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Organizational Autoethnographies of Economy, Finance, Business and Management: Reflections and Possibilities[1]

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Introduction and Overview: Investigating the Economic and the Financial through Autoethnography

Economy, finance, business and management may seem, to some, distant from some of the more obvious preoccupations of organizational autoethnography and organizational autoethnographers. However, in this chapter, we write, both separately and together, as part of the bringing together of, first, a broad interest in economy, finance, business and management, and, second, an established and ongoing interest in emergent methods, including ethnography, (auto)biography, and specifically here organizational autoethnography.

Organizational autoethnography allows for specific insights concerning the understanding of economy, finance, business and management. It takes into account the lives and biographies of individuals in organizations, their emotions, normative orientations, their perceptions of work cultures, the stickiness of social relations in organizations and wider society, and the experienced material realities in these fields. These social dynamics cannot be grasped with (neo)classical economic theory and the idea of the *homo oeconomicus*. Rather, organizational autoethnography furthers the consideration and investigation of critical reflections on lives in and of institutions. Furthermore, it allows to better understand the relation between people in a problematic system and the system and to differentiate between the two.

Methods and ethics

Organizational autoethnography draws on a variety of methods, including the ethnographer's and others' accounts, organizational documents, more or less critical autobiography, memory work, creative and experimental writing, as well as ethnographic methods more generally,

oral history, reminiscence work, and psychoanalytic approaches. With Adams, Jones and Ellis (2014) we understand "[a]utoethnographic stories" as "artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name, and interpret personal and cultural experience" (p. 1). Autoethnography uses "deep and careful self-reflection – typically referred to as 'reflexivity' – to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political" (p. 2). The potential and contribution of organizational autoethnography is thus fairly clear in the reflexive exploration of experience of, and orientation and relation to, organizations, but perhaps less obvious is how organizational autoethnography may contribute to the study of and provide specific new insights on the economy, finance, business and management. Furthermore, in studying the economic and the financial, many methodological issues arise, for example around research access, ethics, as well as what kind of data is usable, and what data is ethical to use? What is formally public data? And to what extent should one respect financial and legal and business privilege of economic actors? And should one tread lightly or more confrontationally in analyzing the economic and the financial?

There are also what can be called narrative challenges in doing organizational autoethnography in and on economic, financial, business and managerial sites. Does one seek a neutral or a class-, gender- or ethnically-conscious narrative? How is domination of the public sphere and public discourse over the private sphere to be challenged? Is this suggestive of a shift in attention from heroic postures in the public sphere to lived contradictions between and within the public and the private, for both researcher and researched? And how is time to be represented, with temporal challenges moving from chronological linearity to some non-linearities? (see Hearn, 2010). In weighing these concerns and dilemmas, a critical stance in the broad sense is appropriate, and this is our guide, which will be followed by three separate contributions, written independently that look at specific instances and possible uses for organizational autoethnography in studying economy, finance, business and management.

What is the Economic? What is the Financial?

What is the economic, and what is the financial? And what are business and management? These are far from being simple open and closed, or indeed innocent, questions, especially when seen through organizational autoethnographic eyes (and other sense-organs)? Some of this concerns different disciplinary takes on what the economic is or how it is construed. For ourselves, we have all had significant experience and education in economics, but none of us currently work in the academic discipline of economics or would claim to be economists. Yet we all work, in different sites and locations, in and on political economy, economy and economic institutions, and further to that, in different ways, on finance, business and management. Rather, we locate ourselves in and between various disciplines, including economics, gender studies, knowledge management, organization and management studies, and sociology. Such various positionings make a difference to how the economic, the financial, business and management are to be seen, experienced and analyzed.

The economic, the financial, business and management are clearly much to do production, exchange, extent of material development and, in capitalist society, profit and financial returns, whether short- or long-term, but that is not all they are. After all, as will be noted in Jeff Hearn's account below, reproduction acts as a precondition and part of economy, organizations and management. The economic is itself also simultaneously cultural, as recognized in cultural materialism (Harris, 1979). Indeed, organizational autoethnography, in staying persistently with the experienced material realities, tends to problematize a strict separation of the economic, the financial, the managerial, on one hand, and the cultural, anthropological and carnal, on the other.

