman, 1983). Thus, the low occupational esteem of parking attendants may widen the gap and lessen the respect between them and the car drivers. It is difficult to place parking attendants a priori within the different types of taint: social, moral, or physical, but these aspects of mundane crime suggest that there is a great deal of moral taint related to the work of parking attendants.

Moreover, parking patrol usually involves little contact with co-employees and thus less opportunity than e.g. firefighting offers to create a strong group identity. In spite of these issues, many parking attendants go to work each day, and they must have some way of making up for these dirty aspects of their work. The real issue for dirty workers, then, is not "How can they do the work?" but "How do they retain a positive self-definition in the face of the low social esteem of the work they do?"

In 2006, Ashforth et al. (2006) presented a scheme for understanding different types of tainted work according to the depth and breadth of the tainted tasks in an occupation. This scheme and the examples they give generate some expectations with regard to the "identification effect" of the tainted tasks among parking attendants—and thus some expectations with regard to how people in dirty work occupations retain a positive self-definition and what may inhibit this. Kreiner et al. place bill collectors—an occupation in some ways close to that of parking attendants—in the category of work with "pervasive stigma", meaning high breadth and high depth of dirty work, and they describe the taint of bill collectors as "moral taint". They then show how they integrate two theories:

system justification theory and system identification theory. Kreiner et al. ask: why do many occupational groups with pervasive stigma evidence pride and satisfaction among the occupational incumbents? This challenges the system justification theory, which would expect employees to take on the tainted identity. Kreiner et al. argue that *the salience of the stigma is experienced as an occupational-level threat which tends to strengthen entitativity, that is, a perception among individuals that they are group-like*. Kreiner et al. speculate that stigma threat is more likely to promote entitativity if other factors conducive to group formation are also present, such as where members are physically proximal, task or outcome interdependent, seemingly similar in demographic and personal attributes, and where they undergo occupation-based socialisation (Kreiner et al., 2006, p.626). As mentioned in the introduction, the first two of these factors are not present in the organisation studied here. Management has, however, worked to promote occupation-based socialisation. Nevertheless, processes of storytelling to create and maintain positive occupational identities are, as we shall see, challenged in times of restructuring.

## Methodology

The analysis of employee-manager relations and dirty work rests on fieldwork in a Danish municipal centre responsible for parking law enforcement. The fieldwork consisted of shadowings (Czarniawska, 2007) of parking attendants and participant observation at job interviews and during training of new parking attendants, as well as a total of 15 interviews with managers and employees in the centre. The analysis here particularly focuses on the information gathered in shadowings and interviews. Shadowings contained ethnographic on-the-job interviews with parking attendants in which the practices of their work were discussed immediately with the parking attendants. Field notes from shadowing were written immediately after the shadowing. The material was coded in the qualitative data processing programme Nvivo according to the numerous categories of dirty work and taint management established by Hughes and developed by Ashforth and Kreiner in order to get to know whether and in what sense parking patrol could be regarded as dirty work. Next, their categorisations of different types of employee and management strategies to deal with social

affirmation were utilised. After coding, the content was written up in field reports on each aspect of dirty work. The analysis in this article presents condensations of these field reports with selected representative quotes from interviews and vignettes written from field notes (Van Maanen, 2011). Names and places have been anonymised.

#### *THE CASE*

The core work task of the parking attendant is to give penalties to motorists whose cars are illegally parked. During recent years, municipal policies have been to increase the costs of parking, and to increase the area of town where a parking license or a parking ticket is required. This occurred after a period, which lasted from 2002 to 2009, during which management paid a great deal of attention to combatting occupational taint and the internalisation of occupational taint by employees. Management focused on reducing the assault rate and absence due to illness using methods such as a change of uniform from a green uniform signalling environmental friendliness to a dark blue uniform resembling police uniforms, providing psychological training under the slogan of "self-esteem replaces absence" and using storytelling to improve the internal and external image of parking attendants and parking patrol. In 2009, the municipality changed the management structure from a three- to a two-layer structure. New managers were hired and previous superintendents were "degraded" to be normal parking attendants. With regard to the everyday work, this changed management structure first and foremost meant that groups of parking attendants were given the responsibility of collectively dispersing the routes among themselves. The fieldwork in this study was primarily done less than six months after this structural change. The fieldwork, then, was carried out during a time of change, reorganisation, and adjustment. Management experienced problems when parking attendants had to cooperate about the distribution of routes. Critical employees, however would tell the researcher, that this new structure did not work in this particular part of the municipality because it shifted responsibility from the superintendents to the new managers. For example, given that the new managers worked in the daytime, the night shift attendants worried

what would happen in case of an emergency (a physical assault on the street), where they felt that managerial support on the spot was important.

The literature on dirty work emphasises group identity and managerial storytelling. This was what management had been working on during the past eight years. The new structure on the one hand worked to increase group-level cooperation by giving more responsibility to the teams; on the other hand, however, efficiency demands meant that the demands with regard to attendants' ability and willingness to walk alone (with no colleague) on the street and work individually were increased just as were expectations with regard to their management of tasks. The Head of Centre describes the consequences that he thinks this process has:

"I have emphasised this all the way through this organisational change ... this way of organising demands other employee-profiles ... the one-to-one management we had in the old days is impossible to have when managers now have to control up to more than 30 employees. And therefore the employees have to, to a larger extent, take on responsibility ... but a lot of the people we have, they don't want to ... but they have to in this new setup...we are giving them another role, they have to find out by themselves how they handle and cover the town, thinking about the dynamics of the town." (Interview with Head of Centre)

The development described by the Head of Centre here, but also in general over the past years in the centre resonates with what Hughes wrote in 1951:

*The movement to 'professionalize' an occupation is thus collective mobility of some among the people in an occupation. One aim of the movement is to rid the occupation of people who are not mobile enough to go along with the changes.* (Hughes, 1951).

The first analysis shows in what sense parking patrol is dirty work. The second analysis investigates how employees and managers interact with this dirty work.

### **Analysis Part I: In what sense is parking patrol dirty work?**

Analysing the material according to categories of dirty work provided examples of physical, moral, and social taint in the job. The most critical aspects of the job

as parking attendant were physical aspects—the risk of assaults on the street and the psychological consequences of such assaults— and moral aspects—the public perception of their methods as intrusive/deceptive. Importantly, as we shall see, these two dirty-work aspects were tied together. In the following I illustrate each type of taint in relation to the empirical material.

#### *Physical taint*

Ashforth and Kreiner divide physical taint into danger—work that might put one in danger—and dirt—work in which the worker is in direct contact with something that is culturally perceived as dirty. The physical taint in the job as parking attendant is more danger or rather risk than dirt. And a very controversial issue in the organisation is how risk is dispersed among attendants and in town. The following two vignettes exemplify how work as a parking attendant is in what is considered a high-risk and generally troublesome area of town and in what is considered a low-risk area (the city centre). The first vignette is a reconstruction of a typical morning on the street based on fieldnotes from several days, while the second vignette is a close description of one particular morning.

#### *Just another day on the street I*

“We stroll and chat. The parking attendant tells me about the organisation and wants to learn a bit about me. While strolling and chatting, the parking attendant is also concentrated on looking at the cars, reading their licenses (have they expired? Are they in the correct area?) – I seldom get full attention. Some cars have mobile services that they can turn on and buy parking over the phone so they don’t have to interrupt a meeting that is longer than expected to go down and prepay more parking time. Parking attendants call a number and check cars with this service. Some forget to pay and get a ticket. (has to be prepaid)

Billing a car takes some time. The handheld computer is used for everything: placing the offence in the right ‘box’, taking pictures of the car, the ticket or the empty front window, the signs, the distance to the corner (measured with another device) or road strips should be taken to document that the bill is given righteously. If the car is parked illegally the bill is written straight away – e.g. when it is forbidden to stop at all, if it needs a renewed ticket or license, the

parking attendant waits for at least four minutes. The hand-held computer, cannot print out the ticket before this period of waiting. Usually the parking attendant stands upright beside the car, visible.

Frequently a car driver comes running out to say: I'll move it now! Anxious. Someone honks while driving by. The parking attendant is sure this is addressed to him. The parking attendant checks a car, takes a picture of the tires to see if it has been moved and placed there again after

Parking attendant gets a call from the superintendants: someone called to say: a car is parking in their reserved parking space. We go there immediately and the parking attendant starts writing a bill, while a couple comes out of the building, ignore us, and start getting in to the car, the parking attendant says: you are not allowed to park here, the driver says: 'Shut Up!' and they drive off. The parking attendant is annoyed, but shrugs his shoulders. We stroll back to headquarters for lunch."

*Just another day on the street II*

"We left the car in an open parking space, and went down the street just before 10 am. After 10, this street is supposed to be free of cars. No parking, only for pedestrians. I immediately sense that accompanying parking attendants down this street means being watched – my instincts tell me. Everything in me wants to disassociate with these two women in uniform. I try not to walk too close to them, and yet I do not want to be impolite. Passed a group of young men, 10 meters down the street, standing around a car. The men shout at us. Walking down the street, we get a lot of attention. Shop owners come out to say that they are just about to move their car – do we have time to do it before you fine us? Parking attendants say: okay, but then you have to move it now. The shouting youngsters have given me a sense of unease. We get to a square, the parking attendants bill a car standing there. You are not allowed to park here at this time of day. I hear someone yelling. And see from a second story window a man yelling angrily and very loud at us. I feel terrible. I can't help beginning to walk very fast as we turn our backs to the man and walk across the square, but also feel a bit ridiculous because I know that it is probably the worst thing to do



to start running – that a parking attendant should stand firm and act calmly, authoritatively. The two parking attendants laugh – they can tell that I am worried - I try to laugh with them. Walk back to the car. Our tires are punctured. The two parking attendants are calm, not surprised. Someone stuck a knife in all four tires. Parking attendant calls headquarters. Can the technicians come with four new wheels? After having worked on getting the wheels of for some time, the parking attendants decide that it will take too long to wait for the technicians. Standing on the parking lot, I can't stop looking around thinking about the windows surrounding us: is there someone standing, laughing at us? The parking attendants were a bit annoyed by the situation, but... it was part of their job. We decide to walk back for lunch. One of the parking attendants said: well I am just glad I am not a police officer. I ask why? She says she was in this street once when the police was there and that 'they' treated the police much worse. I couldn't help feeling a bit alarmed that the police received less respect than we had just done."

Although the number of assaults has decreased steeply and steadily during recent years, parking attendants are very aware of the danger. Incidents like the one described in the following quote from an interview with a parking attendant shows how the danger is always near in the parking attendant's job and self-perception:

"In the street, I was talking to a lucky guy. He arrived [before I finished writing the ticket] and then I stood there talking to him, telling him that he wasn't allowed to park there, and then we got into a good conversation, because he had parked illegally. He was too close to the double white lines. And then came a stone and hit his car. And that was of course very close to me. That was a signal that I should get the f... out. They don't like parking attendants out there...So it is the worst type of intimidation. And a reminder that we are in a risky job."

One thing is the physical risk, but another is the psychological risk this entails: Being a witness to an attack on a colleague; going to court, in some cases two years after an assault; spending time at the emergency unit. And finally there is

the psychological stress from the risk of meeting an offender again on the street. Some parking attendants had experienced this:

'A parking attendant tells me that she was assaulted one day; her computer was kicked out of her hand. Two men, one of whom was obviously on drugs went berserk and kicked her in the head, but she covered her head, so she didn't really see him. She got the number, but no case could be made because the car did not belong to the offenders. Short time ago, she was billing a car the same place and a guy comes out and says: "[name of parking attendant], you know I'll take your computer if you write my car". She was very scared and shaky, particularly because she didn't know how he knew her name – she took a long time billing the car, so she was sure he went away. And she couldn't do any work the rest of the day.'

As we have seen, the physical risks associated with the job and the psychological consequences of them are a very central part of the job as parking attendant. Other types of physical taint, such as contact with dirt, are much less significant issues in the parking attendants' working environment.

#### *Social taint*

Ashforth and Kreiner divide social taint into a) having contact with people with low social status or with a lowly type of character (e.g. criminals) and b) being in a servile relation to others. Both of these aspects are important to understand in the context of parking patrol, and both are complicated by some of the realities within this particular type of organisation. This analysis begins with category b. The servile relation to others is coupled with authority, which makes it tricky to analyse.

Who are the people that the employees have a servile-authority relation to? How are they categorised and understood? The people who get fined are not necessarily citizens of the town—a lot of people of course drive into town—and the people who get fined are not necessarily the drivers of the cars, as the fine goes to the car owner and not the driver. A manager puts it this way:

" If it is someone who buys a ticket, then he must be a customer; he buys something from the city, a license: that is a customer. They are, however, also citizens. Some are businessmen, they are not necessarily citizens, but customers. Then there are car drivers; they are those who park their cars illegally according to traffic law, not in relation to paid parking. So, it is the whole basket."

Now, it is perhaps not so new that people with authority should also be service-minded. Nor is there much that is new in the confusion of roles in the relation between public employee and service-receiver. Such confusion has, for example, been present with regard to police services for a long time. In contrast to the police, however, the parking attendants' most important weapon is the ability to run if someone assaults them. How do the parking attendants experience this?:

"That Mr Nice Guy, who walks down, well [I mean], 'nice guy' in quotation marks. I try to be the human face, which of course also needs to be there, but I also try to be consistent, and authoritative and all that I preach that we are .... But I try to explain: it is part of our job, and you can say, my big challenge is the balance."

From the managerial point of view, acting in the correct manner: service-minded authority is a precondition for holding the job. The Head of centre spoke about his first time in the centre, during which he focused on professionalising the parking attendants:

"I think the first thing I did was to confront these issues and say "we can't continue our cooperation" and that is not exactly, it is not the coolest way to become a new boss: to fire four employees. But those were the conditions. And it did help clean up, and then it happened that people could see that negative actions had consequences. There was a consequence if you walked on the street and didn't speak properly to those customers who actually pay your wages."

On the other hand, the Head of Centre decided to put less emphasis on the servile relation—emphasising authority. Talking about the time where the uniforms bore a logo on the shoulder saying "Parking Service Assistant", he says:

"Well somehow, I do understand what they had tried to express with this, it is, well it does actually make good sense, but again, this mumbo jumbo, when you

come out ... in a situation where you sanction a car driver and then he looks at the shirt and it says "service" and then the first he thinks is "there damn well isn't much service to that", he gets a fine, and I am thinking that, well, it wasn't because we shouldn't offer service, but I am thinking that it is wrong to signal it like that, again because it is an authority task."

A parking attendant said:

"We are parking service assistants. And service means that you find out the lay of the land .... The moment you can see that this car is on its way to leave, then you shouldn't create chaotic situations on the street and take up your handheld computer. So the service consists of informing and then also showing that there is a consequence... If you can disarm people who are aggressive, then you are a good parking attendant... If people are aggressive, then we have to be able to sense it somehow."

In 2008 the administration introduced a balanced scorecard as a management tool. Since then frequent measurements of citizen satisfaction, employee well-being, and economy have been produced to compare the performance of different municipal units. Citizen satisfaction is tricky in relation to parking patrol, as one manager said:

"Well, we have this balanced score card, and it has just been measured here, and we just got the first results from the citizens ... on a scale from one to five, we are evaluated by the citizens .... But when I look at the results from the answers from our citizens, I think it is around 2.49 or something that is the average for our performance, satisfaction with us... Why are we down there? Aren't we doing a good piece of work? Or is it because in every question the word parking attendant or Municipal Parking appears?"

Ashforth and Kreiner focus on the external contact with people of lowly status. Indeed some employees, including one safety representative, worry that a new task consisting of patrolling, opening, and closing churchyards can be problematic, because it can create contact with drug users, who for example inject themselves in churchyard toilets.

Besides establishing what the parking attendants encounter on their routes, the analysis offered a new perspective on social taint. In fact, Ashforth and Kreiner touch a bit upon the issue when they consider managers' tackling of dirty work: they describe how some may feel dirty because they are managing people who do dirty work and are therefore associated with these people (Ashforth et al., 2007). Thus, they show that taint can also come from the relations inside the organisation. Indeed as the Head of Centre tells me, such "taint" had met him when he decided to change jobs from the police force:

"One of my colleagues, he was a bit envious [of my new job]—others were too—and he just said, well he had considered applying, but that he didn't want to bother being the boss of all those fat-ass women walking around the pavement, or something like that."

The analysis shows that intra-organisational taint, can come not just from being associated with the job as a parking attendant but also from being associated with the people inside the uniforms. The public perceptions of the social esteem of the type of people who become parking attendants is a sore spot. The focus on diversity management creates a particular challenge with regard to social esteem. A manager says about recruitment and diversity:

"Well, there are absolutely no limits. The only thing we say is that we reserve the right. If someone does not come at the right time, if someone does not fulfill the role, I mean, if you, we have had people who smelt worse than anything—I won't expose employees to that, simply because we are compared to those we are walking together with. Or if you smell of alcohol when you arrive or we can see from your pupils, that there are some drug problems—then we say: we don't want to do that."

The fact that this job is formally unskilled makes it an obvious place to find work for people who are on the edge of the labour market. Therefore, when the administration ordered the centre to take a certain number of people in subsidised jobs, these were hired to be parking attendants and technicians. A shop steward represented the employees during this hiring process and in the following explains how his colleagues fear the taint from such employees:

"Among these colleagues of mine, there can be some scepticism. It is understandable, for it is in fact so that everytime a bad one comes, we are bombed back."

Finally, taint can also be a problem in regard to other parts of the organisation. For instance, one administrative worker described how he experienced that people in other parts of the municipal administration look down on parking patrol.

While the dirty work literature regards social taint as the contact with stigmatised others, the contact with stigmatised peers—namely, co-employees—was referred to several times.

### **Moral taint**

Moral taint is, according to Ashforth and Kreiner, created by tasks which use deceptive, intrusive methods, or tasks which are of sinful, dubious virtue. The moral taint of parking patrol is perhaps not so easy to grasp and it is worth asking whether there is one. In the author's experience, the first moral questions people ask about parking patrol have to do with organisational recognition and remuneration of parking patrol work. People typically ask: "So, do they have a certain amount of tickets they have to write each day? Are they paid according to how many tickets they issue?" One parking attendant talks of it like this:

"It is not because I just want to write a lot of tickets today, or to make my boss happy, no, it is not that. It has nothing to do with whether I have written a hundred or one or none, sometimes I just write three or four. Some people think that we have to write a lot or that we shouldn't give people any chance, because then the boss will be happy, or because we want the boss to say it is good."(Notes from shadowing of parking attendant)

Another contested moral issue in the organisation is the question of whether it is possible to cancel a ticket once it has been issued. Parking attendants gave different answers about whether it was at all possible to cancel a ticket. One said, "No, it is not possible at all, the managers won't allow it." Another said, "Of course it is possible! Otherwise you cannot do your work properly." The problem

with providing the technical possibility of cancelling a ticket on the street is that although it opens up for larger scope for action, it perhaps also gives a larger vulnerability, as the following situation illustrates:

"A car driver who comes to a car just as the parking attendant has tucked the ticket under the windshield wiper simply says, 'Aren't you cancelling it? You fat cow! Well, it is not your fault that you are a whore.'"(notes from shadowing af parking attendant)

A couple of parking attendants felt the moral burden of not being able to cancel tickets was too high. They talked to a morning paper, which cited them as follows:

"I find it difficult to live with this double morality .... [In one particular area] the signs are so bad that people don't notice they have to pay. We have told management this several times, but nothing happens. It is of course good business".

