

# JBA

## JOURNAL OF BUSINESS ANTHROPOLOGY

### A Few Words from U No Hoo...

This issue marks the end of the fourth year of publication of the *JBA*. To be honest, given my sense of impending doom a couple of years ago, I find it a little hard to believe. But, thanks to the hard work of colleagues who have rallied to the rescue and worked extremely hard to keep the journal alive, I think it's now safe to say that the *JBA*—unlike its competitor, the *International Journal of Business Anthropology*—is here to stay. So do, please, submit your work and encourage your colleagues and students to do the same.

A state of greater permanence doesn't mean that everything in the garden (or, as an anthropologist, I should, perhaps, say "field") is rosy. At one stage during last autumn it seemed that my own impending retirement from the Copenhagen Business School led me to understand that the *JBA* had to be moved to a new website. So I entered into discussions—first with Bloomsbury Academic, and then with Vivian Berghahn—to see if there was any way that a publishing house might be willing to take over the administration of the journal while still keeping it Open Access (the very mention of which makes most publishers utter a cry of dismay since it deprives them of an up-front cash flow through subscriptions). To her enormous credit, Vivian—together with Marion Berghahn—worked out a plan whereby the *JBA* would indeed remain OA and be administered by Berghahn Books for free, in exchange for a "JBA Book Series." I persuaded James Carrier to join me as Series Editor and began to commission volumes accordingly.

Initial euphoria, alas, eventually had to yield to practicalities. Two things have become clear during the past month. First, although Vivian

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and Marion were prepared to give the arrangement a go, Berghahn was going to have a very hard time trying to make ends meet financially under the new arrangement—something which impacted on the form and content of the proposed book series. Second, it transpired that Claus Rosenkrantz Hansen, at the Copenhagen Business School, was more than happy for us to remain under his care at our present website, and that my retirement from CBS was in fact irrelevant to the future of the journal.

As a result, Berghahn Books, my co-editors and I have decided to keep the *JBA* where it is for now, but, at the same time, to try to set up a proper submissions system—something that many of you know isn't working properly right now. This isn't going to be easy—the fact that we editors are located all around the world doesn't help—but hopefully we'll be able to do something constructive over the next few months. If any of you “out there” has *any* experience or knowledge at all in setting up a journal submission system, do please let us know. We need all the sensible and practical advice we can get.

In the meantime, James and I are moving forward with the idea of a JBA Book Series and will be discussing things further with Vivian and Marion Berghahn at the AAA meeting in Denver later this month. I am, however, looking for somebody who might be willing to act in my stead as one of the series editors. I cannot shoulder the editorial responsibility for both journal and book series at the same time. Alternatively, we need a journal editor.

Will all volunteers please drop me a line, or stand in line in the Convention Center bar every evening during the forthcoming annual gathering of bearded weirdos and other anthropologists?

And now let us turn to the contents of this issue of the *JBA*. The two first articles throw light on different corners of the creative industries—creativity and innovation being a strong theme in this issue—by drawing in different ways on anthropological theories of magic and animism. One deals with a “talent pool” of intern fashion designers at HUGO BOSS; the other with *Snøhetta*, a Norwegian architect firm with a global range and reputation.

Kasper Tang Vangkilde draws on a range of anthropological theories of magic and prophecy to make sense of the work and experience of young fashion designers invited to create a collection for HUGO BOSS Orange. He shows that the fashion designer must have a fine-tuned sense, not only of what *is* happening, but of what *is going to* happen. To colonize that intermediate zone between being and becoming—half a pace ahead of the world—Vangkilde argues that designers must enter a “prophetic condition” and be possessed by the *Zeitgeist*. To analyse what is at stake in such creative processes, he uses theories of shamanism and animism to break with our common understandings of how we—or rather fashion

designers—sense or perceive the world. To the average reader *seeing* is something we do, directing our attention towards essentially “passive” objects. But to a BOSS fashion designer that is not the way the world looks. Quite the reverse: to the fashion designer certain objects and things become alive and active. They become *in-spired*, and in-spiration is the experience that some things make use of to *draw* the designers towards them, or, in an apt phrase, to “capture their attention.” As Vangkilde notes, it is often, paradoxically, second-hand things that catch their eye and help them conceptualise the new.

