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EDITORIAL

Business, Broadly Understood

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There is a Danish saying – *Kært barn har mange navne* – which literally translates into "a dear child has many names." More broadly, and also more true to its actual meaning and use, a better translation would be something like "the one you hold dear has many names." The saying can be used quite plainly to denote precisely how children who are liked by many tend to have several nicknames, but just as often, or perhaps even most commonly, it is used somewhat sarcastically to refer to different terms, concepts, and expressions that, with only minor variation, describe the same phenomenon. There is, as such, a certain ambiguity underlying the saying as it may, every so often, be expressed in a slightly irritated tone of voice.

Anthropological work in and around business could be described with precisely this Danish saying: *Kært barn har mange navne*. Indeed, it has been emphasized that a "terminological confusion" (Moeran 2014: 71) surrounds the concept of business anthropology due to a number of closely allied notions such as organizational anthropology (Caulkins and Jordan 2013; Garsten and Nyqvist 2013), economic anthropology (Carrier 2022; Hann and Hart 2011), and design anthropology (Gunn, Otto, and Smith 2013; Smith et al. 2016), to name only some of the most important. In the history of the *Journal of Business Anthropology* (*JBA*), a central aim has always been "to subsume all these terms under the single heading of

business anthropology," as Brian Moeran and Christina Garsten (2012: 3), the founding editors of the *JBA*, initially put it.

For Moeran and Garsten, this was an attempt *not* to establish "yet another sub-discipline," but "rather to suggest that business anthropology is not a marginal enterprise" (2012: 3). Across a broad range of domains, scales, and regions, people are involved in business, Moeran and Garsten argued, in the sense that they all engage in practices which, in one way or another, are related to trade. Business anthropology, in other words, "is an anthropology of trading relations," and, precisely therefore, "it also reaches out to other disciplines such as business history, cultural studies, management and organization studies, some parts of sociology, and even cultural economics" (2012: 4). Hence, it is a wide-ranging field of research and practice.

We agree. In fact, we wish to suggest that the point is not only that people all over the world are inextricably embedded in trading relations of one kind or another, voluntarily as well as involuntarily. In many parts of the world, it is moreover the case that logics and practices commonly associated with business (in the sense of trade and commerce), not least in a context of "free" market capitalism, have increasingly pervaded areas and matters that were hitherto distinct from associations with business. Most clearly, perhaps, this is one of the core characteristics of neoliberal governance – or "advanced liberalism," as Nikolas Rose (1999) terms it – which is broadly known to have rethought the relation between the social and the economic. As Rose has so accurately put it in his discussion of the emergence of advanced liberalism:

> The solution was not to seek to govern bureaucracy better, but to transform the very organization of the governmental bureaucracy itself and, in doing so, transform its ethos from one of bureaucracy to one of business, from one of planning to one of competition, from one dictated by the logics of the system to one dictated by the logics of the market and the demands of customers (1999: 150).

With neo-liberalism, in other words, a central style of governing has been "to create simulacra of markets" in domains previously governed by more social logics (1999: 146).

To fully account for this relationship between neo-liberalism and business logics is not possible, of course, within the scope of a fairly brief editorial letter. Let the above suffice to emphasize, then, that the notion of business in the *JBA* is to be understood, as it always has, broadly. Business logics, activities, and agents are to be found in a broad variety of contexts and situations in most, if not all, geographical regions, often cutting across conventional distinctions between private and public, for-profit and non-profit, formal and informal, social and economic, labor and leisure, and, yes, the list can go on. Also, the terminological confusion that may be seen

to surround the concept of business anthropology should be considered not as a problem, but as an invitation that allows for open exploration and critical scrutiny of its multiple facets, relations, and problematics. Thus, we wish to reiterate here what we briefly stated in our previous editorial letter (Vangkilde, Breslin, and Lex 2022: 165-166); namely that we insist on a broad definition and understanding of business that, hopefully, will lead to publications with numerous different angles on, and approaches to, business. Indeed, we encourage all our readers and potential authors to think about the scope of the *JBA* in precisely this way. As such, we also hope to connect to audiences in the varied fields mentioned above, which are part of this broad scope of business anthropology.

In this issue, we believe that we already present a set of research articles and essays that feed productively into this perspective. The first research article by Christina Jerne explicit expands a conventional use of the concept of business by zooming in on the distinct economies of Danish minority gangs with a particular focus on aspects of solidarity. While the term "solidarity economy" has mainly been used to describe altruistic and socially beneficial ways of doing business, Jerne explores how economies of gangs also draws significantly on solidarity, which, however, typically entails more exclusive and violent aspects. Solidarity economies are, thus, empirically multiple. In the next research article by Frederik Larsen, we are introduced to work practices in an organization whose business is not to create and sell new products, but to receive, handle, and "move" (in the sense of low-priced reselling) divested objects: the thrift store. Instead of focusing on thrift in consumption, Larsen demonstrates how thrift serves as a principle and value guiding work and organizational practices in the store, thus constituting one of the key elements of its business. In the final research article, Lise Tjørring, Martina S. Mahnke, Matilde L. Petersen, Mikka Nielsen, and Mark Vacher focus on how humanities researchers in universities are increasingly expected to not merely generate knowledge, but to engage in business collaborations with an impact beyond academia. While such collaborations may often entail interactions with people who share some of the same terminologies and concepts as the researchers, thus posing distinct methodological challenges (see, for instance, Krause-Jensen 2010: 23-50; Vangkilde and Sausdal 2016), Tjørring et al. argue that, despite a shared willingness to work together, humanities-business collaborations can often be tense affairs. In particular, they put forth the concept of productive uneasiness as a sensitizing tool to capture how tension and discomfort come into play in these collaborations, and how accepting and engaging in this uneasiness can eventually be productive.

The remaining contributions in this issue consist of two essays. Delving into the pertinent question of the role of digital technologies, such as artificial intelligence, Matt Artz offers a discussion of what he considers to be an emerging "digital turn" in business anthropology. He argues that including digital anthropology into the work of business anthropologists

offers substantial opportunities that will shape the discipline in the years to come. Last, but not least, Elisabeth Powell continues her essays in the Millennial and Post-Millennial section with a discussion of the value that anthropologists potentially bring to business. Based on her "anthropology of anthropologists," if you will, she contends that this value is tied to their academic training, but often contingent upon them "educating" the people with whom they work in the world of business.

This is all, for now. Enjoy!

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