"We don't hear anything if we write fewer tickets, but the evening team have an internal competition going on about who can write most. One of them had 160 tickets on an eight-hour shift. That is crazy! I have my doubts whether all of them were just ...."

Another parking attendant said, during shadowing: "You have to understand: it is not easy punishing people." He provides an example: if someone who is at a funeral receives a ticket. He says that he experienced that and cancelled the ticket. Later, he explains that he thinks the prices for parking and licences are too high and that his wife does not like that he works there.

Another theme that frequently comes up is about patrolling around the central hospital. A manager told about his first trip there:

"Well I found out that, well for one thing I was out there just when I started here, and my thought was: how difficult can it be? Anyone could be a parking attendant. But I also found out how important it is to have this psychological robustness, because of all the different things you encounter .... I patrolled down

by the hospital and wrote tickets and when people come running out, crying and just lost their husband or something and are upset about getting this ticket, to tell them that they had to write to us to complain about the ticket. And all those things, right. I actually found out how varied and how tough you actually have to be and then leave it here and not bring it home because otherwise I think you can be run down by all those things."

Finally, as mentioned above, the parking attendants punish people who feel they have done nothing wrong, who feel more innocent than other guilty criminals, and it is uncomfortable to be corrected. One manager puts it like this:

"... things you don't know such as stopping at a bus stop, well by far the majority of my friends actually think you are allowed to do that, and I actually think that I thought it was allowed to some extent. At least I had the understanding that it was not very disturbing to the traffic to do so ... unfortunately not ... if there is something we do have, then it is a bad reputation. I don't think this should be seen as that we treat people badly because we are a bad company. I think we should see it as that we are not happy about being corrected when we move about in the traffic."

To sum up on the issues of moral taint, the point is that the question of "how many" parking tickets have been issued is immoral to ask. The parking attendant should not—from a moral point of view—have any interest in turning more people into criminals or fine-payers than absolutely necessary. On the other hand, when asked about how a bad day on the street is, a parking attendant replies, "A bad day is one where you walk a lot without writing much." People go to work to produce, and although other tasks have been incorporated into the job of parking attendant, the sense of a good day's work invariably is related to having issued some parking tickets. This, however, should also be seen in the light of how "intelligent" parking patrol is done. Some typical rhythms in the traffic every day are related to typical rhythms of traffic law offences and lack of parking payments. In the rush hour, particular parking spaces cannot be used, in order to ease the traffic, by the mosque during the Friday prayer. This is recognised as an opportune time for the parking attendants to be at that spot if



they wish to issue tickets, which raises the question of whether it is immoral to seek the places out where you know that an offence is likely to take place. Another quote from a disgruntled parking attendant in a morning paper illustrates this:

"The bosses say that we should be service-minded, but we are not. Because for example at football matches, we are not sent out there until the match has begun, and we are gone before it is over, so that no one can ask us any questions, if they are in doubt about the rules."

### **Analysis Part II: Taint management**

This analysis concerns how employees cope or do not cope with the dirt issues in this organisation, considering the solitude of the job. Recalling Ashforth and Kreiner's (1999) descriptions of refocusing, recalibrating, reframing, and social weighting as tactics for dealing with dirty aspects of work, and the later description of identification effects such as ambivalence, mild ambivalence, or mild disidentification (2006), we can investigate how parking patrol work and workers relate to these categories. In the above, we have seen that the occupation of parking attendant involves physical, moral, and to some extent also social taint. Moreover, this taint can be said, along the lines of Ashforth and Kreiner's 2006 description of different kinds of jobs, to be pervasive: it is broad and it is deep. According to Ashforth and Kreiner, we should expect that employees react: "Pervasive stigmas will increase an occupation's entitativity, which will increase the use of defence tactics to combat the stigma." It can also be anticipated that "[p]ervasive stigmas, coupled with defence tactics, will result in ambivalent identification."

Moreover, what is interesting here is that in this organisation, management has for a long while been very focused on doing a lot of the "right things" that Ashforth and Kreiner point to: storytelling, working to improve the occupation's image in the minds of the general public, etc. However, because the centre is part of a large municipal organisation, the internal management of the centre is to a large extent conducted from above, from outside the centre.

## Spaces for the creation of group identity

The work day for the day shift was organised so that employees arrived in uniform at eight o'clock for morning briefing and dispersal of routes. After the briefing they left for the streets where some patrolled two by two and some one by one. This was a contested issue: management preferred the parking attendants to be able to walk one by one in order to increase the efficiency of the patrol work, cover town better, and be more visible, but the basic rule was that nobody who did not want to patrol alone should go alone. Another controversial rule was that the same people should not always work together. Previously, the parking attendants had had fixed partners. However, some parking attendants did get away with walking with the same partner every day. At twelve o'clock the parking attendants came in for 30 minutes lunch, but if they wanted they could skip lunch and go home half an hour early. However, management worked to constrain this possibility on the grounds that they—aware of the need for group identity—wanted the parking attendants to have lunch together. During the time on the street, the parking attendants would frequently talk on the phone with colleagues in the operation control centre. Of course, morning briefings, lunch, and phone calls all reduced the solitude associated with the job. Several parking attendants told me that they enjoyed the solitude and preferred to patrol alone.

In view of the fact that this job is very low on the ladder of societal prestige, one might wonder why people actually apply for it. And considering this relatively low level of group interaction, why are they able live with it? The dirty work researchers provide tools for ordering the material into occupational ideologies that recalibrate, refocus, or reframe the organisation's goals and social weighting where organisation members compare their situation to the situations of others. The point of these strategies is to "normalise" the occupation, normalisation being understood as *the processes by which the extraordinary is rendered seemingly ordinary ... the process of normalisation renders the stimulus less salient and arousing, that is, more 'ordinary'* (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Ashforth & Kreiner, 2002, p. 217). In an analysis of managers' approaches to these issues, Kreiner et al. (2006) come to "suspect that the most promising defense tactics are the ideologies of reframing and recalibrating because they

enhance the ends and means of an occupation, but not at the expense of others" (Kreiner et al., 2006, p. 633) and finally our expectation with regard to this analysis would be—given the pervasive stigma of the job—that employees would be ambivalent in their identification with the occupation (Kreiner et al., 2006, p. 622).

### Ambivalence

As we saw in relation to the moral issues in the dirty work, the employees and managers were indeed very ambivalent in regard to their tasks and the occupation as such. Some were willing to go to the newspapers, risking their jobs, while others felt that their spouses and friends were sceptical towards their occupation, but on the other hand, emphasised the positive sides of the job: the flexibility of working hours, the freedom in walking the streets, the pleasurable moments where you can help someone on the street, e.g. to find a parking lot.

### **Recalibration, refocusing, and reframing**

#### **Employees: Refocusing**

Refocusing was by far the most widely used strategy among the parking attendants, while the managers would work particularly to reframe the goals of parking patrol. It is of significance that the parking attendants themselves seldom referred to the overall purpose of their job, but more to the actual practices and conditions of their work: the fresh air, the freedom, the flexibility, chatting with people in the streets, and anecdotes of episodes where someone thanked a parking attendant, the pride of knowing the town well, knowing the rules of the town and traffic and the pride of wearing a uniform. Another type of refocusing was to focus on the real or alleged convenient role of the job in one's own life course: "I feel like, well I am retiring in two years, so I just need that time to pass" or "I started working here ten years ago—it was supposed to be a jumping-off ground for me", having a steady job in times of crisis, or "if you'd seen what I have seen [at war], you cannot be scared of parking attendant's work". Confronted with other's perceptions of them, some would use gallows humor, as when this researcher asked a parking attendant with African background whether

he had had any bad experiences on the street: "[laughing] I am black! Of course I have!"

### **Managers: Reframing**

The managers were generally more keen on using the correct technical vocabulary in relation to the organisational tasks than the employees were. Where employees sometimes would call the tickets "fines", managers would be very attentive to calling the tickets by the legally correct word "duty", thereby emphasising that this profession was different from the police profession and characterised by its own terms and categories. The managers would focus on political purposes of the work and avoid emphasising the economic purpose. Creating safety and passability in town has been the managerial goal for some time, but now the Head of Centre is considering how to reframe this in relation to the municipal climate strategy:

"Well, if we look at the total portfolio of tasks and if we look at the whole of this municipal organisation, then this climate agenda is a very high priority. So I think that what we should emphasise is that, well we are in a unique position there because what we are doing is in direct extension of bringing down CO<sub>2</sub>, but it is, just as difficult as it was to explain that we are creating safety and passability, then you have to spend some hours explaining how we are improving the climate. If we can create a more green image, I think we can get very far."

Another way of reframing the image of the parking attendants has been to describe them as "ambassadors of the town". Moreover, we can say that their tasks have been diffused by other tasks, such as locking up and opening churchyards, in their portfolio. New tasks, however were weighted and discussed with the shop stewards and safety committee, where e.g. cleaning the street was viewed as a task that would contribute to occupational stigma and undermine the authority of the parking attendants.

### **Recalibration**

The examples of recalibration were few; it was generally perceived as immoral or politically incorrect for the parking attendants to find particular value in fining

people, but in other areas of the organisation some recalibration took place in connection with approaches to improving the general quality of the duties. There was cooperation between a parking attendant and the complaints department. The point here was that if the duties were issued correctly, then people would feel less contempt for the organisation and the individual parking attendants. Only one of the parking attendants clearly stated that she found it reasonable to fine people if they broke the rules, making this the central part of her job—and the purpose of her work.

### Social Weighting

Employees only showed few examples of social weighting—perhaps for lack of comparisons? However, the managers, again, were more likely to use this strategy. For instance during job interviews, a manager did not find that a general training programme for "guards" was particularly relevant to the job. And when asked what type of job this job was comparable to, managers said: none. They generally emphasised how unique a profession this was and how it involved a very specific set of skills and talents. On the other hand, there was a high awareness of the tendency for already stigmatised people to be overrepresented in the job.

### Conclusions

This article investigated the work of Danish public parking attendants in the light of the theory and vocabulary of dirty work. The purpose was to contribute to the understanding of the 'making up' of a certain sort of worker by drawing upon the theory of dirty work. The analytical tools of dirty work, which show how employees and managers try to cope with stigma, is in this paper regarded as their interaction with how they are categorized as certain sorts of persons.

The first analysis in the paper identified in what sense parking attendance is categorized as dirty work. It showed that the job is tainted, particularly morally and physically, but also socially. However, the social taint in the job is partly derived from association with others in the same occupation and not particularly by association with the people they are in contact with through their work as other dirty work studies typically suggest.

The second analysis showed that the parking attendants' occupational identification—as expected—was highly ambivalent and that the parking attendants particularly worked to refocus their attention to other-than-tainted aspects of the job. Managers, however, would tend to reframe the meaning of the tasks, emphasizing authority and professionalism.

The analysis of dirty work above has shown that workers 'loops' tend to consist of refocusing in order to deal with the stigma of the occupation. They divert attention to positive aspects of their jobs, while managers tend to reframe the whole purpose of parking attendance as such.

The analysis also draws our attention to several instances where the parking attendants work to loop out of management's intentions to categorise them in a particular way. This is what happens, when we see workers, who go to anonymously to the morning papers to reveal immoral aspects of their job and thereby 'loop' out of being the loyal member of the corps – teasing their managers intentions to 'reframe' parking attendants in the eyes of the public.

## 6. Looking Neat on the Street – Aesthetic Labour in public parking patrol

“... we, as a group generally try to present ourselves smartly (With various degrees of success) as visible representatives of our local council ... Some let the side down completely by going on patrol looking like a badly tied sack of spuds. It’s embarrassing to wear the same uniform sometimes.

Me, I try to look reasonably smart as I’m doing my job as it increases my personal self-esteem and that as a side-effect improves my interaction with the General Dyslexic [slang for people on the street who do not park in accordance with parking signs]. I know we’re not Police Officers, but one has to make the effort as it is one of those things that acts as a social lubricant ....” (From the blog book “Bill Sticker” written by a British traffic warden (Sticker, 2007, p. 18))

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### **Abstract**

Research on aesthetic labor has been confined to service encounters in private sector industries. Aesthetic labor theory is critical of the commercialism that drives management of service labor and points to the discrimination of employees on the grounds of their “looks” that this entails. Considering the common conception today of the public sector as a service provider, application of the theory of aesthetic labor is relevant to public sector service work. But the public sector has many other purposes and mechanisms than those pertaining to increased revenues that may influence the use of aesthetic labor. This paper analyzes the aesthetic labor of Danish parking attendants in an organizational ethnography. A change management process in this organization has applied the principles of aesthetic labor actively for the purposes of diversity and health and safety. The paper shows how managers apply aesthetic labor principles to promote health and safety and workforce diversity, but also that the use of aesthetics has ambivalent purposes. Aesthetic labor is not as unequivocally applied for commercial purposes as hitherto assumed.

**Keywords:** Aesthetic labor, Diversity management, Health and Safety, patrol work, parking attendants.

### **Introduction**

In 1992, a new type of public employee entered street life in Denmark. Originally titled “parking service assistant” (parkeringsserviceassistent), but in everyday language referred to as parking attendants (parkeringsvagter), these uniformed representatives of the municipality patrol the streets and enforce parking law. They punish car drivers who park illegally or with no license by issuing fines, which they place on the windshield. Representing a public service that is not particularly popular, those who perform the job of parking attendant face a high risk of being subjected to verbal and physical assaults in encounters with people



on the street. At the beginning of the 2000s, one municipal center responsible for parking patrol was experiencing the highest assault rate ever. In 2002, about 100 parking attendants reported a total of 65 assaults. In 2003, however, the number dropped to 28 and it has been around or well below 30 since. Managers and employees attribute this very steep decline in assaults to new management initiatives at this time. They particularly attribute the decline in assaults to a change of uniforms from green uniforms signaling environmental friendliness to dark uniforms resembling police uniforms in 2002. With regard to the long-term situation, organization members explain the consistently lower assault rate with two managerial initiatives: managerial attention to improving the attendants' self-esteem and therewith their attitude in street encounters and the introduction of diversity management so that the parking attendants representing the municipality mirror people on the street. These three elements of a change management strategy—uniforms, self-esteem, and diversity—all manage the attitude and appearance of the parking attendants, that is, their aesthetic labor (Witz et al., 2003). This strategy appears to have been successful with regard to lowering the assault rate and the rate of absence due to illness. However, the use of aesthetics in organization and management has been criticized on the basis of recent studies of service work. This makes it relevant to ask at what costs this aesthetic professionalization of the job as public parking service assistant has been carried out.

Previous studies show that the downsides to aesthetic labor lie in potential discrimination of workers on the grounds of their appearance (Nickson & Warhurst, 2007; Spiess & Waring, 2005; Williams & Connell, 2010). This has given rise to discussions about the discriminatory aspects of "lookism" and whether these should and can be legally regulated (Warhurst, Broek, Hall, & Nickson, 2009; Waring, 2011). However, studies of aesthetic labor have been confined to the private sector. This is perhaps due to the understanding that aesthetic labor is applied by managers for commercial benefit (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007b a), to manage the customer–server relation. But considering the focus on the citizen as consumer associated with New Public Management (Clarke et al., 2007), it appears likely that the concept of aesthetic labor has explanatory power with

regard to the working conditions in this sector. By applying the concept of aesthetic labor to the field of public sector research, this paper contributes to a new understanding of service work in public organizations and to the theory of aesthetic labor by applying it in an organization that is in many respects quite different from those industries.

Through an ethnographic case study of one Danish municipal department responsible for parking law enforcement, this paper investigates the content, purposes, and consequences of aesthetic labor as a component of the “matrix of skills” (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007b) demanded of frontline public sector workers. The first section accounts for and discusses the theory of aesthetic labor and the critical perspectives it generates. The second section accounts for the study’s methodology and how it can provide a fruitful analysis of aesthetic labor in the public sector. The third section introduces the case. The fourth section analyzes recruitment, training, and work in the perspective of aesthetic labor, while sections five and six discuss implications, present conclusions, and identify possible new perspectives in research.

### **Service work and aesthetic labor**

Critical service work research draws attention to how service workers’ selves and self-presentation are an object of management, because managers perceive commercial outcome as resting on the customer–server encounter. This situation has often been analyzed through the lens of Arlie Hochschild’s theory of emotional labor (Hochschild, 2003 (1983)), which draws attention to how employees’ emotional selves become objects of management. In the last decade, however, a theory of aesthetic labor, which was developed by the so-called Strathclyde group, has challenged and complemented this analysis. The Strathclyde group’s interest in aesthetics was fueled by an increased amount of jobs in clothing retail in Glasgow, Scotland. In this sector, employees with customer contact were expected to dress and act in a particular style, matching the product and appealing to the customers (Nickson, Warhurst, Witz, & Cullen, 2001). The researchers were concerned about a mismatch between the skills of a growing group of unemployed and the skills requested by employers in this growing pool of jobs, which at one and the same time were “McJobs” that

required a fast pace of service encounters (Leidner, 1993; Ritzer, 1996) and “style jobs” requiring that employees dress in a particular fashion. Questioning the common theoretical understanding that such jobs required no skills, the researchers wanted to investigate what type of unacknowledged skills the jobs required (Thompson et al., 2001). Through interviews and fieldwork in the hospitality and retail industries, the researchers found that managers expect a matrix of skills consisting of technical, social, and aesthetic skills for these jobs. The technical and social skills were quite developed, appreciated, and articulated, while the last category of aesthetic skills was not. They identified aesthetic labor as

*...a supply of “embodied capacities and attributes” possessed by the workers at the point of entry to employment. Employers then mobilize, develop and commodify these capacities through processes of recruitment, selection and training, transforming them into competencies or skills, which are then aesthetically geared to produce a style of service encounter. By “aesthetically geared” we mean deliberately intended to appeal to the senses of customers most obviously in a visual or aural way. (Warhurst et al., 2000, p. 4).*

Developing the notion of aesthetic labor, they drew on Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of distinction (Bourdieu, 1998 (1986)), which explains how the individual “habitus” embodies social distinction. Aesthetic dispositions are indeed about class, but our habitus also provides us with a “‘practical sense’ that enables our ongoing engagement in the social and alignment with the demands of sociality” (Witz et al., 2003, p. 4). In that sense, aesthetics contributes to explain what holds society together. By taking Bourdieu’s theory into the workplace, Witz et al. find that they can show how employers mobilize these individual embodiments of class distinction for commercial purposes (Witz et al., 2003, pp. 40–41). The Strathclyde group differentiates between the aesthetics of organization, in organization, and *as* organization (Witz et al., 2003). The latter concerns the application of aesthetic theory directly on the “art” of management and will not be taken up in this article. Aesthetics of the organization concerns the aesthetics of the “hardware” of the organization: the architecture of a building, furniture, or a logo. The aesthetics in the organization concerns the “software” of the

organization. This is about the mobilization of employees for aesthetic purposes: presenting the organization to customers in a particular way. At times, employees are transformed into organizational hardware, for example, through the use of uniforms, which they do not just wear, but also are trained in *how* to wear (Witz et al., 2003, p. 48).

