

## Back to Copenhagen: A Few Words from the New *JBA* Editors

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Ever since Marcel Mauss wrote about the gift and Bronislaw Malinowski about the Kula, it has been something of an anthropological truism that things have social lives. As many readers of this journal will know, Arjun Appadurai (1986) made this particularly clear with his seminal anthology *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. While we will not rehearse the argument of the book here nor elaborate on its significance for the development of business anthropology, let us use it merely to state the obvious: things rarely linger in a single place forever, but move and change hands across space and time. This is, of course, also true for a journal of business anthropology.

In 2012, the first issue of the *Journal of Business Anthropology (JBA)* was published by Brian Moeran and Christina Garsten as founding editors. With Brian's professorship at Copenhagen Business School, the journal was – and still is – hosted by Copenhagen Business School Library as part of its Open Journals, offering open access publication. Over the years, various scholars assisted Brian in editing the *JBA*, until Greg Urban from University of Pennsylvania, together with Nancy Ameen, took over in 2017. For the past five years, Greg and Nancy have done a remarkable job in continuing the vision and effort of Brian and others, making sure that the *JBA* could very quietly (in fact, without any mention) celebrate its

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10-year anniversary in the previous issue. That issue featured a set of highly pertinent pandemic essays, which discussed the experiences and implications of the most critical global “disruption” in recent times – COVID-19 – which, of course, was much more important than celebrating an anniversary. Now, however, we believe it appropriate to send a huge THANK YOU to Greg and Nancy, as well as to all previous editors, for establishing a now 10-year-old journal that is, at least in our view, of great importance.

It is, thus, with both humility and excitement, as well as pride, that we now take on the responsibility as new editors of the *JBA*. After five years based in the US, the journal returns to Copenhagen; although not to the business school, but to the Department of Anthropology, University of Copenhagen, where we are all employed. While Greg, in his first editorial (Urban 2017), stressed how Brian’s “enormous, seemingly boundless energy, far beyond the abilities of mere mortals such as myself” meant that the editorship “needed at least two people to replace one” (2017: 124), we quickly realized that we needed at least three people to replace two! We have created an editorial team – consisting of the three authors of this editorial, who have different profiles within or related to business anthropology – in the hope that we will be able to further develop the journal and realize its potential as a leading international outlet for business anthropology, both in terms of academic research and in terms of professional practice.

While it may certainly be argued that business anthropology has had something of a surge in momentum in the past decade, the force of this momentum, we believe, still has to be harnessed to its full potential. This goes for the *JBA* as well. In line with our editorial predecessors, our core ambition is to maintain and strengthen the journal’s position at the international forefront of business anthropology, covering topical themes and issues from not merely North America and Scandinavia (the two editorial “homes” of the journal so far), but from all parts of the world. Indeed, as Moeran and Garsten (2012) emphasized in the first article published in the *JBA*: “After all, these days, all of us would be hard put, if asked, to find any aspect of society and culture that is *not* in one way or another commodified and thus economic” (2012: 14). In other words, as editors, we aim to continue and cultivate a diverse and inclusive academic journal with a global reach, not least because cross-cultural comparison and learning remain the key qualities that move (business) anthropology forward.

In addition to continuing the work of our predecessors then, our initial priorities will, more concretely, be to focus on three interconnected initiatives:

- 1) To insist on a broad definition and understanding of the concept of business in order to attract a wide range of contributions on a

multitude of topics, questions, and regions. The goal for this is not only to increase the number of submissions, but also to make it easier to address broad and significant societal questions related to business.

- 2) To develop and, potentially, re-design the current digital platform and publication formats to match the wishes and expectations of different readers. The aim is to integrate new digital formats into the journal infrastructure, thus providing a platform for sharing a variety of publication formats; including not only different forms of written pieces, but also different media (videos, podcasts, etc.).
- 3) To implement an outreach strategy for sharing content on social media platforms (initially LinkedIn, but potentially also others). Until now, *JBA* has made no such efforts, meaning that there is an untapped potential in enhancing the outreach and impact of the journal by showcasing business anthropology on social media.

As with all strategies and initiatives, we are aware, of course, that actions speak louder than words. And we are, just as importantly, equally aware that the relevance and quality of any journal depend on the submissions of its authors. So please, continue to think of the *JBA* for publishing your work and do not hesitate to think creatively (and to approach us) about what a publication might look like. We do not want to be “just another academic journal” – we want to be a valued and engaging venue for research and debates around business anthropology, broadly construed.

Realizing visions and ideas takes time, of course. In this issue, we have nonetheless tried to act on some of our thoughts above by putting together an issue consisting of both well-known contribution formats and a new addition. First, you will find two standard, peer-reviewed research articles. Angela Kristin VandenBroek writes about Stockholm’s startup ecosystem with specific focus on the conception and role of experts and expertise. Kasper Pape Helligsøe, Rikke Rønnau, and Peter Bredsdorff-Larsen explore the possible benefits of comparing a professional handball club and a software company in Denmark, focusing on the phenomenon of disturbances and their own research collaboration (an anthropologist, an HR business leader, and a professional handball coach). Second, you will find the remaining and final pandemic essays (jointly edited with Greg and Nancy), which continue the focus of the previous issue on the effects and experiences of COVID-19. Tamara Hale writes about the struggles of “muddling through,” Nao Hirasawa and Ryotaro Mihara about the survival of a Japanese animation production studio, and Matthew J. Hill and Mario Moussa about “the four forces framework” and how a financial institution applied it to adapt to the pandemic. Then, Wayne Fife takes a seat in our so-called “Readers’ Corner” with a review of Thomas Maschio’s new book *Digital Cultures, Lived Stories and Virtual Reality*. And last, but not least, we present a new addition to the *JBA*: a short ethnographic/documentary

film collaboratively produced by Thomas Scott Hughes, Brady Welch, and Janine Schuurman, accompanied by their written reflections on making it. The film, entitled *Pieces of the Puzzle*, is a tribute to scientists everywhere, based on work inside the biotech company Genmab. In addition to its own distinct purposes, the film exemplifies how we wish to disseminate and publish work within business anthropology in novel and unconventional ways.

On this basis, there is only one thing left to say: we truly hope that you will enjoy it!

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