

EDITORIAL

## What to Submit to the *JBA*? That Is the Question

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It is no surprise that editing an academic journal is hard work. Editors are, if not famous, then at least notorious for remarking on the rigors of publishing article after article, issue after issue. When one manuscript is finally ready, another is usually already waiting in the wings, to be read, screened, reviewed, revised, edited, laid out, proofread, and uploaded. But the truth – the real truth, if you will – is that it is, above all, a privilege. A true privilege. To edit an academic journal is to witness new ideas taking shape, to help refine arguments, to learn from intriguing submissions, and to contribute to sustaining a community of researchers and practitioners with shared interests in a distinct field of knowledge. Hard work? Oh, yes. Worth it? Without a doubt.

In our case, editing the *Journal of Business Anthropology (JBA)* may be somewhat different from editing many other journals, especially those situated within core disciplines or broader domains of inquiry. Editors of such journals may find the sheer volume of submissions overwhelming, often having to reject far more manuscripts than they accept. While we do not wish to suggest that business anthropology is a niche field – indeed, this would be fundamentally mistaken given the highly influential work of so many business anthropologists in companies and organizations around

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the world – it is nonetheless a fact that high-quality research articles and other contributions have never just poured in, at least not in such volume as to overwhelm the current editors of the *JBA*.

This, we claim, is not to be viewed as a lack of vitality or relevance of business anthropology. Certainly not. Anthropological perspectives and practices remain, as mentioned, influential in numerous business contexts all over the world, actively generating new knowledge and contributing to novel solutions on timely and pressing matters. There is no indication, in our view, that “the omnipresence of business – and, potentially, business anthropology,” as we put it in a previous editorial (Vangkilde, Breslin, and Lex 2024), is declining in any substantial sense. But if this is correct, why is it, then, that editors of the *JBA* have not experienced an overwhelming number of submissions?

This is not that simple to answer, of course, but one thought is: Could it be that professionals engaged in and identifying with the field of business anthropology are generally so preoccupied (and busy) with their work – doing consumer research, exploring user experiences, conducting organizational studies, managing project work, designing new solutions, consulting clients, or whatever else they may do “out there” – that it does not leave them many minutes to actually *write*? For writing is, as many of us are acutely aware, both time-consuming and highly challenging. It follows that something of a conundrum arises: How to edit and run what we like to think of as a leading journal in business anthropology if the practitioners within that field have no, or very limited, time to contribute to it?

What we have done to address this issue – and what we wish here to make clear to all readers of the *JBA* – is that we, as a principle, seek not to take rigid conventions too seriously. Of course, as an academic journal, certain scientific conventions and established procedures cannot – and should not – be ignored or altered, such as double-blind peer review and other processes that safeguard the quality and credibility of the research published. But apart from this, our general approach is this:

*If you have a good idea that our readers will find interesting – an intriguing argument, a thought-provoking experiment, a solid piece of research, a visual product, a creative design, a report from the field, or something entirely different – then we will do our utmost to find a way to convey it in the journal.*

In other words, while other journals often have rigid categories or genres of submission, we are more than open to adjust, change, or even develop new ones to accommodate your idea. Also, do not be too concerned about writing a specific number of words (another, often arbitrary, convention), as we believe that you should write exactly the number of words needed to say what you wish to say – no more, no less. Finally, do also remember that both “business” and “anthropology” are to be understood broadly, as

we have emphasized more than once already (Vangkilde, Breslin, and Lex 2022; 2023; 2024). In a nutshell, just reach out to us.

Having said this, it may still be relevant to briefly outline some of the categories of contributions that we have published in the past couple of years – if only as a general orientation that may inspire you either to submit within those categories or to propose something beyond them.