Since the Strathclyde group provided these conceptualizations of aesthetic labor, the notion has been nuanced and developed through many case studies and some quantitative surveys. Common to these studies is their focus on the private service sector, particularly on the hospitality and retail industries (Pettinger, 2004; Warhurst & Nickson, 2007b; Williams & Connell, 2010), but also on the airline industry (Spiess & Waring, 2005), call centers (Callaghan & Thompson, 2002), and fashion (Entwistle & Wissinger, 2006, 2006). The existence of aesthetic labor in the private service sector is thus well established. Nevertheless, there seems to be agreement among these researchers that aesthetics also has a role to play in other types of work and organization. As Williams and Connell write: “It is probably the case that every interactive service job has an aesthetic component, that is, a set of normative expectations regarding appropriate appearance and demeanor” (Williams & Connell, 2010, pp. 352–353).

Another opening for new aspects of aesthetic labor comes from Warhurst and Nickson (2007a), who, reflecting on the nuances of aesthetic labor in service work, emphasize that the typical image of the service worker is of being in a servile position in relation to the customer: *workers can remain servile, but there can also be interactions with equivalence between worker and customer, and there can also be interactions in which the worker is superordinate* (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007a, p. 793). For example, as Robyn Leidner has shown, insurance workers have to assert themselves in relation to the customers (Leidner, 1993)

Thus, we can expect aesthetic labor in other than commercial settings, and we can expect that the content of the aesthetic labor depends on the “genre” of service encounter. These acknowledgements probe the question of whether there might be reasons other than commercial benefit for applying the principles of aesthetic labor. In a recent contribution, Huzell and Larsson (2012) question

whether managers only use aesthetic labor for commercial purposes. They suggest that *the demand for certain aspects of aesthetic labor might be driven by the employers' need to be politically correct, to comply with hygiene and safety policies and legislation or as a means of reducing costs* (Huzell & Larsson, 2012, p. 109). Having acknowledged the possibilities of other rationalities behind aesthetic labor, Huzell and Larsson focus on cost reduction, when they suggest that employers' interest in reducing future expenses for sickness leave and rehabilitation may influence their recruitment and selection. In a survey in Swedish service companies, Huzell and Larsson show that employers seek to employ healthy looking staff, which in the employers' view affords a low risk of costs for sickness absence. Suggesting the notion of "athletic labor" as a subcategory of aesthetic labor, Huzell and Larsson thereby bring workers' health into the field of aesthetic labor. This contribution is important, because it suggests the development of a more nuanced theory of aesthetic labor.

Following up on Huzell and Larsson, Karlsson (Karlsson, 2012) suggests that aesthetic and athletic labor are subjected under an umbrella of "Corporeal Labor" and that the economic purposes of corporeal labor determine the content of corporeal labor: The more focus on cost containment, the more athletic labor, and the more focus on "selling services," the more aesthetic labor. The notion of corporeal labor will be discussed at the end of this paper, but until then aesthetic labor is referred to as the umbrella term for different types of aesthetics, including athletic skills.

Although Huzell and Larsson and Karlsson open for new interpretations of aesthetics in work, they stay empirically in the private sector and within the logics of economy. In order to further nuance the theory of aesthetic labor, it should be applied in other types of organizations, and to nuance the purposes of aesthetic labor, the public sector's role as spender, rather than income generator, provides an interesting contrast.

While New Public Management has contributed to commercialization of the public sector, which in itself qualifies for a study of aesthetic labor, the public sector is also characterized by having multiple, contested, and ambivalent

purposes (Hoggett, 2006). Provision of service to citizen-consumers, cost containment, and income generation are but a few of these (Clarke & Newman, 1997; Clarke et al., 2007). The managers and street-level bureaucrats (Lipsky, 2010 (1980)) who deliver the public service continuously balance different purposes, such as flexible high-quality service delivery, equal treatment of all employees and citizens while responding to diversity, bringing down costly absence due to illness, and partnerships with external actors (Newman, 1996). Frontline public sector workers are at the center of these issues in their everyday encounters with citizens. Moreover, although the public sector shares the role of service provider and a strong focus on cost containment with the organizations hitherto studied in aesthetic labor research, in the public sector these issues are combined with the politically guided role as bureaucratic rule enforcer. In such a setting, we should question whether the purposes of aesthetic labor are more or other than commercial and/or cost containing.

Finally, research on and theory of aesthetic labor does not stop at conceptualizing aesthetic labor and documenting the existence of the phenomenon. Aesthetic labor is criticized for the discriminatory effects of weighting the looks and appearance of workers, particularly because this approach excludes other equally or more suitable candidates for the jobs. In designer retail, young, white, upper-middle-class employees are preferred to other formally unskilled workers who might need the jobs more (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007b; Williams & Connell, 2010); the aesthetic and sexualized labor of flight attendants may exclude people who do not have “the looks” (Spiess & Waring, 2005); and the athletic labor demanded in the Swedish service industries excludes potentially unhealthy workers in the recruitment phase (Huzell & Larsson, 2012). The identification of aesthetic labor has also led to discussions about the pros and cons of legislating to forbid this “lookism” (Warhurst et al., 2009; Waring, 2011).

To sum up, aesthetic labor can exist in practically any service organization, and to investigate it, we need to ask 1) what the identity of the organization is, 2) what style of service it delivers, 3) for which purposes aesthetic labor is used, and 4) what the consequences are. While the public sector in line with New Public

Management has a strong focus on generating income and reducing costs, the public sector also represents an antithesis to the typical aesthetic labor research context. The public sector involves a range of styles of service encounters that, due to the role of the employee as street-level bureaucrat can be expected to require aesthetic resources that differ from those usually found in aesthetic labor research, such as a particular class-specific fashion style in clothing retail. Likewise, we may expect that the purposes of using aesthetics are different from those in the private service sector, perhaps mirroring the general ambivalent purposes in the public sector. And finally the consequences of aesthetics may also differ from what we have seen above, given the inherent need to be politically correct not only in regard to public spending but also in regard to diversity, equality, health, and safety.

In the Danish (and surely also other) public sector organizations today, there is a close HR monitoring of the composition of the workforce in terms of diversity in regard to age, gender, and ethnicity. Mirroring the citizenry by employing principles of diversity has been a common public policy during the past decade in Denmark. As opposed to those organizations typically in the spotlight in discourses regarding aesthetic labor, there is at least formally quite a strong focus on not discriminating on these issues when it comes to access to the jobs. However, the role played by aesthetics is not reflected in formal statistics, and the question is how aesthetics actually plays out in a context where managers already have a strong focus on avoiding discrimination in general.

By investigating aesthetic labor in this context, this paper can contribute to the development of the theory of aesthetic labor which recent contributions encourage (Huzell & Larsson, 2012; Karlsson, 2012). For these reasons, I turn to the study of aesthetic labor in a public center responsible for parking law enforcement.

### **Methodology**

The fieldwork consisted of participant observation, interviews, and collection of relevant written material. I approached the organization “bottom-up,” by doing participant observation among the parking attendants (Goffman, 2002 (1989)).

The observations were conducted as shadowing (Czarniawska, 2007) of parking attendants one or two at a time during a workday and interviewing the attendant or attendants on the job. Field notes of observations were taken and on-the-job interviews carried out after shadowing. The purpose of shadowing was to achieve a practical understanding of their work tasks and work day, knowledge of informal networks among the employees, and an appreciation of the importance on a day-to-day basis of diversity management. Next, I interviewed the direct managers of the parking attendants. These interviews were semistructured (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) around three common basic themes: expectations of people holding the job as a parking attendant, current managerial challenges, and the tackling of inclusion and diversity. In the second week of my fieldwork, I was a participant observer on three days of job interviews at which I also took notes. Finally, I was a participant observer at selected days of a three-week introduction course with the newly hired parking attendants. The days were selected so as to provide material about all the different themes that were introduced to the attendants. The total empirical material consists of field notes from 15 one-day shadowings of different parking attendants and transcripts of 15 interviews with five managers in the center, a shop steward, and two of the newly hired, six months after their hiring. Recorded interviews with managers lasted 45 minutes to 1.5 hours and recorded interviews with employees lasted 15 to 45 minutes. Other material, such as relevant information from the Intranet, HR and balanced scorecard policy documents, consultancy reports, and newspaper articles, was also collected. Field notes, interview transcripts, and other written material were imported into the qualitative data processing program Nvivo, in which it was possible to code, analyze, and explore the material.

The reflective analysis that followed identified the framework of aesthetic labor as an appropriate way to approach the importance that the managers attributed to the parking attendants' appearance. Studies of aesthetic labor have shown that the recruitment situation is particularly important in relation to aesthetic labor (Callaghan & Thompson, 2002) (Warhurst & Nickson, 2007 a), particularly because many employers do not wish to spend resources training employees for aesthetics (Williams & Connell, 2010), and for this reason, aesthetic labor in



training and daily work is also an important area to include in the study in the context of an investigation into the extent to which employers train employees in aesthetics (Thompson et al., 2001). The collected material provides the opportunity to analyze these three areas of the organization.

Coding of the material was according to references to aesthetics—observations and utterances about looks, gestures, and uniforms. The theme of aesthetics was particularly in evidence in relation to issues of diversity and safety. To investigate these instances further, I focused on the places in the material where people referred directly or indirectly to aesthetics. I wrote up ethnographic tales (Van Maanen, 2011) of situations where aesthetic labor was a theme—situations where references were made to the “appearance” of the parking attendant. This article presents vignettes from interviews and field notes, which illustrate the content and use of aesthetic skills.

### **The case**

This case description, which relies on the collective story (Elliot, 2005) of the history of the parking center, traces the identity of the organization, what style of service it delivers, and the collective understanding of the purposes of aesthetic labor.

This municipal center is part of a large Danish municipality. The official purpose of the organization is to undertake parking patrol in order to secure safety and passability in town. This makes the center one of the few municipal activities that creates more money than it spends. It is, however, politically incorrect for the parking attendants and for the organization as such to give the impression that they want to increase municipal incomes by fining car drivers.

The collective story is a story in three phases. In the first period, from 1992 to 2002, the parking attendants’ reputation was tainted, not only by the character of the job—often characterized as being a form of de facto tax collection from car owners—but also by the common understanding that the job as a parking attendant in effect served as a retention project for worn-out elderly bus drivers. This reputation lowered public esteem for the parking attendants, who frequently experienced harassment and assaults and had a very high rate of

absence due to illness. When the managing director retired in 2002, the municipality hired a consultancy firm to evaluate the organization. The consultants identified the aforementioned high rate of absence due to illness and high frequency of assaults. The second phase (2002–2009) of the “collective story” began when a new managing director was hired. The manager was assigned the task of improving the bad scores for absence due to illness, which caused high budget costs in the municipality and in general was and is a very central political focus in Denmark. The new managing director immediately did three things as part of his change management strategy: 1) changed the parking attendants’ uniforms from green uniforms signaling environmental friendliness to dark uniforms resembling police uniforms, 2) set up a project focusing on improving the parking attendants’ self-esteem and thereby their appearance on the street, and 3) set up diversity management, following municipal diversity policies by giving the mid-level manager of the operations department the following message: “If you have two applicants with different ethnic backgrounds, but the same qualifications, then you should hire the one with another ethnic background than Danish.” Following a national (and European) trend after the turn of the millennium (Boxenbaum, 2006; Holvino & Kamp, 2009), the municipality’s goal was that 15% of all employees should have another ethnic background than Danish, thereby mirroring the ethnic composition of Danish society. With about 30 different nationalities employed today, this center contributes to the fulfillment of this diversity goal. All these debates and issues were part of everyday life and management in this center. Phase three of the collective story began in 2009 when a new organizational structure was introduced in the administration at large and a balanced scorecard was introduced, comparing each of the administration’s different centers’ performance on the basis of a citizen panel, employee satisfaction, and economic performance. Not surprisingly, given the nature of the tasks in this center, the parking center’s performance is typically given lower scores by the citizen panel than other centers in the municipal service. In relation to the balanced scorecard, an internal assessment of and individual feedback on the quality of the officers’ work was set up. The administrative focus on absence due to illness is still high. During the fieldwork in 2010–2012, the absence due to illness had decreased

from 40 days per attendant per year to around 12. The diversity of the workforce in terms of ethnicity, gender, and age is still obvious to the casual observer, but the new managers in the operations department no longer hire by the principle of positive action used in phase two. The managing director describes the goal of the work they do as keeping the city's traffic safe and passable and wants to couple this to the municipality's environmental agenda. The external image is continuously worked on through the media, who often write critical stories about the organization.

As this story tells us, the *identity* of this organization has been very directly targeted in a change management process in these three phases. Phase two was a period of professionalizing the employees by directly targeting their self-esteem, thereby providing them with training in the right attitude and appearance in street encounters, and it was about sending a politically correct message presenting the municipality as a tolerant and diverse organization. Today, the organization still consists of a diverse workforce, but the politically correct message is cost containment, through a strong focus on absence due to illness.

The *style of service* is a combination of authority and service. If the parking attendants act too servile, they become weak targets to possible offenders. The uniform underlines the authority and by wearing the uniform, employees become organizational hardware. The purpose of this style of service is found in the fact that uniforms can provide a shield against attacks and unpleasant encounters (Craik, 2005). But also in that the focus on diversity transforms the attendants into organizational *hardware*: they represent the citizens of the municipality among the crowd and thereby collectively blend in, as a total corps. The software consists of acting with an air of service, trustworthiness, and confidence while punishing people. The managers are evaluated by their employers in the administration on the grounds of the absence due to illness among their employees, which indirectly comes down to the management of health and safety. Diversity in the workforce is monitored and regarded as important, but the managers are not directly evaluated on these grounds. Having thus outlined the identity of the organization, the style of service, and the

purposes of aesthetic labor, we can turn to investigating when, where, and how aesthetic labor is applied and analyze the consequences. As Thompson et al. (2001) suggest, the required skills for a job are best investigated in the recruitment, training, and everyday work. In the following vignettes, I present some of the perspectives on aesthetics afforded along the way in these situations.

### **Aesthetics in recruiting**

The analysis first takes up an example from phase two, at the time when diversity management and positive action in recruitment were at its high, where a manager looked back at the way she recruited. Next, the aesthetic content of the skills that the hiring committee valued is analyzed, and one particular instance is highlighted to show how the managers work with aesthetics to change the image of the organization. Throughout the analysis, the managers' and hiring committees' motives to act and reasons to choose on the basis of aesthetics are analyzed.

#### *Recruiting in Phase Two: The Aesthetics of Diversity*

Looking back at experiences with diversity management, this manager explained how she began to consider whether it was possible to hire a Muslim woman with a head-scarf. In Denmark, Muslim women's head-scarves acquired great symbolic significance during the 2000s in public debates about whether or not women could and should wear them at work. Discussions about head-scarves were often fueled by arguments about head-scarves being a symbol of gender discrimination and "oppressed Muslim women" (Andreassen, 2012). The scarf discussion epitomizes the dilemma that managers are in, when they try to accommodate a discourse of equality while also accommodating a discourse of diversity: treating everyone the same, but different. This is how the manager describes how she approached the issue after giving it a lot of thought:

"... finally I thought: I am ready! And I talked to my middle managers about it, asked them how they felt about it. They thought it was an excellent idea to employ people with scarves. And then we talked with the employees. We talked with each of the teams and said: an employee with a scarf—how would you

respond to that? ... Let's hear all the prejudice so that we can have a discussion about it ... and I said [to the employees]: now I have had this opportunity to hear you out and I have decided, that wearing a scarf is no barrier to work in this parking center ... what I have heard you say is that you don't see any problems in people wearing scarves, but you do see a problem if we hire a woman with a scarf who doesn't speak proper Danish and who doesn't look neat. You have been honest and I appreciate that."

The references to language and looking neat have to do with health and safety. It was a recurrent theme that an important issue for parking attendants was that their colleagues were respected on the streets and gave a good impression of the workplace. Generally, the risk of any bad talk about them was perceived as a risk to the health and safety of all parking attendants. Moreover, it could be risky to walk the streets with a colleague who attracted negative attention. So, if this type of diversity was to be introduced in the service work and encounters, the person would have to represent something other than a stereotypical image of a Muslim housewife, who the officers expected would provoke hostility and racist behavior on the street. Thus, health and safety set the limits to the degree of diversity. To counter the employees' reservations, the manager decided to look for a good-looking Muslim woman with a scarf through one of the attendants' networks:

"I was lucky that one of the officers came to me and said: I know someone, who fits that description. Because we wanted a real ice-breaker—it is all right to think a bit, isn't it? She came for a job interview. She was—she looked damn good, her Danish was beautiful—still with a bit of dialect, though. And she came in with a head-scarf—everything was just perfect. She was employed and after two days she was uniformed and we provided the most beautiful, beautiful silk scarf. She was so elegant!"

The manager took in other employees' opinions about aesthetics in a recruitment process, and the underlying argument for the employees' preference for a beautiful co-employee is: health and safety. However, we cannot conclude that aesthetics serves as an ice-breaker, promoting diversity and inclusion. The

purpose of using aesthetic labor is more ambiguous here: The newly hired woman resigned after only a couple of days, when the manager denied her request to be allowed to wear a long skirt, after the attendant had met private acquaintances on the street who did not approve of her wearing trousers. The manager described the situation as follows:

“Then I said: do you know what? I really cannot accommodate you there, because it wouldn’t look like a parking attendant. You have to blend in, that is why we are uniformed—we are a corps. Then, she [said she] couldn’t work here and I said, then there is nothing else to do, you have to resign. Then give me a piece of paper [she said], and she put down her signature and left.”

The manager argued that to be a parking attendant, the employee would have to blend in and look the part although the manager had actively sought—a woman with a scarf. In the interview, the manager explained that she was provoked by the strength of the woman’s Muslim community. She argued along the lines of the strong societal image of the “oppressed Muslim woman.” But when recalling the situation above, she argued that the exit of the scarf-wearing woman was a consequence of the woman’s own choice to not blend in with the organizational aesthetics by wearing a proper uniform. The manager’s ambition of diversity was challenged by her other political ambitions in regard to gender equality, but she manifested this political ambition in the form of an aesthetic judgment. In this case, aesthetics serves as what the manager regards as the proper argument for setting this limit to diversity. The aesthetic tools that the manager in the first instance used for the purpose of furthering diversity ended up being used as an argument against diversity. Either way, both ways of applying aesthetics serve political purposes.

#### *Recruiting in phase three: looking too much like a parking attendant*

The recruitment procedures can show us more detail about which aesthetic attributes the hiring committee approved and disapproved of. The hiring committee consisted of two managers—one with long experience in the organization, including experience as a parking attendant, and one recently hired manager who was also head of the center’s health and safety committee—and

one shop steward. The experienced manager led most of the conversation with the applicants. Typical questions from the experienced manager were: How do you feel about having to punish people? What did your family and friends say when you told them you were going to an interview here? How do you think you would react if someone said something unfriendly to you in the street? How do you feel about wearing a uniform? And a more practical question: How do you feel about working evening shifts? Apart from the last, these questions were formulated with a view to considering how the applicant would tackle street encounters. They all addressed the gray area between aesthetic and emotional labor, illustrating what Warhurst and Nickson pointed out: that in practical life the differences between these issues are difficult to disentangle (Warhurst & Nickson, 2009). By the end of the interview, the shop steward would ask about the applicant's physical condition: Do you have any problems with your legs? Are you prepared to ride a bike? Thus, there were some very direct questions regarding the applicant's athletic abilities. Finally, the other manager would take over and ask questions he wanted to ask. While two of the skill categories identified by Thompson et al. as belonging to a matrix of social, aesthetic, and technical skills required by employers were treated extensively in the interviews, the third category, technical skills, only came up in the interviews when applicants asked about what type of training they would get, and the experienced manager would typically explain to them that there was a three-week course with a test at the end and that there was nothing to worry about because usually everyone passed the test.