Hagen’s article uses magical theory to understand the labour process in an elite architectural firm during a period of downsizing. She uses concepts of myth and magic to analyse the experiences of architects during a series of cutbacks in the wake of the financial crisis of 2008. Magic, Hagen argues, provides ways of thinking devised to cope with risk; they are thus pertinent and relevant when we want to understand how companies strive to get ahead in today’s turbulent global markets. Like the fashion designers, architects struggle with the relationship between the new and the known, imitation and innovation. Hagen suggests that magic, understood as “the repetition of difference,” thus offers helpful practices in which innovation and imitation fuse. Generally the architects carry a deep affection for their firm, which even those who are fired hold in very high regard. The architects view themselves primarily as artists, and they talk contemptuously about “drawing for money” (thereby adhering unconsciously to Richard Caves’s distinction between “creative” and “humdrum” personnel and supporting Bourdieu’s distinction between “art” and “commerce”). While celebrating creativity, however, they also—in line with Howard Becker—frown on ideas of “the lone genius.” The company is instead grounded in an egalitarian ethos, which is reproduced in the foundation myth of entrepreneurial employees who, through collective effort, were able to seize an opportunity and win a prestigious competition, which eventually got the company off ground. The organizational context here is that of the Scandinavian welfare state, in the sense that the relatively generous economic support given to people temporarily out of work means that employees can afford to look at (temporary) unemployment as “just another mode of creative labour.”

The issue then embarks on discussions of innovation and creativity. In a very helpful essay, Benoît Godin outlines the historical development and use of the word “innovation.” Then the *JBA* makes its own innovation by introducing a “speed movie” by Simon Westergaard Lex and his students on—what else?—innovation. Then come ten opinion pieces, with an introductory essay by Brian Moeran.

The issue finishes with two articles by Zoran Slavnic and Kimberly Chong, together with an essay on emotion and the sense of the sacred in consumer rituals by Tom Maschio. The first article deals with another kind of creativity and precarious labour, this time from the margins of the

official economy. Taking its methodological starting point in the life story of Adem, a trained engineer who came to Sweden in the 1990s as a refugee from Bosnia, Zoran Slavnic describes the deregulation of the taxi industry over the last couple of decades. Whereas in Hagen's case, the Norwegian welfare state seemed to offer some protection for the architects in their condition of job insecurity, the reality for Slavnic's Swedish taxi drivers is quite different. He describes a labour market characterized by increasing deregulation, ethnic segmentation, and harsh competition—a condition of precarity driving down incomes forcing taxi-drivers to work still longer hours and to deploy informal economic strategies to survive. Slavnic's analysis links the processes of informalization, normally understood to be a salient characteristic of disadvantaged social groups, to larger structural and political developments of neoliberal transformations of contemporary capitalism.

In the last article, Kimberly Chong deals with a different segment of the workforce in another part of the world. Drawing on her fieldwork inside the Chinese arm of a global management consultancy she describes the conditions of so-called "knowledge-workers" in post Maoist China. More specifically, she analyses how practices of Corporate Social Responsibility clash with post-Maoist understandings. Through the analysis of a corporate citizen initiative—a charity bike ride, where a corporate managers and white collar employees ride bikes through rural parts of China to collect money—she unpacks the assumptions and practices behind CSR. The discourse of CSR gets its appeal and legitimacy by claiming to fill in the gaps of development produced by the absence of the state. But, as Chong argues, in China the state is seemingly omnipresent—a control which is enacted through paternalistic ties resembling those invoked by CSR. Chong points out how the charity event in particular, and CSR discourse in general, are predicated on evolutionist assumptions and "othering." The CSR discourse reproduces the difference between givers and receivers of help and fetishizes cultural "others" as rural citizens, who are less "sophisticated" and "un-modern." At another level, the discourse and experiences of the participants expressed and implied a particular view of China as still being trapped in a socialist legacy which is seen to be antithetical to global capitalist development.

So there you have it. Enjoy, and don't forget to sign up as either book series or journal editor!

*Jakob Krause-Jensen and Brian Moeran*