- *Research Articles*  
These are publications that have gone through our double-blind peer-review processes, usually involving two or more reviewers.
- *Essays*  
These are more free in style and content than the research articles and only peer reviewed by the editors. We use this category when submissions are interesting, creative, or thought-provoking, yet not sufficiently research-based to qualify as a research article.
- *Video articles*  
These are dual publications in that they contain both a video and a text accompanying it – often (but not necessarily) an ethnographic or ethnographically-inspired film together with a written account of the ideas, purposes, and perspectives underlying it.
- *Reports or Field Reports*  
These are either a descriptive account of a past event (such as, for instance, a conference or a summit) or an empirical report from a fieldwork.
- *Readers' Corner*  
This is our “catchy” headline for what other journals typically call book reviews.
- *Review Essays*  
These are publications that review and discuss other publications such as a book or a set of articles. They are more elaborate than conventional book reviews (our *Readers' Corner*), as they present a distinct analysis or argument based on the publications in focus.
- *Early Career Scholarship*  
Formerly titled *Millennial & Post-Millennial Perspectives*, we have renamed this category to better reflect its focus on publications from emerging scholars. It provides a platform for students and recent graduates to share work of relevance and value to business anthropology that may not take the form of a full-length research article or essay.

To repeat, however, these categories are by no means set in stone, and new ones will certainly be added along the way. What matters is not

rigid convention, but rather a creative approach that enables us to publish the most stimulating ideas and work. In this sense, we like to think of the *JBA* as a commons that belongs to all of us – readers as much as authors, reviewers, and editors. So, what to submit to the *JBA*? That *is* the question we hope you will ask yourself!

This is precisely what a number of authors have done, and we are delighted to present their work in this issue. In the first research article, Macario Lacbawan engages with the intriguing question of how, in a time of climate change, the act of escaping environmental disaster is becoming entangled with opportunities to generate wealth. Focusing specifically on the construction of New Clark City, a smart city promoted as a “backup capital” in the Philippines, Lacbawan puts forth the concept of speculative escape to describe the complex fusion of fleeing climate catastrophe and capitalizing on climate infrastructure. In this way, Lacbawan shows how climate change is transformed into a managed and marketable vision of elite survival, revealing how the escape from it is shaped by exclusionary practices and uneven politics of adaptation.

In the next research article, Christian Henrik Alexander Kuran explores the intentional bending and breaking of safety-related rules and regulations in the European trucking business. Drawing upon fieldwork in Norway, Kuran highlights the performances and rationalizations of rule-bending behavior, conceptualizing it as actions that are deliberated and justified through the notion of “the unserious actor.” Kuran argues that this concept both guides and restricts rule bending in the business, which he further elaborates through the creative analytical metaphor of doing “Ludo tricks”; that is, actions that provide an edge and save time. Overall, the article offers an ethnographic view of trucking as a highly important business in which rule bending forms part of the practical negotiation of safety, efficiency, and professional identity.

The next publication is an essay by Yan Chi Tiffany Tivasuradej on what is termed precarious inclusion. Based on autoethnographic data and ethnographic studies on work and disability, the essay discusses inclusion in corporate organizations. While this issue has been high on corporate agendas in recent years, Tivasuradej argues that organizations essentially foster precarious inclusion, which results in greater exclusion rather than genuine inclusion, not least because these organizations predominantly adopt neoliberal values. As a closing, Tivasuradej also offers a perspective on how business anthropologists may play a role in addressing precarious inclusion.

Finally, the issue ends with a review essay by Helga C. Wild who carefully reviews and discusses Parker Shipton’s (2011) ethnography of a World Bank development effort in Africa which failed spectacularly. Wild draws upon Isabelle Stengers’ (2010) concept of “ecology of practices” to emphasize – and add to Shipton’s analysis – that the reason for the failure

lies in the effort's disregard of the ecology of social practices operating at different levels of the implementation. Instead, the program embodied an a-social conception of participants as rational, self-interested economic actors. It thus appears that a technocratic ideology was at work behind the program's explicit aspirations, making it contra-indicated to consider local conditions and practices.

And so, with these words, enjoy!

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