Between the interviews, each of the three members of the committee rated the last interviewee by assigning him or her a number from one to four. The shop steward, who saw his role as imagining how it would be to work together with the applicant, would often give higher ratings than the managers. The rating process often involved discussions about the applicant's suitability for the job and what type of employees the applicant would approve of. The committee tried to imagine the applicant on the street: How would the applicant interact with people on the street? Would the applicant be able to tackle harassments? Were the applicant's Danish language skills good enough? Technical skills were

seldom mentioned in these discussions or given much weight in the assessments. Much discussion was about the external image the applicant would create. Questions were posed regarding how “people on the street” would react to this person.

The health and safety manager would focus a great deal on the risk of a high rate of absence due to illness, referring to a demand from “above” in the administration that this should be brought down. The questions about athletic skills were usually quite short and none of the informants said that they would have any problems walking or riding a bike. However, one applicant stated on his own initiative that he suffered from a very bad back injury and that one of the reasons he would like this job was that the doctor advised him to walk a lot. In spite of the fact that this man stated that he had lost another job due to these back problems, he got the job. In this case, lacking athletic skills were compensated by other aesthetic skills: the managers found him very calm and sympathetic. This willingness to take in an effectively disabled person and employ him under ordinary conditions tells us that the pressure for cost containment in relation to illness may not be as heavy as what Huzell and Larsson saw in the Swedish private service industry and that athletic abilities were weighed against aesthetic factors.

Language has previously been treated indirectly in aesthetic labor research in the context of call center employees “sounding right.” Linguistic skills here are about speaking the Danish language so that people on the street will not misunderstand the explanations the attendant gives them.

Disqualifying issues could, for example, be too great an interest in the uniform and exercise of authority, which the assessment committee found to be a sign that the person would “think he was a cop.” But the committee also found that smaller aesthetic markers such as visible tattoos were expected to signal an inappropriate aggressive attitude. The following story gives us a better idea of the image that the managers were trying to move away from.

One applicant, experienced from work as a bartender, answered readily that he would tackle harassments calmly, but was given only one point by the



experienced manager, who said “he looked too much like what people expect a parking attendant to look like.” In an interview, the manager explained what he meant by this:

“People have this image of parking attendants, oh yes: they are lowlifes, they typically smoke 30-40 cigarettes a day and at least half of them have a drinking problem, or else, they don’t have a life at home and again, you know: if you can’t do anything else, well you can always become a parking attendant. And then, you know, there are some types who—I have been in this trade for a long time—when you look at them, you think: yes, this is exactly the stereotype who people would love to look at and say: hey yes! I just met one of those we were talking about at dinner yesterday. And of course, I—and my colleagues—we are very conscious about this ... well, he or she might be a nice person, but we have to look at the workplace as a whole and say: It won’t work, because we don’t have the time and resources to change this person ... we simply have to look at: how do we want to be viewed—and then employ according to that.”

As this story illustrates, the manager found this applicant to be representative of the image of the “worn-out and replaced” parking attendant from phase one of the collective story. Moreover, the manager explains that the aesthetic qualities cannot be built up after admittance to the job, because they do not have the time and resources for this.

What type of skills, then, will make one qualified for the job of parking attendant? Spiess and Waring argue that *firms may seek employees with a certain look that is not necessarily about beauty. For instance, some firms may seek out particular racial types or a look which is consistent with a social class that managers believe their customers will identify with* (Waring, 2011, p. 196). The vignettes above show exactly this: that aesthetics is not necessarily about beauty, but about “looking the part.” When the manager in phase two chooses not to accommodate the woman’s wish for a modified uniform, her underlying grounds for this are political, but she uses aesthetics as the legitimate explanation. Aesthetics here is about displaying uniformity in diversity, but the uniformity will disappear if an employee wears a skirt—or if the employee is not

willing to perform the aesthetic labor required for the job. The purpose of aesthetic labor here is political.

In the recruitment procedures in phase three, the ability to tackle encounters on the street is very central. But what does it take to be able to tackle street encounters? The matrix of skills here, besides demonstrating seriously wanting the job by being willing to work the evening shift, is a matrix of aesthetic skills, which this analysis suggests that we can divide into 1) *athletic skills*: being able to walk far, ride a bike, and skills that pertain to having a certain neat appearance, 2) *acting calm* and nonaggressive and perhaps more difficult: not looking like people's negative image of a parking attendant, 3) *avoiding stigma*: i.e., tattoos, and finally 4) *having good language skills*, so there is little risk of sending confusing signals in street encounters.

The observations showed that compromises could be accepted with regard to some of these qualities if other qualities were as the committee wanted them: compromises were accepted with regard to language and athletic ability, while compromises could not be accepted with regard to calm and nonaggressive appearance. The purpose of aesthetic labor here was cost containment, health and safety, and a professional image.

### Training

Newly hired parking attendants went through a three-week training course. The course was scheduled as a mix of lessons about the organization: personnel policies, the role as law enforcer, cooperation with other departments, introduction to the safety organization and employee representatives, and lessons in parking law. The organizational lessons were given by managers and people from the different departments in the center. In the parking law lessons, caseworkers from the complaints department took the new attendants systematically through the 32 points of Danish parking law. Every afternoon the new attendants went on the street together with their mentors, experienced attendants, whom they were to follow for the first three months of their employment. After three weeks, the new attendants took a written examination which tested their knowledge of parking law. Finally, on the last day, an external

psychologist gave a lesson in basic psychology and conflict resolution. The formal training before the examination did not contain references to appearance or aesthetics. The session focused on giving the officers a very basic psychological understanding of themselves and street encounters. The session focused primarily on empathy and understanding different psychological types and reactions. In the tools proposed to tackle people on the street, some aesthetic issues came up. It was emphasized that people usually react to the sight of a uniform and less to the sight of the person in the uniform. It was also emphasized that the attendants themselves were prejudiced against people based on their looks. Advice was given with regard to various ways of reacting and acting on the street: do not turn your back on anyone; people become more aggressive if you don't listen to them; if someone becomes aggressive, stand with your hands in front of your body and withdraw slowly.

The training first and foremost focused on the technical skills of parking patrol, but there was also a lot of emphasis on explaining to the employees the type of role they were in as enforcers of not only law but also policy. Some time was devoted to the gray zone of emotional and aesthetic skills, but these were not covered by the exam. Compared with the great importance attributed to aesthetics in the recruitment procedures and the balancing of aesthetics with diversity and health and safety on the same occasion, these themes were not very prominent in the training situation.

### **Everyday work and management: looking neat on the street**

The third and final area in which we should consider aesthetic labor is in relation to everyday work. In connection with my analysis of this everyday work, I first exemplify the managers' everyday attention to aesthetics and present a characterization of how managers and employees see the role of the uniform. Finally, I account for parking attendants' everyday aesthetic appearance on the street.

It was important for the managers to underscore that the parking attendants should look "neat" on an everyday basis. A practical example of this came up during a final interview with two managers only a few days after their physical

headquarters had moved to new premises, while a lot of equipment was still in boxes. During the interview, another manager came into the room to ask the interviewers, "Where is the mirror?" The two interviewees answered that they didn't know and laughed a bit and the manager who had interrupted said: "Well yes! So they can look at themselves before they go on the streets. They have to look neat on the street!" After the interview, a large mirror had been placed right beside the elevator. The parking attendants' opportunity to check their looks before they hit the streets had a high priority.

The center of attention in regard to the parking attendants' appearance at work is, not surprisingly, their uniform. The managing director explained how he, in the process of transforming the organization, had to explain to the employees how to wear a uniform. Recall that this manager decided to replace green uniforms with dark uniforms:

"In my opinion, the problem was not only that they were green. What was wrong was that, well for one thing the attendants had very low self-esteem. But that was *inside* the uniform. And then, the *design* of that uniform was wrong. They looked like they were on their way to go fishing, when they walked down the pavement, right? That was not very good when you were going out to exercise authority. It gave a totally wrong impression for those who sort of stood on the other side, and this was perhaps why some people became more aggressive or that they got aggressive at all, which they wouldn't have been if they had sort of got the right expectation from the beginning ...."

Quite in accordance with other studies (Craik, 2005), the uniforms had to be worn in a particular manner:

"I also sometimes had to set an example. Not because I, well..., I am not a uniform guy in that sense, but my opinion is that if you have chosen to wear a uniform, which you do when you are a parking attendant, well *uniform* of course means (laughing) that you look the same, and then you shouldn't drive around with different colors and with yellow t-shirts and red t-shirts and what not. There were still some who did that."

The managing director tells me how he handled two attendants who came to talk to him in his office one day: “I said: ‘Try having a look at yourselves, the two of you,’ and then I said, ‘How the hell do you think that people on the streets should guess that the two of you come from the same place?’”

The parking attendants typically find the uniform a central and attractive part of the job. Making sure that the equipment is up-to-standard and that the shoes are polished but also that the clothes are practical to wear, e.g., during the cold winter or the hot summer, is a common theme in talk about work among colleagues, and caring for the uniform takes some time, as is illustrated by one parking attendant who goes through his typical work day in an interview:

“... my work day actually started at home. Because this uniform was on a hanger, and it was creased so I had to iron it, and you can say: When you iron, you are already in action mentally and physically, so in that way I was preparing myself from 12 o’clock [90 minutes before the shift starts].”

Another officer says: “... I had no idea about parking rules, or about how the motorist reacts to parking attendants—I had no idea. But from the day I got the uniform I was absolutely excited! (Laughing.)” The same attendant shows me how the uniform serves as a working tool, providing status on the street as a way of communicating to the general public. Also internally, it joins the employees in a common identity and perhaps even fends off some internal conflicts, as she suggests when she contrasts this work with her previous work in fashion retail. In the job interview, she emphasized her background in the hospitality and retail industries as qualifications for the job and had a light-hearted, smiling appearance. When asked how she felt about having to wear a uniform, she said: that is so cool! In a later interview with this employee, she told me about how happy she was about moving from retail to parking patrol: She—an immigrant—had felt bullied by Danish female colleagues in the clothing retail store she used to work in. The Danish girls were very preoccupied with fashion and they did not like her way of dressing.

Turning to the parking attendants’ street appearances: On the street, the attendants walked calmly, never hurrying, while looking at windshields to check

parking tickets or licenses. While writing a fine, the parking attendants would typically act in a very firm manner. If the car was fined because it needed a ticket, the parking attendants' handheld computer did not print the ticket before a fixed number of minutes had passed, giving the car drivers the chance of getting to their car, but also providing the attendants with evidence that they, in accordance with the style of service they were intended to provide, were not too keen on fining people, but would give people a fair chance. While waiting the fixed number of minutes for the bill to be printed automatically, the attendants stood straight and visible beside the car. This impression management was carried out knowing that all eyes are watching on the street and that in case the car driver came and was upset, they would have given him or her the chance to have his or her say, signaling availability and a neat and tidy piece of work: measuring the distance from the car to the corner correctly, taking pictures, documenting the violated regulations. In the rougher areas of town, some attendants chose to walk through the street very visibly, perhaps chatting to a few people on their way, to make sure that potentially rough car drivers got notice before the attendant turned round and walked back down the street and began to write fines. This gave people the chance to signal or call each other to warn about the parking attendant's presence. Putting on this act of being very visible was both an act of showing the style of service and the image of the organization as not directly aiming at earning money and an act of self-protection. The parking attendant's appearance signaled: available and kind, but although many would meet personal acquaintances on the street, their role was also to keep a distance and not get personally involved with people. Asked about how the attendants handled unpleasant street encounters, one attendant explains how she controls her display of emotions:

"If you go over to a car driver, if you have just issued him a fine, you know he will be angry and unpleasant ... If you go to him with a smile on your face, he just looks at you and says, 'Why is she smiling, goddammit? She just charged me and she is smiling at me. I am angry and she is smiling at me?' But it helps, it really helps a lot .... I really mean it, I smile all the time. It doesn't matter if he says: 'you are a fucking parking attendant or fucking bastard'—I have heard stuff like that.

Yes, I just smile and say ‘thank you.’ I know you are angry, because you just got charged 500 kroner and that is a lot of money ... I just do my job, and of course I know that car drivers don’t look at me personally. They just look at the uniform and it is the uniform they hate. But I love my uniform, and I really like it. So I try to explain to them that I am just doing my job, but I do remember how it was when I was a car driver and got charged (laughing).”

Like Robyn Leidner’s McDonalds workers (Leidner, 1993), this attendant finds that the uniform shields her from physical attacks. Looking neat—and looking neat in a uniform—is about having an appearance that does not attract attention and therefore does not attract attention away from the uniform and the status of authority that the uniform provides. This raises the question of whether the diversity of the attendants sometimes compromised their safety. One of the reasons for using diversity management is described by the managers as the expectation that the organization will be more trustworthy if its image is that of representing the differences within the population—this is the organizational aesthetics. However, while they represent diversity at a collective level, as a pool of ambassadors for the municipality, the attendants usually walk one by one or two by two on the street, making the diversity of the corps invisible in the isolated encounter between the parking attendants and people on the street. Discriminatory harassment on the street was common and based on judgments from the parking attendant’s looks. Verbal assaults referred for instance to stereotypes related to race, religion, gender, and status judged on the basis of looks: “you fucking Muslim!” (to an attendant with dark skin), or “you fucking whore” (to a blonde female attendant), or “you just took that job because you weren’t able to get any other job” (the job is quite difficult to get).

## Discussion

Having evaluated the role of aesthetics in the recruitment, training, and service encounters in the vignettes above, we can now consider how the theory of aesthetic labor contributes to our understanding of work in a public sector organization and critically assess the consequences of aesthetic labor in this type of job. Finally, we can consider the implications and significance of this analysis for the theory of aesthetic labor.

As was to be expected, there is widespread use of aesthetic labor in this public sector organization. This study confirms other studies that show that employers primarily focus on aesthetic labor in the recruitment process, although some aesthetic training is given in the introduction course and small corrections are made along the way. The question is how it works in this “genre” of service: a public service/authority role, associated with a high risk of assaults, in an organization with an external image of being politically correct in terms of exercising justice, an internal image of prioritizing health and safety and cost containment, and both an external and internal image of diversity. The expectations were that the aesthetic resources differed from those seen in private service sector jobs, that aesthetic labor had other than commercial purposes, which contained ambivalence. Finally, the analysis was expected to show that the consequences in terms of discrimination differed from the discriminatory consequences seen in private service occupations given the large focus on diversity and equality in this organization.

The analysis showed that the aesthetic resources mobilized from employees in relation to the aesthetics of the organization were wearing the uniform correctly and “looking diverse in a way that should not attract negative attention.” Aesthetic resources mobilized in relation to the aesthetics in the organization were athletic skills, calmness, avoiding stigma, and Danish language skills. In relation to these public service workers, a different kind of aesthetics from the one described in previous aesthetic labor research is valued. While the managers in high-end retail industries described in aesthetic labor research that they would typically look for employees who matched their customers’ social class, the aesthetics of diversity applied here in this parking center has to meet the broad public. The employees here have to look neat, not classy. Their uniforms have to be clean and tidy, but as a corps they have to mirror different groups in society. The employees take pride from wearing and caring for these uniforms which work as a shield against assaults and “soften” the image of diversity.

In regard to the purposes of mobilizing these resources, there was indeed a great deal of ambivalence and ambiguity. However, the question is then for what other purposes this all-important argument is applied. As we saw, aesthetics was



applied by one manager to divert attention from some uncomfortable issues related to diversity. The manager's political ambition to on the one hand show that it is possible to work in this organization as a Muslim scarf-wearing woman conflicted with her political notions of gender equality. This situation and perceived dilemma arising from treating everyone differently while pursuing equality are well known in the Danish context, but what is new here is that in this case aesthetics—not looking the part, not blending in with the corps—is used as the final argument to explain to the woman why she cannot keep her job. Aesthetics is a legitimate cause in this organization for dismissing people, which is why the manager can use it despite the fact that a scarf-wearing Muslim woman in trousers—which the manager preferred—is indeed a very seldom sight, which might attract a lot of negative attention on the street.

What is interesting here, concerning aesthetics, is that it trumps all arguments because it is closely tied to health and safety, something which the employees have a very direct interest in, and the managers also have due to the large focus on absence due to illness and cost containment in the administration. There is broad consensus in the collective story of the organization, that aesthetic labor can fend off potential conflict on the street and thus be used to improve health and safety. “Looking neat on the street” means accommodating the citizen-consumer's taste. The more uncomfortable a citizen-consumer is about the looks and appearance of a parking attendant, the more likely the citizen-consumer is to attack the attendant verbally or physically. The strong relation between aesthetics and health and safety, however, also makes a very strong case for mobilizing aesthetics.

Returning to the model of corporeal labor proposed by Karlsson (2012), organizations with large focus on cost containment mobilize athletic skills and organizations with a large focus on “selling services” mobilize aesthetic skills. This study to some extent supports this model, because the managers are under pressure to reduce costs on sickness absence, and they do discuss it during the job interviews. However, this purpose is also ambiguous: One person was hired in spite of the fact that he openly spoke of his high risk of illness, but his other aesthetic skills weighed higher in the final assessment, taking focus from cost

retainment. While this exception to the rule may indeed only be an exception, this difference may also be explained by the differing labor market systems in Denmark and Sweden. In the Swedish context, employers cannot fire employees on sick leave, whereas this is easier in the Danish “flexicurity” model (Lund et al., 2009). Either way, the example draws attention to the process of weighing different types of athletic skills against each other and to how an individual’s aesthetic skills can be of a kind that impresses the managers so much that they dispense of other principles of cost containment.

## Conclusions

This paper applied the concept of aesthetic labor, which has been studied primarily in private retail and hospitality industries and only in commercial settings, to a new setting: the public service job of parking attendant in a Danish municipality. In the context of New Public Management, we expected that the frontline public worker’s aesthetic labor takes shape from the image of a citizen-consumer, but also from the contested and noncommercial purposes that characterize public organizations. In this case, the critical issue proved to be how to balance low-status authority work with the citizen-consumer’s desire to have pleasant service encounters.

Going through the three themes of recruiting for the job, training for the job, and doing the job, the analysis showed that the job as parking attendant requires a complex set of aesthetic skills, which balance authority with a pleasant and neat appearance. The study particularly contributes to the theory of aesthetic labor by showing the ambivalent purposes of aesthetic labor: The requirements for these aesthetic skills are perceived as legitimate by managers and employees, who relate them to health and safety and professional pride. However, and more critically, the strong consensus about the legitimacy of aesthetics in this organization opens up for using aesthetics for political purposes, in this case to further and/or restrain diversity.

The study supports recent suggestions to nuance the theory of aesthetic labor by showing that managers work with not only a matrix of technical, social, and

aesthetic skills but also a matrix of aesthetic skills consisting of many different aspects of appearance.

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## 7. 'Making Up' Workers in an Inclusive Organisation - Inclusion and diversity in Danish parking patrol

“Municipal Parking is a company whose mission is to secure a passable and (in terms of traffic) safe town to move around in. Alongside this work, there has been hard and targeted work to create a better image through a strong focus on employee well-being and diversity.

“I often highlight Municipal Parking as a good example of a workplace which has worked in a very targeted way to make the composition of employees mirror the town of which the company is also a part.” (The Mayor’s blog)

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*ABSTRACT*

**Purpose** – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the unintended consequences of managing inclusion and diversity and how these unintended consequences relate to organisation members’ mediation between work tasks and practices of inclusion and diversity.

**Design/methodology/approach** – The study uses critical diversity and inclusion studies as the theoretical context and a Danish municipal centre responsible for parking patrol as the empirical context. The researcher has conducted interviews and participant observation in this organisation and particularly analyses the “making up” of abstract categories of employees and the mundane “making of ” employees in the light of diversity and inclusion practices.

**Findings** – The analysis shows that parking attendants are ‘made up’ as an increasingly professionalised brand and that the inclusive policy of diversity becomes part of this brand. However, the study also shows that in spite of this external brand, local and internal practices of inclusion and diversity create categories of people that employees may avoid or resist and some that carry unfulfilled promises of inclusion. Moreover, an internal image of the parking attendant as a person on the edge of the labour market persists internally in spite of the effort to brand this person otherwise externally.

**Originality/value** – The paper applies the notion of “making up” people, to accommodate critique of the social constructionist approach, that is common to much critical research on diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, the paper agitates for “bringing work back in” to the study of diversity and inclusion and does this by focusing on the work of



parking attendants. Given that this work is formally unskilled, the organisation represents an example of a workplace that represents a gateway to the Danish labour market, which makes the management and organisation of inclusion very pertinent. The paper provides new perspectives, particularly in terms of the unintended consequences of inclusion in organisations.

*Keywords* - Diversity, Inclusion, Resistance, Work, Parking attendants, Unintended consequences

## **Introduction**

Recent studies of inclusion in work organisations point to critical issues related to organizational practices to promote diversity and inclusion. Researchers express concern about how managerial strategies to promote diversity and inclusion may in fact promote new types of differences and exclusions. What, for instance happens if an employee does not want to be identified and managed as a certain category of person, different from others in terms of i.e. ethnicity, gender or disability? Or what if managers have other, less noble aims than or besides the promotion of inclusion?

Concerned about such issues, critical diversity scholars call for more focus on power and context in studies of diversity and inclusion in organisations. First, they argue that agency and resistance among employees is largely unacknowledged in comparison to the power of managers (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). Second, material aspects of work and organization are often left out in discourse oriented studies of diversity (Boogaard & Roggeband, 2009; Zanoni & Janssens, 2007) and third, scholars highlight the importance of attending to the intersectionality of multiple identities in work organisations (Ashcraft, 2009; Holvino, 2008). To investigate these issues, several scholars call for close and detailed empirical studies of inclusion and diversity in local organizational settings (Ashcraft et al., 2012; Holvino & Kamp, 2009; Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). More in-depth organizational studies of work organisations, naturally means more attention to everyday work practices in line with for instance, Steve Barley and Gideon Kunda's call for bringing work back into organization studies (Barley & Kunda, 2001). In spite of the renewed focus on the material and structural

foundations of organisations in inclusion research, the actual work tasks have received little attention. This lack is acknowledged by diversity scholars (Zanoni et al., 2010), but still needs elaboration.

This paper contributes to knowledge of unintended consequences (Czarniawska, 2002) of the management of diversity and inclusion by drawing on critical diversity and inclusion studies and proposing the vocabulary of the 'making up' (Hacking, 2006) and the 'making of' (Maanen, 1972) employees in studies of workplace inclusion. The use of this is demonstrated in the empirical context of a Danish workplace: a municipal centre responsible for parking patrol. The front-line work here as a parking attendant is formally unskilled and the work environment is characterized by high psycho-social pressure. Diversity, understood primarily as employing people of different gender, age and ethnic origin and inclusion, understood as being socially responsible towards employees, are declared goals for management in this organisation. To mention one aspect of diversity: 30 different nationalities were employed in the centre in 2012. This paper focuses on how the management of workplace-inclusion and diversity relates to the particular work-tasks and requirements.

The paper first provides the analytical framework. Second, the paper presents the methodology of the study. Third, the paper analyses the historical 'making up' of the parking attendant in the light of inclusion and diversity. Fourth, the paper analyses how employees' avoid categories that are 'made up' for them, in the 'making of' employees, whereby unintended consequences of the managerial strategies occur.

#### *Critical analysis of the management of inclusion and diversity*

This section frames this paper's empirical analysis by discussing critical theories of inclusion and diversity in relation to the unintended consequences of diversity and inclusive management practices and how these theories approach work tasks.

Critical studies emphasise the role of discourse: the socially constructed character of difference and the types of in- or exclusions that rely on these constructions. For instance, some point to the prescriptive managerial literature's

focus on the business case for diversity, which emphasizes the innovative potential of diversity by holding that difference is an individual merit, but thereby also downplays systematic inequalities and exclusions (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004). Thus, the business case for diversity hides power issues (D. R. Litvin, 1997), while the relation between increased performance and diversity has yet to be proved (Holvino & Kamp, 2009). Moreover, the academic literature on diversity, whether it works to assess the business case for diversity or to assess power inequalities, typically regards diversity as “a universal and objective fact that can be described, measured and used” (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004, p. 57). Critical towards this way of approaching diversity, some studies document diversity management’s active role in constructing difference through critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2010) of interviews with diversity managers (Zanoni & Janssens, 2004), diversity consultants (Deborah R. Litvin, 2002) and the prescriptive diversity literature (Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004). The latter study also provides an analysis of a municipal context that resembles the one accounted for in this paper. Kamp and Hagedorn-Rasmussen’s study showed that in spite of the municipal policy of diversity and equality, the local interpretations of diversity management were coupled to social responsibility in a way that placed ethnically “diverse” employees in a position of lower status and less power than were enjoyed by other organization members (Kamp & Hagedorn-Rasmussen, 2004, p. 547).

Thus far, we have seen how critical scholars have established consensus about the socially constructed character of diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, we have seen that attempts to combat inequalities related to diversity may contribute to construct difference and thus, potentially new lines of exclusion.

*Resistance, intersectionality, materiality*

Critical scholars call for more in-depth organizational studies to address some shortcomings of the discursive focus. First, discourse analysis has had a strong focus on managerial control and has evidenced little recognition of the “diverse” and “included” employees’ agency and resistance. Second, there is growing attention to the intersection of different types of identities (Crenshaw, 1995; Holvino, 2008). Third, the material aspects of organisations have, due to the

strong focus on social constructions and discourse, along with attention to the particular work context, been placed in the background until recently.

Two Dutch studies have responded to some of these issues in contexts that resemble the type of organisation analysed in this paper: Zanoni and Janssens's (2005) study of diversity management in service companies approaches the intersection of service work and diversity management. Janssens and Zanoni take up the idea in service-work studies, promoted by Paul Du Gay (1996), that worker identities are developed in relation to the expected customer. Their analysis showed that:

"diversity is understood in relation to the way particular socio-demographic differences affect the organization of service delivery, and are therefore likely to contribute to or hamper the attainment of organizational goals" (Janssens & Zanoni, 2005, p.327).

Referring to Ian Hacking (Hacking, 1986), Du Gay calls this the 'making up' of workers (Du Gay, 1996, pp. 54-55). By coupling diversity and work identities in the 'making up' of employees, Janssens and Zanoni contribute to bringing work in to inclusion and diversity studies. They find, that where employees work in close proximity to customers, diversity management attempts to provide a customized response to differences among the group of customers, while where employees have little direct customer contact, management tailors services more to professional standards, leaving customer contact less of a justification for diversity. Zanoni and Janssens also investigate the exercise of control and resistance (Zanoni & Janssens, 2007). Importantly, they find that managerial control is not only discursive, but also material. (*ibid.*, 2007, p. 1393).

In another study, Boogard and Roggeband (2009) investigate intersectionality of socio-demographic identities in the Dutch police force. Boogard and Roggeband show, that this organization has structured diversity management as a business case issue. However, breaking with other critical interpretations of the business-case for diversity, they find that the business case provides power to some minorities because their diverse traits provide skills, i.e. language and culture that their co-employees do not possess.

Thus, we have learned from these critical studies, that managers' deliberate efforts to create inclusive organisations contribute to the construction of difference and the demarcation of lines of in- and exclusion. These constructions are actively used by the employees themselves, perhaps in order to resist managerial control or perhaps for other reasons, and in- and exclusions are closely related to work practices and organizational goals. Following Boogard and Roggeband, diversity management may represent an opportunity for some groups and following Zanoni and Janssens, 'the expected customer' has a decisive role in the staging of diversity in a particular organisation. We do not, however know what to expect in terms of the unintended consequences of the links between work and inclusive practices.

Hacking's theory of the continuous invention of new categories of people: the 'making up' of people refers to the abstract and collective categorizing of different types of people according to their social attributes. The development of social statistics is central to this development (Hacking, 1999a). In work organisations, the management of diversity and inclusion involves the increasing use of statistics to monitor these issues and Hacking's writing has been drawn into diversity studies by Gastelaars (2002), who critically points to positive action as a way of 'making up' people. HR and diversity policies that count the number of e.g. different nationalities or gender may, following this theory, contribute to the 'making up' of categories of workers. The term 'making up' also refers to the tendency for people to identify with these categories (Hacking, 1986, 2006). Importantly, people are knowledgeable of, and active in relation to their categories. Hacking uses the term 'moving targets' to describe the tendency for people to move from the categories they have been assigned. In this perspective, the targets are not necessarily conscious of the fact that they are exercising resistance. People change and cannot always fit into the images and categories that social scientists or organisations provide for them.

Besides abstract categories, the development of identities also happens at the everyday practical level of work and training. This has, for instance been shown in the participant observation of the 'making of' policemen in the work of John Van Maanen, where he illustrates how policemen are trained in one way, and learn

other rules of the game from their co-employees on-the-job. Hackings abstract ‘making up’ can be complemented by the mundane ‘making of’ workers (Maanen, 1972), to see specific contexts contribute to the formation of persons, who are at one and the same time employees conducting a particular job and members of an organisation with a particular approach to diversity and inclusion. Thus, an important assumption in the following analysis is that work practices and inclusive practices intersect in the ‘making up’ and ‘-of’ employees. The question is rather how they intersect and what the consequences of the particular intersections of inclusion/diversity and – in this case - parking patrol work are.

### Methodology

The analysis rests on interviews and participant observation in a municipal centre responsible for parking patrol, which has actively worked with diversity management for the past 10 years.

The fieldwork took a “bottom-up” approach (Goffman, 2002), starting with shadowing (Czarniawska, 2007) front-line employees: parking attendants during workdays while interviewing them on-the-job. After some days of shadowing, the researcher began to conduct semi-structured interviews with the direct managers of the parking attendants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Next, the researcher conducted participant observation at three days of job interviews and in an introduction course with newly hired parking attendants. The total empirical material consists of field notes from shadowings of 17 parking attendants and transcripts of 15 interviews with five managers, a health and safety consultant and seven employees. Table 1 provides an overview of these informants.

**Table 1 Shadowings and Interviews**

	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Age group</b>	<b>Function (s)</b>
<b>Shadowing</b>	Male	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant, safety representative
	Female	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant

	Female	Rumanian	50-60	Parking attendant
	Male	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant
	Male	Turkish	30-40	Parking attendant
	Male	Danish	60+	Parking attendant
	Male	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant, safety representative
	Female	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant
	Female	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant
	Male	Danish	40-50	Parking attendant
	Male	Cameroon	40-50	Parking attendant
	Female	Turkish	40-50	Parking attendant
	Female	Lebanese	40-50	Parking attendant
	Male	Lebanese	40-50	Parking attendant
	Female	Vietnamese	40-50	Parking attendant
	Female	Danish	20-30	Parking attendant
	Female	Swedish	20-30	Parking attendant
<b>Interviews</b>	Female	Danish	50-60	Secretary
	Male	Danish	40-50	Parking attendant
	Female	Polish	20-30	Parking attendant
	Male	Palestinian	20-30	Parking attendant
	Male	Danish	50-60	Parking attendant, shop steward
	Male	Danish	40-50	Academic member of secretariat
	Female	Danish	50-60	Health and safety consultant
	Female	Danish	50-60	Manager of technicians
	Male	Danish	40-50	Manager of parking attendants
	Male	Danish	40-50	Manager of parking attendants
	Male	Danish	40-50	Manager of parking attendants
	Male	Danish	50-60	Centre Manager

Interviews with managers were typically longer (45 minutes to 1 ½ hour) than interviews with employees (15 minutes to 45 minutes). Other material included HR policy documents, consultancy reports and newspaper articles. A systematic analysis of the connections between work practices and inclusive policies was carried out using the qualitative data processing programme, Nvivo. First by coding places in interviews with managers and official documents, where parking attendants were described either broadly as a group of employees or more specifically in terms of particular ‘types’ of employees, thereby identifying how diversity/inclusion and work identities intersected. The researcher coded places in interviews and field notes, where managers described employees who acted differently than they would have expected, or where employees described their personal strategies to either avoid or comply with categorisations. The analysis maintained an open approach to the content of diversity and inclusion, leaving the content up to the respondents. Thus, the analysis includes examples related to many diverse attributes, while keeping focus on these issues in relation to the ‘making up’ and – ‘of’ the parking attendant as an employee and the unintended consequences of these efforts.

### **‘Making Up’ the parking attendant**

This first part of the analysis attends to the invention and development of the parking attendant alongside management policies of inclusion and diversity. The job of parking attendant in this municipality was created in 1992 and has continuously had very low-status in Danish society (Ugebrevet A4 & YOUNGOV, 2012), although the job has undergone a ‘professionalization’ and a branding process (Ashcraft et al., 2012). For the first ten years, the corps of about 100 parking attendants consisted primarily of ethnic Danes, of whom many were close to retirement age and transferred from other municipal jobs, which gave the centre a reputation for being a de facto retention project for worn-out elderly bus drivers. According to employees and managers who remember this era, there was practically no management and no measures taken to help employees cope with the physical and psychological strain on the job. This section outlines two periods in the history of diversity management in the organisation: Phase I: 2002-2008 and Phase II: from 2008 and at least until 2012.



The phases were identified by the researcher according to management's changing approaches to the professional role of the parking attendants.

Phase I began, when a new Centre manager was hired to improve the organisation on the grounds of an external consultancy report. The consultants described the employees in the centre as "lacking proper care". That they needed care was grounded in the lack of managerial attention coupled with some 'typical traits' of the attendants. An internal consultancy report from 2002 put it like this:

"...many attendants have what one may call 'strain in private life' with large or small crises; problems with the children, with finances, illness in the family, divorces, abuse, etc. This condition may also have had an influence on the high absence rate."

From 2002 onward, the parking attendants were 'made up' in two ways: with an aesthetic appearance as 'authoritative', first and foremost by a change of uniforms from green uniforms signalling environmental friendliness to dark blue uniforms resembling police uniforms (Dahl, 2013). The other part of the branding process concerned the introduction of diversity. The municipality's policy was that the ethnic composition of municipal employees should mirror the composition of the municipal citizens. The new Centre Manager decided to bring this about by means of an affirmative action programme and management soon included other aspects of diversity. Hereby, the parking attendants were 'made up' not only as 'authoritative', but also as 'diverse'. This strategy was used externally, to brand the organisation towards the general public, as in this interview with one of the managers in an HR-magazine:

"Diversity has become the strength of this Centre. By creating space for the inclusion of everyone – irrespective of skin-colour, gender, religion, sexuality or disability, a workplace where respect for each other's difference creates a feeling of safety and work satisfaction. This spills-over to the quality delivered to the citizens of the town." (Interview with manager in HR magazine)

Not only the quality of services improves by this centre's diversity management, but potentially according to the manager, society as such:

“When you have the chance to work together with so many different co-workers, whose cognition, actions, look and abilities are mixed and diverse, we experience that by getting to know each other as humans, we become confident with each other’s differences. This confidence, we carry with us in our professional everyday work, in our home and in our leisure activities and we discover that we recognize a lot of different people, because they look like our co-workers. It helps us feel comfortable. This is why we have accomplished to move the limits of what is ‘normal’. And we continuously strive to widen the notion.” (Interview with manager in HR magazine).

Internally, the municipal HR department encouraged diversity, but the managers’ performance was particularly measured on the rate of absence due to illness among employees. Illness prevention was socially responsible, but also a way of lowering expenses. Management initiated programmes to improve the parking attendants’ self-esteem and thereby their ability to cope with harassment in street encounters and began a systematic account of and follow-up on the assaults. A systematic account could contribute to making the employees ‘manageable’: employees were here ‘made up’ according to their track record of assaults and sickness absence. ‘Care’ for the employees was effectuated through a strong focus on retention.

Phase II began in 2008, when the centre was reorganised in accordance with a new organisational matrix in the municipal administration. Previously, work and daily patrol-routes were planned by superintendents, but now, planning was to happen within teams of parking attendants.

In this phase, the parking attendant is ‘made up’ more according to the development of the organisational goals of high quality parking services. Diversity here is less along the lines of the typical socio-demographic categories and more according to the business case understandings of diversity. At the practical level of organizing work, one manager describes how this makes organising flexible:

“...we have no problems covering [the shifts] Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve, for instance, so in that way it becomes a flexible place to work, because it is a diverse workplace. Some don’t celebrate Christmas or New Year’s Eve.”

However, the managers are more sceptical towards the promises of diversity and inclusion:

“... there are a lot of downsides to it, right. In my experience, we have nearly become too diverse, in terms of culture, etc. It is fine that you can meet different cultures among attendants in the street... but in terms of managing, well the communication with these employees is incredibly difficult.” (Interview with manager)

“...diversity can be an advantage, but it is also a challenge. Because when we exercise authority, if we for instance talk about language diversity, which can be caused by a disability, or by ethnic background, when you do authority work, then it is one of the things the citizen can pick on right away, if they disagree with something.” (Interview with manager)

In phase I, attendants had little responsibility for organizing their own daily work. Internally, management sought to ‘make them up’ as included and tolerant employees. In phase II, new organizational goals initiated an internal process of ‘making up’ the attendants as more flexible (they had to be willing to patrol alone), efficient (management initiated a survey of the quality of each attendant’s work) and able to plan and manage their own patrol work in cooperation with colleagues. In phase I, the manager expected diversity and inclusion to provide confidence and tolerance. In phase II, managers had less confidence in diversity and inclusion. And were more preoccupied with the obstacles diversity and inclusion might be to the improved quality of services and to bring down the rate of sickness absence. Still, the image of the parking attendant as someone who needs ‘caring’ persists. One manager says about recruitment and sickness absence:

“Our goal is still the same as the municipality’s goal: 15 days of absence [per employee per year]. We are not more ambitious than that, because I think regarding the function of the job: there will be more illness. Both when we look at the hours they work, and in regard to the type of people we employ. Well you can say we are a bit more critical now... in our recruitment... it is a sort of light duty here. Many of our employees have been discharged from other places due

to work injuries or the back, knee, arms, legs, all sorts of things. We suffer from that today — they have to go in for surgery, then this, then that.”

Thus, in spite of the eager external branding of the parking attendants, they are still internally ‘made up’ as weak people in a light duty, and the manager sees a more critical recruitment as a way to improve the organisation.

#### *Moving targets of diversity and inclusion*

The remaining part of this analysis shows how categories may have material consequences for employees, but are also avoided, resisted and changed.

Looking back at phase I, managers and employees describe their experiences of problems related to diversity: gay people tended to group and keep for themselves; religious issues were problematic when for instance some, due to their religion, were not willing to patrol together with a colleague of the opposite sex; staff evidenced racist attitudes; and there were difficulties related to poor language skills. As opposed to Boogard and Roggeband’s (2009) study, which showed how employees could make use of their diverse traits as skills, managers and employees often accounted for language or culture as problematic. For instance, speaking other languages than Danish in street encounters with people of the same ethnic origin could create tensions if co-workers did not understand the language. The manager who “strived to widen the notion of normalcy” also met some limits. The manager tells about hiring a transvestite in a subsidized job in the technical department:

“The jobcentre asked if we could take her in for a work trial. We said: ‘there is nothing we can’t do!’ ... [but] it was too big a challenge. After she had been here half a year, the shop steward came and said, ‘I have to tell you, it doesn’t work’. We had her with us on the street, but you know, big breasts and pearl necklaces and a wig. There were too many comments [from people on the street] ....’ So I said to her: ‘I simply have a problem letting you out on the street because we attract too much attention ... and I can’t guarantee safety — neither for you nor your colleague.’”

The manager concludes:

“But we gave her half a year in the labour market, where we did what we could to find out what the obstacles were for her to stay here ... but at the same time, I felt: ‘Damn it, it didn’t work!’ ... after a while, you want to be challenged by the ultimate, right? But, I have to say, that was a defeat.” (Interview with manager)

Due to the exposed character of the job, the transvestite becomes a threat to the safety of herself and her colleagues: the integration of this employee clashes with the organizational ambitions to prevent work injury. She cannot represent the diversity brand of the organization in a way that aligns with the work task and prevention efforts, and thus, she has to go.

Another example presents itself when the same manager hired a Muslim woman with a scarf. The Muslim woman asked to be allowed a uniform with a long skirt instead of trousers. Not being able to obtain such an item from the uniform supplier, but also with the ambition of promoting gender equality, the manager declines this request and the employee is forced resign. In spite of the manager’s expectations with regard to her own power as a ‘societal integrator’, the target moves away from the alignments that the manager expects her to make to be included in the organization (see also Dahl, 2013).

As described above, in phase I, the manager who implemented positive action described herself as quite powerful in terms of including people, and thus of integrating society as such:

“They ask me, what is the future for me? And I say: your future is not to be a parking attendant forever. The future is, that when you come here, with another ethnic background, you have the possibility within a year or two to document that you are able to keep a job, to perform a job, you pay your taxes — because they want permanent residence or citizenship ... but then I hope you will go looking for another job, because most of them are way too qualified for the job as parking attendant ... you can also get a recommendation from here, but most importantly: you get an understanding of what Danish work-life is about.” (Interview with manager)

The manager is aware of the fact that she is hiring overqualified people for the job, but nevertheless finds the job adequate for people 'with another ethnic background'. She also acknowledges that this is a job with little promise of promotion and improved material conditions for the employees.

Although managers in phase II aim to be stricter in their recruitment of people who are fit for the job, they, during the researcher's observation of job interviews, decide to hire a man who explains that he suffers from a back injury. Unfortunately, when the researcher returned to the organisation about 1 year after, this employee was fired. A manager explains:

"In reality it was all about him being in the wrong place in his effort to get a job. So, he hasn't just changed reality in relation to us, but also to himself. He came into a job that he didn't mentally fit – and then we are quite limited in what we can do for people." (Interview with managers)

The systematic monitoring of assaults resulted in the 'making up' of "repeaters": parking attendants who experience harassment more often than others. The story goes that this is because these particular parking attendants are not good at tackling harassment calmly. As the work environment consultant says:

"We have had some, who have repeatedly been assaulted, and usually there are reasons for this. It is because they have ... some psychological problems from many years back, which come up when they are angry or afraid, when they meet an angry car-driver. We simply hire some external psychologists for them, so they get a proper debriefing. They get built up again, so that they can face the job. And it has actually helped. We use that a lot."

However, a parking attendant accounts for her experience with two assaults in a street which is renowned as a tough area to patrol in. After reporting two assaults, the parking attendant felt uncomfortable by the focus on her psychological condition from the managers. Learning, during the making of parking attendants that takes place at lunch or on the street, that a Chinese colleague had experienced several assaults without reporting them, because he

was afraid that management would say that his poor Danish language skills were the reason for the assaults, the parking attendant chose the following strategy:

“I used to be one of those who reported everything. I am not scared of the assaults, but of the management, that my name comes up again. I don’t want to register cars without number plates [which means extra contact with the managers] and I don’t want to be a mentor for new attendants... I just don’t report any assaults ... I am afraid of losing my job.” (Shadowing of parking attendant)

Having been targeted by the managerial attempts to care for her, she wants to avoid being categorized as a “repeater”, and thereby as a weak employee in need of care, while still being materially dependent on the job. Meanwhile, the stronger focus on sickness absence is not easy to comprehend for the employees. As one parking attendant says:

“I have fought hard to get a job in Denmark, so it is very important. Once, after five [short] periods of illness, I was called to a meeting with my superintendent — it was a fine meeting, but it was only then that I became aware that it was better to be ill for 14 days in a row than to be ill five times. Before this, I went to work without being quite recovered although my wife told me to stay home because I was still ill. Now I would rather use my day off being ill because it is so important for me to keep my job.” (Shadowing of parking attendant)

As we see from this example, the ability to manage sickness absence according to written and unwritten rules on the one becomes part of the making of the parking attendant. However, we also see, that this practice of avoiding to be categorized as someone who is often ill by spending holidays is to the benefit of the manager who improves his score on the sickness absence performance measure.

Finally, the intersections between the stigma of doing a low status job and diversity-traits are important. As we have seen above, managers mention the risk that diversity represents for health and safety. Indeed, attendants did report of harassments on the basis of i.e. ethnicity. The attendants also had to deal with

the stigma of the job privately. One attendant of Lebanese background explained to the researcher that his friends would ask him how he could stand being a parking attendant, and that he used to answer them: “You want integration, don’t you? This job is all about integration: everyone hates the parking attendant!”(Shadowing of parking attendant).

## Conclusions

How has this analysis increased our knowledge of the unintended consequences of managing inclusion and diversity? And how do these unintended consequences relate to organisation members’ mediation between work tasks and diversity/inclusive practices?

The analysis showed how management first embraced diversity management and then after a while became more cautious. This cautiousness was related to new work requirements for the employees. We have seen several examples of managers’ material control through diversity, but we have also seen workers who with or without purpose resist categorisations related to inclusion and diversity, that are ‘made up’ for them. The unintended consequences of managing inclusion and diversity were for instance: managers fostered inclusion by hiring a person with a back injury, but for other reasons than his back injury he turned out not to be able to do the job; managers were socially responsible by providing psychological counselling to a worker, but the worker reacts by seeing this as an early warning of firing and finally, managers worked to be a diverse organisation by hiring a transvestite, but the co-employees found this a threat to health and safety. Most of the examples of unintended consequences and worker’s resistance of categorisations in this paper’s analysis turn out to be more to the workers’ disadvantage than to the managers’. Thus, the implications of this paper’s analysis is to point to the need to analyse carefully individual employee’s resistance to what managers may think of as their good intentions. To research, the analysis provides a jumping-off-ground for analysis of the “making up” and “making of” workers in other “inclusive organisations”. It also implies a need to be aware that once an organisation has decided to be inclusive/diverse, this strategy is continuously tried and measured against the requirements for the job and not least the requirements for managers’ performance.



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## 8. Conclusions

Having now presented empirical examples and theoretical analysis from the development of a new sort of worker in the public sector: the parking attendant, it is time to revisit the overall purpose of the study:

**How do changing management strategies in the public sector affect the “making up” of public parking attendants?**

In order to answer this question, I conducted a qualitative study in a Danish municipal center responsible for parking attendance. Within this organization I undertook a case study of the social situation in which the parking attendant developed as a new sort of worker. In the course of this case study, I reflected upon different aspects of the relation between management strategies and worker identities. Doing this, I “carved out” three particular points of attention, and the case developed into a case of “dirty work”, a case of “aesthetic labor”, and a case of “inclusive management strategies”. The task of this conclusion is to tie these different perspectives on the “making up” of public parking attendants together in a way that shows how the study – in the words of Robert Stake – has added to experience and improved understanding (Stake, 2000 (1978), p. 24). More particularly, the “experience” and “understanding” to which the dissertation aimed to contribute to are those associated with the “sociology of personhood”:

*...to see how particular categories of person have been formed or ‘made up’ in specific contexts at a particular time and through certain practical means (Du Gay, 2007, p. 25).*

In the following, I review observations from each chapter in the dissertation before I turn to focus on the contributions provided by this particular analysis of the “making up” of parking attendants. I seek to show how this study has expanded the way we can think about the public sector worker through the case of the parking attendant. Through the study, I have argued along with Ian Hacking and Paul du Gay for the need to pay attention to how people interact with the ways in which they are categorized. As mentioned in chapter 3, the

qualitative case study following Robert Stake (2000(1978)) proliferates rather than narrows and one is left with more to pay attention to “more rather than less”. This is also the case in this study, where what particularly stands out is a number of ambivalences and ambiguities, which I shall attend to here. There are, however also some ‘lumps’ of analysis, which can pull together some of the strings and provide some closure to these ambivalences and ambiguities. Thus, I pull together the different sorts of ‘loops’ and resistances that have appeared in the study. Finally, the chapter considers directions for future research.

### 8.1 The Study

The first chapter of this dissertation argued for the importance of studying the construction of identities in formally unskilled work in the public sector. There has been little study of low- and unskilled work in the public sector and particularly little of the construction of identity in such jobs. The professional work of doctors, nurses, and social workers in the public sector context has often been studied in relation to a concern that these professional occupations have lost authority in the course of the development of the public sector and expectations of the public sector from the public at large. But the consequences of developments in the public sector for occupations that do not rely on formal skills has received little attention. In order to comprehend the relation between changing management strategies and the construction of worker identities, I draw upon the theory of “making up” people initially formulated by Ian Hacking and drawn into the realm of service work studies by Paul du Gay.

Chapter 2 proposed the framework of “making up” people as a relevant framework for studying the relation between changing management strategies in the public sector and the development of worker identities. The immediate advantages of applying this theory lie in its recognition of organizational structures’ contribution to the formation of worker identities combined with the theory’s attention to the fact that in spite of management’s urge to create particular sorts of worker-subjects, the worker-subjects may react to these subjectifications, act upon them, contribute to them and perhaps make moves away from them.

As we move closer to the particular context of worker identities in the public sector, we can note that other theories have analyzed aspects of work, which are relevant to the particular work of parking attendants. Therefore, while regarding the “making up” of workers as the main frame of reference, I propose to bring in theory related to dirty work, aesthetic labor, and inclusion and diversity.

Chapter 3 accounted for the study’s methodology. In this chapter, I showed how the case study developed – and described some of the anxieties related to adjusting research to what actually goes on in the case. I showed the analytical as well as practical choices I made while I planned and conducted the research. By mixing interviews, shadowings, participant observations, and the collection of a range of different material I obtained material describing formal and informal managerial strategies and how workers responded to these strategies and shaped their identities in their everyday work. It was important not to lock the study into a single, direct relation between manager and employee, and it was important to discover what actually happened during the work day, given that people do not only come to work in order to be managed / be part of the organization, but also to undertake particular work tasks. The chapter also described how I found the most relevant and important coupling of theory and empirical material through a reflexive process of analyzing empirical material by identifying “puzzles” in the material and testing different theories’ explanatory value. The chapter showed how some of the methodological puzzles that arose along the way provided insights into the organization, for instance in relation to the openness I generally encountered there – the easy access, which was related to the managerial strategy to be an open organization. How should I interpret this openness? Should I be suspicious of what I was told on the grounds that it was all part of a branding activity? Or when I indirectly contributed to the management’s decision not to hire a person because he did not want to shake hands with me (a woman).

Chapter 4, “Changing management strategies in Municipal Parking” described the development of the managerial strategies in this organization. Thus, the chapter showed the top-down initiatives to develop parking attendants as a certain sort of worker.

I described this as a development in three phases. The first phase (“phase 0”) ran from the establishment or invention of the public parking attendants in 1992 until 2002. During this period, management was weak, and the alignment of workers and management to a common goal was – at least in retrospect – depicted by workers, managers, and consultants as non-existent. In 2002, there was a managerial change. In relation to this, the front-line workers in the organization, and particularly the parking attendants, were framed as the central point of attention in the organization – those to which the other parts of the organization were catering, due to the fact that they were the ones who met the customers and created the revenue. In this process, the parking attendant’s self became the very concrete object of management, and new aspects of the workers in question became the objects of statistical monitoring. Locally, the parking attendants’ assault rates were systematically monitored, the HR policy of the administration mandated that the organization began to monitor the composition of the workers in terms of their ethnicities, and there was a very strong focus on monitoring sickness absence. A new Head of Center used a wide range of strategies to improve the center’s performance on economy, image, and sickness absence: storytelling, the Self-esteem Replaces Absence project, the introduction of a new uniform, value-based management, and diversity management. The last phase included in this study, “phase 2”, was characterized by another major restructuring and new management initiatives. The organization went from a three-level structure to a two-level structure, introducing new shop floor managers, who were not themselves working as parking attendants, and thereby shifting responsibility away from a few parking attendants with special duties in order to disperse the duties and responsibilities in question among the parking attendants. This chapter revealed a decentralized public organization which responded to policies and managerial strategies from the above administration and policy, for instance the introduction of new ways of measuring performance and adaptations to societal developments such as a new focus on sickness absence and the promotion of diversity management. Following this initial empirical outline of how the “making up” of the parking attendant responded to new managerial strategies, the remaining three



chapters, in article format, have gone into depth with the analysis of this “making up” in the light of dirty work theory, aesthetic labor, and inclusion and diversity.

Chapter 5 contained the article “Dirty Work and Management in the Public Sector: How parking attendants and their managers interact with stigma”, in which I use the theory of dirty work to display some of the ambivalences and problems of the work as a parking attendant and also to show how employees and managers interact with the “labelling” of them as a stigmatized occupation and organization. This article provides examples of parking attendants’ work on the street and meetings with citizens, and how they relate to their work in their private lives, but also about how the taint involved in the job interrelates with new management strategies, for instance, when Municipal Parking’s performance is measured against other municipal departments and scores very low on citizen satisfaction. We also see the ‘loops’ made by attendants, who ‘tease’ their managers by complaining to the newspaper about the immoral tasks they find that they are asked to undertake.

Chapter 6 takes up the notion of “aesthetic labor”. The theory of aesthetic labor has been applied in relation to several service jobs in the private sector. At the outset, the article argues that the theory is relevant to the public sector given the increased focus, due in part to the influence of New Public Management, on the public sector as a provider of services and the citizen as a consumer of public services. The article shows how managers use aesthetics as a way to improve the image of the organization, which also has the effect of bringing down assault rates. But the article also shows that this coupling of aesthetic labor to health and safety means that aesthetics can be used as an argument to exclude people from the organization. By focusing on aesthetic labor in the public sector in contrast to previous studies of the subject, which have all been undertaken in the private sector, the article shows the potential of studying aesthetics in other public service occupations (see, for example, a study of university librarians (Wieser, 2014)).

In the description of the case in Chapter 4, I showed that Municipal Parking was expected to perform as an inclusive and diverse organization in terms of gender,

age, and ethnicity and that there were significant developments in this regard, according to the statistics. Adding to these measures of the composition of the workers, there are (at least) two other important measures, namely the monitoring of sickness absence and comparison of such absence to that experienced by other departments in the municipality, and the monitoring of assaults on parking attendants. These statistics – applying Hacking’s analysis of the “making up” of people through statistics – may become an important part of managerial strategies to “make up” workers in the organization. This is what the article in Chapter 7 attends to. Showing how employees try to avoid categories that are “made up” as managerial strategies to promote inclusion, I also show that employees may find that by subjecting themselves to such categories, they find that they put themselves at risk of being fired. The contribution of this analysis of the “making up” of workers in inclusive organizations is its ability to point to how managerial strategies to promote diversity and inclusion may establish new types of differences and exclusion. The fact that management efforts to be inclusive and diverse may have unintended, negative outcomes for the employees is quite to be expected – few managers would expect that any managerial strategy can be implemented perfectly. However, the fact that employees may be able to spot these “unintended consequences” as potentially excluding mechanisms and may attempt to resist them is probably the most important part of this analysis.

### **8.3 Ambivalences, Ambiguities, Dilemmas**

The identification of ambivalences, ambiguities and dilemmas is not only common to case studies as such, but is somehow also common to studies of work in the public sector. The work of the street-level bureaucrat described by Michael Lipsky (1983) is full of ‘dilemmas’, and likewise researches attending to citizens and workers in the age of New Public Management point to conflicts, ambivalences, and ambiguities (Hoggett 2006, Newman & Clarke 2009). Apparently, the public service worker’s existence as a certain sort of worker involves instabilities and conflicts. On the other hand, we must pay attention to the *interests* behind these instabilities and conflicts and to how new alliances –

new stable relations - between particular attributes of the public service worker come about.

In the case of parking attendants, it has been evident in this study, that the public's perception of the job as tainted and low-status plays a central role in the creation of worker identities. Moreover the actual physical and psychological hazards of walking the streets are also central to the understanding that workers and their managers have of the parking attendants. Managers and workers in differing ways attempt to reconcile these negative attributes of the job with a positive image of the worker. Managers with the interest of 'delivering' and keeping down assault rates and rates of absence due to illness. Employees to remain included in a steady job and avoid assaults.

The ambivalences that show in the study, are often tied to the different uses, combinations, and interpretations of the many different management strategies that are available in the organization. We have, for instance, seen that a very stigmatized sort of work which involves the execution of authority and de facto punishing people has been placed with a group of workers whose members in many cases already face some sort of stigma and/or have little formal training. Dealing with "stigma" is ambivalent when workers and managers on the one hand meet people outside the organization – friends, families and the public – who find their job immoral, but then again also work to generate positive images of the job. On top of this stigma, management strategically introduces diversity management with the expectation that if the composition of the corps of parking attendants mirrors the composition of the public in general, then the unpopular task that they undertake will be more acceptable for the car drivers. However, this "mirroring" of the general public does have a limit. The authority work must be undertaken with a certain "aesthetic quality". Aesthetic labor is closely allied to strategies to improve health and safety, but health and safety and diversity management are continuously weighed against each other. We also find an ambivalence in the fact that diversity in itself becomes an aesthetic attribute of the organization to which the employees are expected to contribute and in the fact that one can actually be regarded as unqualified for the job of parking attendant if one "looks too much like what people think a parking attendant

looks like". Also the personnel policies reveal ambivalence when "care" and raising parking attendants' "self-esteem" become tools and objects of management. Workers are not sure how to interpret these initiatives and some become afraid of being fired if they put too much trust in their managers. In phase 2 the parking attendant is supposed to be more "professional", and the managers seem to be wondering about why the parking attendants come to them in their offices and expect them to take action with regard to some of their private problems. However, given the history of management in the organization, in the course of which parking attendants learned – in phase 1– that this part of their lives was an object of management (like it or not) – suddenly they face managers who do not take the accustomed interest, but focus on professionalism. Not surprisingly, there is no single positive or negative reaction to this among the parking attendants revealing the ambivalence within this regime of care and control. Some miss the good old days where they were left to themselves, some miss the time where the manager really cared for them, and others happily turn to "new opportunities" in the recent developments in the organization.

While this analysis of the ambivalences in the making up of the marking attendant may provide an understanding of the 'messy actualities' of the case, there is need to recall how the theory of 'making up' offers to identify and bring into shape the certain sort of person we are studying. The making up consists of top-down discursive work, *and* the bottom up interaction which people have with each other and with their 'categories'. All in all, I think we should be cautious about "making up" any activity in public organisations, including the making of new employees as an activity full of dilemmas and ambiguities, because this carries the risk of leaving us in a position where the organization and management is apparently 'done to' a worker, who has nothing to gain from and no means of resistance to continuously changing, but always dubious managerial strategies and the political strategies behind in the larger public administration.

While in chapter 4 we entered the empirical setting of Municipal Parking by and large through managerial initiatives primarily reflecting the top-down contributions to the making up of workers, the exit from this study goes through

the bottom-up perspective by walking through the instances, where organisation members have avoided top-down expectations, applied them to their own use or contributed to their creation.

#### **8.4 Loops and moving targets**

Chapter 4 showed how a range of new management strategies have been introduced over the years. So many, in fact, that it is difficult for the employees to see through, which management strategies they are in fact being managed by. The implication of this is in the perspective of this study, that it becomes difficult to know what sort of person, the parking attendant is supposed to be in the view of management. One central development over time, however, is that the parking attendant's self has come to be an object of management, and that also over time, there have come more and more expectations to how the parking attendants are to invest themselves in the organizing of their work tasks. To some, this was difficult, as when attendants resist reading briefings aloud because, as one of the attendants state: she is not a manager and doesn't think she is supposed to do the managers work.

One issue leading to controversies was about the 'intelligent covering of town'. While management would demand that also the rough areas of town are covered in all shifts, and that the employees themselves should plan and disperse the routes, employees would get into conflicts about this. Given the request from management that employees should cooperate about planning their routes, this management strategy gave rise to overt conflicts between employees. The task of sending your colleague to a rough area was one some employees did not want to take upon them and they openly resisted doing so.

However, not all managerial strategies are necessarily resisted by workers. Moving on to the three analysis of dirty work, aesthetic labour and diversity/inclusion, and pulling the instances of looping and resistance together here, what is most notable is that the use of aesthetic labour as a managerial tool meets little resistance from the employees. This is related to the fact that it is tied closely to health and safety, which "trumps all arguments". Given that this theory of aesthetic labour is generally very critical towards the repressive effects

of the use of aesthetic labour, it is notable that there seems to be general agreement that aesthetic demands are reasonable. The analysis of aesthetic labour here also shows how the manager's quite sophisticated expectations to the possibility of targeting a 'good-looking' muslim woman and shaping her into a positive representation of Municipal Parking's "aesthetic diversity" simply doesn't work out, because the woman is not willing to align with the requirements and the manager on the other hand is not willing to compromise. Given that aesthetics is tied to health and safety in this organization, it is a legitimate cause for dismissing people.

The two other papers on dirty work and on inclusion/diversity reveal more tension and confusion on the part of the parking attendants.

In the study of dirty work, parking attendants and managers are all quite eager to find ways of overcoming the categorizing of their work as 'dirty'. Parking attendants primarily do this by drawing attention to other aspects of the job than the actual 'billing'. They focus on the freedom in the job, the possibility of providing services, helping tourists, etc. Managers on the other hand focus on the larger political *raison d'être* of Municipal Parking, coupling it, for instance to the greening of the town. The tension between workers and managers here, is revealed in relation to the moral taint of the job. Some employees want to put a distance to the management strategy of 'intelligent' and rational parking patrol, which makes use of the knowledge of town to be in the right spot in the right time in order to increase the probability of writing a lot of bills. Employees' resistance here takes the shape of anonymous interviews with the press.

In the study of inclusion and diversity, we see that health and safety comes in as an important "player". The limits to inclusion go along the lines of health and safety: they try to hire a transvestite, but the threat to the employees' safety is too high. And finally, the analysis shows how a new 'local' category of person is 'made up': the "repeaters", understood as parking attendants who experience harrasments more often than others. Being identified by management as a repeater and being targeted by managerial strategies in order to receive care and help to deal with the high assault rate leads the parking attendant to seek to

avoid management. Being identified as having a record of assaults is regarded as an early warning of firing, and employees begin to avoid reporting assaults and in general avoid contact with management.

Concluding these aspects of 'looping' in this particular context, we can say that not all managerial strategies/targeting are necessarily avoided by the workers. Moreover, by bringing together these 'loops' we can see how employed public workers do have some means of resistance and means of overcoming some of the seemingly ambiguous aspects of their work in the organization.

This analysis has, however shown little example of how 'loops' have contributed to positive developments on the side of the worker. There are, however two important general observations in this respect, which refer to how parking attendants interact with those managerial statistics, which apparently serve ambiguous purposes of costreduction/income generation and the development of the employees's self:

The workers in this study learn how to handle the local statistics in the organization. The study shows examples of how the reporting on assaults gives rise to the image of the "problematic parking attendant who has a tendency to get into conflict". To avoid this label, Attendants simply don't report their assaults. The second example is about the statistics of car parking and how management wants to use them intelligently to 'cover the streets'. Some employees find this amoral and work to avoid working in this way, either by refusing to take responsibility for it or even by telling about it to the press.

### **8.5 New perspectives**

There are several paths to follow from here. One, of course, is laid out for the "sociologist of personhood". Can we perhaps study other sorts of formally unskilled workers in the public sector and follow their development into more and more professionalization? The public sector has responsibility for delivering a broad range of services to citizens which are not dependent on professional expertise. In my interview with a union representative, my attention was directed to a number of occupations, which may be small in numbers, but which are – like that of the parking attendants – formally unskilled, and some of which may also

from time to time may involve some exercise of or at least appearance of authority. This goes for instance for the occupations of the town-hall porters, hospital porters, or public swimming pool attendants.

This study may also provide a jumping-off ground for more investigations and analysis of the “making up” and making of workers in the light of management strategies to promote inclusion and or diversity. For instance, we saw the “aesthetics of diversity” – might there be room for a more thorough analysis of diversity along the lines of Bourdieu’s theory of aesthetics?

Moreover, seemingly small bits or corners of society often contain information that is of great relevance to the society at large. During the course of my investigations, I have reflected on what the organization of the whole “parking business” may tell us about society. In this Scandinavian case, we see a plethora of management strategies and initiatives driven by ambitions to improve working conditions, diversity etc. Perhaps in other contexts and cultures the exercise of this sort of authority and the sentiments that the public have in relation to it might be different. I have, for instance, been told that the actual physical or psychological harassment of parking attendants would be unthinkable in Vienna and that in Rome the traffic police are all ‘ethnic italians’ – how can this be? Perhaps the (to me) most curious way of regulating parking I have come across are the “Meter Maids” at Surfers Paradise in Australia, who dress in bikinis and cowboy hats and help car parkers to notice when their tickets run out.

Returning home, it is also interesting to continue following the development of parking in Denmark. Two major changes are on their way. One is due to the fact that an EU regulation now demands that the parking attendants have to wear uniforms that are fluorescent – this is a regulation created in order to protect different sorts of workers in the street, but unfortunately it makes little sense for the parking attendants, whose physical and psychological health is best protected by a uniform that signals authority. Another significant development here is technological. New cars which can drive through the street checking licenses are being introduced and thereby potentially restricting the parking attendant’s role



to going where cars have already been identified. Thus, there may literally be new future pathways to follow for the parking attendant.



## Abstract

This dissertation investigates how changing management strategies in the public sector contribute to shaping and developing the 'parking attendant' as a certain sort of person in a municipal centre responsible for parking attendance. The job as parking attendant is – just as many other jobs in the public sector – the object of changing management strategies according to changing political agendas. Meanwhile, the job is also a psychologically demanding and stigmatized unskilled job in the public sector. The dissertation analyzes how parking attendants, whose job is increasingly professionalized, interact with changing management strategies by for instance resisting or avoiding them. The dissertation relies on sociological fieldwork among parking attendants and their managers. The fieldwork included shadowings of daily work, interviews, gathering of documents and participant observation at job-interviews. The analytical point of departure for the dissertation is Ian Hacking and Paul du Gay's theories of how identities are 'made up'. This sort of analysis is coupled in three articles in the dissertation to other perspectives on the relation between work and identity. These are about how employees handle stigma, which is considered in research on "Dirty Work", about how managers and employees draw upon "aesthetic labour" to meet the public's scepticism and as a means to bring down the number of assaults and finally how management strategies aiming at creating inclusion and diversity contribute to the making up of the parking attendant. All three analysis contribute to expand understanding of work and identity in the public sector

## Resumé

Denne afhandling undersøger, hvordan skiftende ledelsesstrategier bidrager til at skabe og udvikle "parkeringsvagten" som en bestemt form for person i et kommunalt parkeringscenter. Jobbet som parkeringsvagt er - i lighed med andre jobs i den offentlige sektor – genstand for skiftende ledelsesstrategier på baggrund af skiftende politiske målsætninger, men samtidig er jobbet også et eksempel på et både psykologisk krævende og stigmatiseret ufaglært job i den offentlige sektor. Afhandlingen analyserer, hvordan parkeringsvagter, hvis job i stigende grad professionaliseres, selv interagerer med de skiftende ledelsesstrategier, fx ved at yde modstand mod dem eller unddrage sig dem. Afhandlingen bygger på sociologisk feltarbejde blandt parkeringsvagter og deres ledere. Feltarbejdet bestod af skyggeobservationer af parkeringsvagtens arbejde, interviews, deltagerobservation ved jobinterviews og introduktionskurser for parkeringsvagter og dokumentindsamling. Afhandlingens analytiske udgangspunkt er Ian Hacking og Paul du Gays teorier om hvordan identiteter skabes. Denne form for analyse kobles i afhandlingens tre artikler til andre perspektiver på relationen mellem arbejde og identitet. Det drejer sig om hvordan medarbejdere håndterer arbejdets stigma, hvilket belyses i forskning i "beskidt arbejde" (Dirty Work), om hvordan medarbejdere og ledere trækker på "æstetisk arbejde" (aesthetic labour) for at imødegå offentlighedens skepsis og som et middel til at nedbringe antallet af overfald og endelig om hvordan ledelsesstrategier som har til formål at skabe en rummelig og mangfoldig arbejdsplads spiller ind i hvordan parkeringsvagten skabes. Alle tre analyser bidrager til at udvide vores forståelse af relationen mellem arbejde og identitet i den offentlige sektor.

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## Appendices

## Appendix 1 Interviewguides

### *INTERVIEWGUIDE, PARKING ATTENDANTS*

The interviews with parking attendants were adjusted as to whether they were experienced or new parking attendants. Moreover, one of the interviews parking attendants was a shop steward, who also participated in job interviews. Some particular questions about this role were included in the interviewguide.

The interviewguide was used during shadowings and interviews of parking attendants in the autumn 2010 and spring 2011. The original version is in Danish. I have only enclosed my English translation of it.

<p><b>Introduction of the interview</b></p>	<p>Explanation of the purpose of the interview</p>
<p><b>Please tell me about yourself:</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- for how long have you been a parking attendant?</li> <li>- what did you do before?</li> <li>- how do you get along here?</li> <li>- what is the job here about?</li> <li>- what are the challenges of the job? What do you find easy? What is difficult?</li> <li>- what do you like about the job?</li> </ul>
<p><b>Going through a workday:</b></p>	<p>How is a typical workday from you meet up until you go home? Please go through the day step by step.</p>

	<p>How is a good workday? How is a bad workday?</p> <p>Do you prefer walking alone or together with others?</p> <p>Are there any areas of town you prefer to walk in?</p> <p>Have you experienced any assaults? If yes – what happened? How was your contact with management in relation to the assault(s)</p>
<b>Co-workers</b>	<p>What is a good colleague?</p> <p>What is a good parking attendant?</p> <p>If you ever have internal conflicts, what are they then about?</p>
<b>How has the organisation changed since you were employed?</b>	<p>Describe the restructurings – what happened?</p> <p>How do the restructurings affect your everyday work?</p> <p>Which advantages/disadvantages do you see in these changes?</p> <p>Do you think any other things have changed when you look back at how your job was when you began and until now?</p>
<b>Management</b>	<p>Which discussions are there between employees and management?</p> <p>Many say that they like that it is a flexible job –</p>

	<p>what do you think that means?</p> <p>What happens if you call in ill?</p>
<b>How can others see what you do at work?</b>	<p>What information is collected?</p> <p>How are assaults dealt with? And how is the difference between areas of town dealt with?</p>
<b>How are you introduced to the job here?</b>	<p>To the experienced: have you tried being a mentor for a new colleague?</p>

Particular questions to the shop steward:

<b>About being a shop steward (only to the shop steward)</b>	<p>How long have you been a shop steward?</p> <p>Which challenges are related to being a shop steward?</p> <p>Which issues do the colleagues bring up with you?</p> <p>How many of the parking attendants here are unionmembers?</p>
<b>Explain the shift of subject to the hiring procedures</b>	<p>I would like to ask you about the jobinterviews you had a couple of weeks ago, where you participated as the shop steward for the evening shift, because the new attendants primarily will</p>

	be working on the evening team.
<b>Can you describe the hiring procedure?</b>	What did you do when you got about 700 applications – how did you handle that?
<b>What happened in the interviews?</b>	How did you go about it? What did you ask about?  Had you spoken with you colleagues about what you wanted?  What were you looking after in the interviews?
<b>What happened after the interviews?</b>	How did you choose who to hire?  What did you think of the hiring of people in subsidised jobs?  Have there been any reactions to the subsidised jobs among colleagues?  Have there been any reactions to the subsidised jobs from management?  Have there been any reactions to the subsidised jobs from shop stewards and safety representatives?  How do you think about the word 'diversity'? What do you associate with that?

<p><b>"Interpretation" of the hiring situation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- what do you think of management's way of handling the hiring situation?</li> <li>- what do you think of management's way of evaluating the applicants?</li> </ul>
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*INTERVIEWGUIDE, OPERATIONS MANAGERS*

<p>Introduction of the interview</p>	<p>Explanation of the purpose of the interview</p>
<p>Please tell me about yourself</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- how long have you worked here?</li> <li>- what did you do before you became a manager here?</li> <li>- what is the job here about? what are the challenges of the job? What do you find easy? What is difficult?</li> <li>- what do you like about the job?</li> </ul>
<p>Going through a workday:</p>	<p>How is a typical workday from you meet up until you go home? Please go through the day step by step.</p> <p>How is a good workday? How is a bad workday?</p> <p>Please describe the parking attendants job. How is it organized?</p>

	<p>Please tell me about the briefings at the beginning of each shift. What happens there?</p>
<p>How has the job as parking attendant changed since you came here?</p>	<p>The content of the job</p> <p>Managers expectations to parking attendants</p>
<p>How has the organisation changed since you were employed?</p>	<p>Describe the restructurings – what happened?</p> <p>How do the restructurings affect your everyday work?</p> <p>Which advantages/disadvantages do you see in these changes?</p>
<p>About being operations manager/ mid-level manager</p>	<p>How are the tasks divided between the three managers, who share the management of the parking attendants? What is your area of responsibility?</p> <p>What are the challenges of your are of responsibility?</p> <p>If you have conflicts with employees or between employees, what are they about?</p> <p>Who has expectations to you? What are the expectations? ( From parking attendants or other places in the organisation)</p>

	(only newly hired managers) Is there anything you have wondered about since you came here? Contrasts to your previous experiences in other organisations.
Management	<p>Which discussions are there between employees and management?</p> <p>Many of the parking attendants say that they like the job because it is flexible – what do you think they mean by that?</p> <p>What happens if a parking attendant calls in ill?</p> <p>How do you get to know your employees?</p> <p>Please tell me about your group of employees, what characterizes your way of managing them?</p>
How can you see what the parking attendants do?	<p>How much work they do?</p> <p>How do you handle assaults?</p>

Particular questions to managers who were part of the hiring committee:

<b>I would like to ask about the job interviews you held a couple of weeks ago.</b>	
<b>From the top – can you describe the</b>	What did you do when you got about



<p><b>hiring procedure?</b></p>	<p>700 applications?</p> <p>How are responsibilities in regard to hiring people divided in the organization? Including the handling of hiring in subsidized jobs.</p>
<p><b>What happened in the interviews?</b></p>	<p>How did you go about it? What did you ask about?</p> <p>Had you spoken with you colleagues about what you wanted?</p> <p>What were you looking for in the interviews?</p>
<p><b>What happened after the interviews?</b></p>	<p>How did you choose who to hire?</p> <p>What did you think of the hiring of people in subsidised jobs?</p> <p>Have there been any reactions to the subsidised jobs among colleagues?</p> <p>Have there been any reactions to the subsidised jobs from management?</p> <p>Have there been any reactions to the subsidised jobs from shop stewards and safety representatives?</p> <p>How do you think about the word 'diversity'? What do you associate with that?</p>

	<p>How did you divide the new attendants between you?</p>
<p><b>Subsidised jobs</b></p>	<p>What did you think of the subsidised jobs?</p> <p>What have the parking attendants (including the shop stewards) thought of the subsidised jobs?</p> <p>What was the difference between applicants for subsidized vs. Ordinary jobs?</p> <p>How is your contact with job centres?</p> <p>About subsidized jobs – what are your experiences with them?</p> <p>How will you decide whether the attendants in subsidized jobs will be offered an ordinary job when their 6 months of subsidies run out</p>
<p><b>How are new employees introduced to the work here?</b></p>	<p>What do they have to learn through the course and from colleagues?</p>
<p><b>Mentors</b></p>	<p>How do you become a mentor for new employees?</p> <p>How are the mentors matched to the new employees?</p>

	How do you prepare the mentors for the mentoring?
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*INTERVIEWGUIDES, INTERVIEWS WITH HEAD OF CENTRE*

The head of centre was interviewed once in the autumn 2009 and once in the spring 2015.

The first interview was primarily about the time where he had been manager of the centre. The second interview was more historical to uncover what he knew about the beginning and development of the organization.

**Guide number 1 (autumn 2009)**

Introduction of the interview
Explanation of the purpose of the interview
Please tell me about yourself - what were your work experiences before you came?
Please tell me about the history of Municipal Parking
Please tell me about your own history as Head of Centre here
Please tell me about inclusion and diversity in the centre Do you discuss inclusiveness? Do you discuss well-being?

How much direct contact do you have with the parking attendants and technicians?
<p>Please explain to me what a parking attendant is</p> <p>A technician?</p> <p>An employee in the complaints department, the secretariat, customer service?</p> <p>Has your understanding of these employees changed over time?</p> <p>How have you wanted to change them?</p>
Please explain to me what a parking duty is (parkeringsafgift)
Please explain to me what job quality is?
Please explain to me what quality of services is?
How has the organisation changed since you were employed as Head of Centre
<p>What are the visions for the centre?</p> <p>Its role within the municipality</p> <p>Political role</p>
How do you expect the centre to develop in the future?

### **Guide number 2 (spring 2015)**

<p>Introduction of the interview</p> <p>I would like to learn more about the history of Municipal Parking</p>
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from its establishment in 1992 until you became the manager in 2002.

Please tell me about the recent organisational changes?

Please tell me about the history of the centre:

What were the reasons for the establishment of a corps of parking attendants?

What were the political reasons?

Was there political resistance?

How important was the possibility of creating new jobs within the municipality for the decision to establish parking patrol?

What sort of problems were anticipated?

How was the introduction of parking attendants communicated to the public?

What did the legal admittance of municipal parking attendance mean to the police?

From when could the municipalities begin to charge payment for parking?

How has the municipality's process of buying up roads developed?

Please tell me about the assault on three parking attendants in 2012

How did you handle it?

What has happened to the three employees since then?

Please explain the principle of 'conduite' to me?

*INTERVIEWGUIDE, OPERATIONS MANAGER OF TECHNICIANS*

(in charge of diversity management)

Introduction of the interview
Explanation of the purpose of the interview I would like to learn about your experiences with hiring according to diversity, meaning diversity broadly according to different cultures, different sorts of restrained work-capacities, etc. I am particularly interested in how you tackle colleagues to people with restrained working-capacity.
Please introduce yourself, your work experience and your experience in this organization
Why did you begin to work with diversity management?
How did you begin to work with diversity management?
Have you received any training?
Have you used your network?
Are there any particular possibilities or issues relating to diversity management given that you are a public/municipal organization?
Have there been any barriers to diversity management?
How have employees reacted to diversity management?
How has your recruitment of a diverse workforce related to the current lack of labour power?
What do you ask job applicants about at their interviews?



*INTERVIEWGUIDE, INTERNAL WORK ENVIRONMENT CONSULTANT*

The internal work environment consultant was interviewed twice in semi-structured interviews three times during the course of the research. First time was in the spring 2009, was in late 2012. Besides this, the work environment consultant has answered many questions during lunch, small informal meetings, over the phone and email.

**Guide number 1 (spring 2009)**

The first interview with the work environment consultant was related to the WIRE project about Corporate Social Responsibility and Work Environment. Therefore, the interview guide was made with this subject in mind. The WIRE project included both private and public workplaces, which is why the interview guide refers to Municipal Parking as a ‘company’. We had strategically chosen the companies among companies that had been nominated to prizes for work related to CSR. In this case, the “company” had been nominated to a prize for diversity management.

<b>Introduction to the interview</b>	Our study investigates smaller companies' work with CSR and how this work also has a bearing on work environments.
<b>Please tell us about the company</b>	What is your core-task?  What is the (brief) history of your company.  How many employees do you have? What are their functions? Typical educational background?  How are you organized, managed, owned?  Do you as company or in your trade have any particular possibilities or challenges which are



	important for your daily work?
<b>Your motivation for working with social responsibility</b>	<p>What activities do you have which are related to social responsibility?</p> <p>Why did you decide to concentrate on these activities?</p> <p>How did this work start? Why?</p> <p>What were your motives to start these activities? What did you want to achieve?</p> <p>Does your trade/geography/size or other matters had any bearing on your involvement in socially responsible activities?</p>
<b>Implementing social responsibility</b>	<p>How is your CSR-work organized?</p> <p>What has it taken you to make it work (ressources, personnel, etc.)</p> <p>In which way is management involved in these initiatives?</p> <p>Have you formulated policies, actionplans or the like?</p> <p>What is your key to succes in this field?</p> <p>Did you get any help – economically/knowledge from external parties, organisations persons, authorities etc.?</p> <p>Have you cooperated with any NGOs or</p>

	<p>authorities in any of your projects?</p> <p>Have you met any barriers on your way? Which?</p>
<b>Results from CSR work</b>	<p>Have these activities brought the company any advantages</p> <p>Have you met any negative results?</p> <p>Have the results been as expected?</p> <p>How did you become aware of the prize you received?</p> <p>How have the employees reacted?</p> <p>What does your CSR work do for your profile as a company?</p> <p>Do you have new plans for CSR in the future?</p>
<b>CSR and work environment in the company</b>	<p>Do CSR and work environment coincide, or are they separate fields of work?</p> <p>Does CSR – in your view – have an impact on the company’s work environment?</p> <p>Does the social engagement have an impact on the cooperation between management and employees?</p>
<b>The company in general</b>	<p>Do you wish the company to grow?</p> <p>Is your company typical for the trade? Why?</p>

	<p>Why not?</p> <p>What do you think is particularly important for smaller companies social engagement?</p> <p>Do you think that social engagement can lead to an improved work environment?</p>
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**Guide number 2 (late 2012)**

<b>Introduction to the interview</b>	<p>It has been a year since I followed the parking attendants on the street, and I would like to know what has happened in the organization since then.</p>
<b>Organisational setup</b>	<p>Have there been any organizational changes?</p> <p>Have they led to any new problematics? Which?</p>
<b>New employees</b>	<p>What has happened to the people who were employed a year ago?</p> <p>What has happened to the people who were employed in subsidized jobs?</p> <p>Have you hired new parking attendants?</p> <p>How did you do this?</p>
<b>New responsibilities</b>	<p>A year ago, the centre and parking attendants got some new responsibilities, e.g. to patrol</p>

	churchyards. Have these lead to new work environment questions?
<b>The job as parking attendant</b>	What sort of job is the parking attendant's job today?
<b>Inclusion, Integration and retention</b>	<p>Have there been any new initiatives?</p> <p>Do you have any concrete examples of retention/firing/integration of a parking attendant?</p> <p>Where is diversity management today in the organization?</p> <p>3 attendants were recently severely injured in an assault. Has this led to any new initiatives/thoughts about safety? How have the attendants and other employees reacted to this assault?</p>
<b>External relations</b>	<p>Which contacts do you have outside of the centre related to your HR and work environment work – internally in the municipality or elsewhere?</p> <p>How are your relations to the union?</p>

*INTERVIEWGUIDE FOR INTERVIEW WITH UNION REPRESENTATIVE*

**Introduction of the interview**

The purpose of the interview is to learn about the union's experience with the development of parking attendants as an occupational group and to learn about

comparable, unskilled jobs in the public sector.
Please tell me about your background and your experience with parking attendants
Are there any comparable groups of employees in the public sector?
How are the parking attendant's wages compared to others?
Do you know how many publicly employed parking attendants there are?
Do you know anything about how the public parking attendant's job compares to parking attendants employed in the private sector?
What role has the union played in the upskilling of parking attendants?

## Appendix 2 Overview of fieldwork and material

Fieldwork	Material
Four days of participant observation in the shop and call centre	Field notes, written during and after observations.
Fifteen one-day shadowings of different parking attendants—day and evening shifts.	Field notes, primarily written immediately after the observations.  Material related to the practical organization of work: dispersal of routes, briefing sheets
Participant observation at three days of job interviews.	Field notes, written between interviews and at the end of the day.  Applications, job advertisements and an assignment to the job applicants
Participant observation at introduction course for parking attendants	Field notes, written during and after observations.

Participant observation one day at a court proceeding.	Field notes during and after observations.
Sixteen recorded semi-structured interviews with five managers in the centre, four parking attendants, and one secretary, one employee in the administration, one internal work environment consultant and one representative from the parking attendants' union.	All interviews transcribed.
Informal talks and ethnographic interviews with employees and managers over lunch, in offices, and in the corridors.	Field notes during and after observations.
Collection of material on the spot by asking the internal work environment consultant and the administrative employee for material or borrowing a room for a day to download material from the intranet.	Written material: relevant information from the intranet, HR and balanced scorecard policy documents, consultancy reports, and newspaper articles. Notes written specifically for me by the HR manager.
Collection of material from a distance, via the World Wide Web.	<p>Newspaper articles on parking patrol by journalists.</p> <p>Articles written by work environment consultants and managers.</p> <p>HR documents and surveys from the municipality providing information related to social capital, diversity, and gender.</p>

	Material from the union
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## **Appendix 3 Conference paper: Stories Of Professionalization And Social Inclusion In Public Parking Services**

**This paper was published in: John Chandler; Berry Jim; Elisabeth Berg (eds.) (2012) Dilemmas for Human Services: Papers from the 15th Research Conference 2011. London : Royal Docks Business School, 2012.**

### **Introduction**

This paper presents stories from fieldwork among parking patrol officers and managers in a Danish municipal centre. The stories are about the hiring, firing and retention of parking officers. The centre is renowned for management's active and ambitious work to improve the work environment for parking patrol officers, the quality of parking services and to employ diversity management. As many other types of unskilled work in Denmark, the job as parking patrol officer is a possible entry point to the labour market for people without formal education or people who have been worn out in other occupations.

By presenting stories told by parking patrol officers and their managers at Municipal Parking, I wish to contribute to our understanding of the role of the public sector as an employer: the ambitions and limits of the public sector in regard to employing people for unskilled work and the dilemmas that follow. The aim of the paper is to show how these stories shape the simultaneous processes of professionalizing the traditionally unskilled work of parking patrolling and fulfilling a role as a socially inclusive workplace.

### **Background**

The Danish public sector accounts for around 30 percent of Danish employment (Danmarks Statistik, 2011) and as an employer, the public sector is traditionally a central actor when it comes to alleviating problems of unemployment. Besides including people in subsidized jobs, the Danish public sector has a history of



creating jobs for people on the edge of the labour market. This has particularly taken place within the care sector, but also recruitment to the job as a parking officer can be seen as part of this so-called 'vacuum-cleaning' (Labriola & Lund 2009) of the labour market.

In the Danish context, the job as a parking patrol officer is highly stigmatized. Therefore, the parking patrol officers, who charge car-drivers for their illegal parking, have quite a psychologically strain-full job. This work environment challenge has only increased as the municipality in recent years has developed a strict policy in regard to parking, increased the enforcement of parking rules and increased the prices for parking very much. Yet, the job as parking patrol officer is popular and the centre receives many applications (600 for 10 vacancies) for these jobs.

### **Fieldwork**

My empirical material consists of field notes from 15 1-day shadowings (Czarniawska 2007) of parking officers during their everyday work, qualitative interviews with five managers in the centre, one shop steward and three parking patrol officers. I was a participant-observer for three days of job interviews and on selected days during a three-week introduction course.

### **Stories**

The stories presented in this paper developed spontaneously during the course of an interview or during my talks with the patrol officers while I shadowed them. The latter talks were quoted from memory in my fieldnotes. Stories are traditionally understood as narratives, ordered around a plot. The main characteristics of narratives are, that they are chronological, meaningful and social (Elliot 2005: 5-12). A plot involves the passage from one equilibrium over a disturbing force, or happening, to a new equilibrium (Czarniawska 2004: 17-19). This paper does not explicitly identify these elements in the presented stories, but focuses on how stories link (Gubrium and Holstein 2009: 55-67) issues of social inclusion and workplace retention to skills. In these stories, my interlocutors exercise the power of narrative to situate themselves and others –

they make sense of their own identity and work on the scripts for other's roles (Czarniawska 1997; Czarniawska 2004). By looking at stories, we can learn about the repertoire of identities and the exercise of power in relation workplace retention and skills. We can follow the creation of meaning when managers and employees reflect upon matters of importance to socially inclusive workplace initiatives.

### *Stories from Municipal Parking*

The first story primarily relies on an interview with the work environment consultant in the Centre. I treat it as a collective story of the organization (Elliot 2005:166) as I have met the same line and content of this story in my conversations with many other persons in the organization – employees as well as managers. The collective story serves to draw up a collective understanding of the history of the organization. Next, I present shorter stories through quotes from interviews and fieldnotes.

### *A collective story of transformation*

Central to management and employees at the centre, is a collective story about the development of the centre from a de facto labour market retention project for worn-out, elderly bus-drivers to a modern workplace for skilled parking officers, in which management is very competent in regard to handling issues of diversity and retention in the workforce.

The first person I met and talked to at The Municipal Parking was the work environment consultant. Her job functions primarily regard human resource management. She has no formal managerial power, but considers herself as an intermediary between the employees and management. In an interview, she tells me the following story: about ten years ago, things were going very badly in this municipal centre. Employees didn't really work, they experienced loads of harassments on the street, and there was a very high illness rate: about 40 days per officer per year. But then came a new centre-manager who tightened up the organization. Being a former police officer, he had a very good understanding of the work as a parking officer. One of the first things he did was to make sure that

the uniforms were changed from green uniforms, signaling environmental friendliness, to dark uniforms resembling police uniforms. The work environment consultant links the uniforms directly to the parking-officers' self-confidence; contributing a drastic fall in the amount of harassments to these new dark uniforms.

In this transformation process an external consultancy company was hired to go through the organization. The consultancy report concluded that the employees were 'in lack of care'. This conclusion resulted in a series of projects and initiatives to improve the work environment, for example a project named: "self-confidence replaces absence" and systematic courses in conflict management, to prepare the officers to tackle conflicts on the street. Today, absence due to illness is reduced to around 20 days per officer per year.

Woven into this story of transformation are initiatives to recruit according to principles of diversity management, to make use of various types of subsidized jobs, and to use so-called round-table talks with employees, who are in risk of losing their job because of illness, abuse or other circumstances.

### **Hiring & Firing**

The next story is about hiring procedures related to diversity management. In Denmark, diversity management has primarily been used in relation to the integration of an ethnically diverse workforce and has often merged with corporate social responsibility (Boxenbaum 2006; Kamp & Hagedorn Rasmussen 2004). Unskilled work is often an entry point to the Danish labour market, as illustrated in the following quote from a former manager of the parking officers:

'They [the parking officers] ask me, what is the future for me? And I say: your future is not to be a parking patrol officer forever. The future is, that when you come here, with another ethnic background, you have the possibility within a year or two, to document that you are able to keep a job, to fill out a job, you pay your taxes – because they want permanent residence or citizenship ... but then I hope you will go looking for another job, because most of them are way too qualified for the job as parking officer... you can also get a recommendation from

here, but most importantly: you get an understanding of what Danish worklife is about' (Interview with manager in the technical department)

According to this story, the meaning of holding the job is to become more employable in other jobs. The manager does not expect or wish to keep the employees for too long but rather to help them on to another more qualified job. This manager also tells me about her experience with diversity management as a series of experiments and a long line of individual stories with mostly happy endings. But the following story of the hiring of a transvestite tells us about the limits of hiring:

'The job centre asked if we could take Catherine in for a jobtest. We said: there is nothing we can't do...[but] It was too big a challenge. After we had had Catherine half a year [in the technical department], the shop steward came and said: I have to tell you, it doesn't work. We had Catherine with us on the street, but . you know, big breasts and pearl necklaces and wig. There were too many comments [from people on the street]... So I said to Catherine: Catherine, I simply have a problem letting you out on the street because we attract too much attention... and I can't guarantee the safety – neither for you nor your colleague.' (Interview with manager in the technical department)

The manager concludes: 'But we gave Catherine half a year in the labour market, where we did what we could to find out what the obstacles were for her to stay here..... but at the same time, I felt: Damn' it, it didn't work... after a while, you want to be challenged by the ultimate, right? But, I have to say, that was a defeat...' (Interview with manager in the technical department)

The story shows how the manager has a personal ambition to try out all sorts of 'characters' among her employees – she attributes personal satisfaction to this part of her work. According to the story, the limit to her experimentation is the security of other employees.

### **Retention & Firing**

As regards firing, two types of grounds for firing are particularly prevalent in my empirical material. The managers of the parking patrol officers point to the

parking officers' willingness to cooperate in a new organizational structure, which has meant more responsibility delegated from managers to work teams. But the work environment consultant articulates another ground for firing: in efforts to keep an employee, who is at the risk of dropping out of the labour market, it is crucial that this employee is ready to cooperate in these efforts. If not, they may have to fire the employee. The different perspectives in two stories about retention told by the work environment consultant and a parking officer illustrate the complexities of this process:

Given that the physical and psychological harassment from disgruntled car-drivers and others on the street is a major strain in the work environment, it is a part of efforts to prevent illness, to make the parking officers able to face these challenges and to follow up on those officers who experience assaults. The work environment consultant is eager to offer managerial care and attention as a remedy to solve the individual parking officer's problem – as we have seen illustrated in the collective story above. This type of care has meant attention to the parking patrol officers' record of assaults, i.e. how often they report having experienced critical instances on the street. The work environment consultant talks about 'repeaters': Parking officers who tend to experience harassments more often than others. The story goes that this is because the particular parking officer is not good at tackling harassments calmly. She tells us about the "repeaters":

'We have had some, who have repeatedly been assaulted, and usually there are reasons for this. It is because they have...some psychological problems from many years back, which come up when they are angry or afraid, when they meet an angry car-driver. We simply hire some external psychologists for them, so they get a proper debriefing. They get built up again, so that they can face the job. And it has actually helped. We use that a lot.' (Interview with work environment consultant)

A parking patrol officer told me another story. He told me about two assaults, which he experienced in 'Trouble Street': a street which is renowned as a bad area with many aggressive car-drivers. I knew from my shadowing of other

parking officers, that many of them refused to patrol in this area although management wanted them to. After reporting the assaults, the parking officer felt an uncomfortable focus on him and his psychological condition from the managers he had at the time. He now worried, that the attention could lead to a firing:

'I used to be one of those who reported everything. I am not scared of the assaults, but of the management, that my name comes up again. I don't want to register cars without number plates [which means extra contact with the managers] and I don't want to be a mentor for new officers. I have made an agreement with my new manager, that I just don't report any assaults... I am afraid of losing my job. But it also has a lot to do with where in town you are...' (Fieldnotes from shadowing parking officer)

By doing what management values, namely patrolling in a dangerous street, he puts himself at risk and when this action, which is in line with the values of the organisation, by 'fate' leads to a series of assaults, his actions are not recognized as appropriate by management. While management signals that they want employees to patrol in Trouble Street, they apparently don't really expect it. In the parking officer's story, we can recognize a double-bind problem (Bateson 1972; Gudiksen 2007): He describes how he is trapped in a situation where the managers express two messages where one denies the other: 'we want to support you by giving you psychological counseling' vs. 'if you need too much psychological counseling, you are not suitable for the job'. He is also trapped between: 'we want you to be flexible and patrol in all areas of town – including the troublesome areas' and 'if you become a person with repeated assaults we may have to fire you'. According to his story, the parking officer is in a tragic position, where he cannot comment on the messages. His position is low in the workplace-hierarchy and he is afraid, that attention will disturb his employment relation.

### **Concluding**

The collective story of the organisation pointed to the simultaneous processes of increased professionalization of the work done at Municipal Parking and the

increased focus on social responsibility. The process of professionalization has focused on care for the employees – particularly with attention to their psychological abilities. What used to be a light job, now carries responsibilities, larger requests for quality, but also larger requests for managing one’s own personality. In retention efforts, the employee must be willing to work on his or her psychological qualities. In recruitment, the stories presented here show a manager that describes herself as quite powerful in terms of allowing people into the labour market. In her stories, the limits to recruitment do not have to do with quality of services, but with the care for other employees’ secure work environment.

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