Autoethnographic Perspectives on Economy, Finance, Business and Management

After this joint examination of more general possibilities for furthering uses of organizational autoethnography in studying economy, finance, business and management, we now

turn to our separately contributed sections, written independently, on our different relations to and some uses of organizational autoethnography.

Karl-Erik Sveiby: Searching for Meaningful Work – Autoethnography as Anagnorisis

I have had the good fortune to be supervisor for several mature PhD students, who have started their studies at their work life's mid-term.[2] It is a time when many begin reflecting about the meaning of working life, which is the topic of this chapter section. I lean on the notion of *narrative identity*, which sees identity as an evolutionary dynamic concept configured by all the stories – true or fictitious – that a person tells about themselves (Ricoeur, 1985, 246-248). These stories unfold over time with agents assigned to actions in a chronological fashion, where one's self becomes the subject of interrogation and reflection (MacIntyre, 2012).

I will show how three managers-turned-doctoral-students (including my own experience) have used autoethnographic research for self-discovery, using three concepts from Aristotle's *Poetics*: *Peripeteia* (reversal, radical change of fortune); *Katharsis* (relief in form of the clarification of the sequence of events), as elucidated by Martha Husein (2001); and Kasper Bro Larsen's (2008) analysis of *Anagnorisis* (recognition; discovery of something central to the plot that the hero had known all-all along). I combine the three narratives in rough chronology; from peripeteia via katharsis to anagnorisis.

First, peripeteia:

Linda succeeded after her Master studies in securing what probably typifies a dream job for a business school graduate, an international management career at a US oil company:

> **Linda:** My job involved extensive travel, staying at hotels, which I enjoyed in the beginning. However, I began questioning my situation. One early morning I looked out of my hotel room's window high up above Houston, Texas, and saw the sun rising over a beautiful landscape – and masses of oil-drills pumping relentlessly up and down. *We are literally raping the Earth, I thought, and after this insight*

everything felt meaningless. I took the next flight back to London and submitted my resignation.

The second story is my own. I had left a manager position at Unilever in 1979 for a start-up, a publishing firm in financial press. Although we did not know it at the time, it was perfect timing; the roaring 80-ies when Sweden opened up its economy. We were economists, financial analysts and journalists with a dream: an employee-owned organization without the fetters of the big corporation.

> **KE:** I am standing on a chair at a café on Plaza Major in Madrid. It is a warm night in June 1988, we have had our annual conference dinner and I am about to be 40 years old. The partners are singing for me, but I am sad, because *we all know that this will be last of the traditional conferences with all of us present – the dream is broken. I also know that I will be one of those leaving*, but first I will have to administer the process to find us a partner to merge with. (Quote, translated from unpublished thesis, 1991)

These reversals were followed by more or less systematic search for meaningful work, where we ended up in PhD programs without knowing anything about autoethnography.

> **Linda:** A couple of years followed where *I went into 'search mode,'* including among other things, a half-year travel tour in Australia with my boyfriend and a one-year course in Sweden to become a well-being consultant. I then enrolled in the PhD program at Hanken. After much effort I also managed to get access to an animal shelter organization in Brisbane in 2010. I believed that *this would be the ideal place to meet people, who by saving animals had found meaning in their work life.* I was completely naive. Had I known what I was in for… (interview)
>
> **KE:** The process took two years (we merged with another publishing company) and then I began my PhD studies 1991 at the business and management faculty of Stockholm University while working part-time in the new firm. *I had no plan for*

academic career, and I was not interested in a job in the financial sector; I was just fed up, I guess. (reflection)

Lauri ten years into a banking career is half-way with his thesis and has become interested in the role of power in banking:

> **Lauri:** *I had never thought about an academic career.* My first jobs were in the business sector in construction companies. I did my master's thesis full-time between jobs and *my tutor asked if I was interested to continue with doctoral studies. I said yes and started with the courses 2008 without any plan for what to study.* The problem came first 2013. Current draft title: *Developing a Power Sensitive View of Knowing as Practice.* (interview)

Karl-Erik and Linda intuitively searched for *katharsis*:

> **KE:** This was when autoethnography was unknown in management research and my supervisor never suggested it. Still, *I felt a need to reflect and to explain to myself what had happened* during the eleven years of our partnership and *why the dream had broken. I just decided to first write a text without constraints – never to be published – all penned – and in which emotions were to come out.* I had my diaries and had full access to corporate and a couple of my colleagues' archives. *It was liberating* – an edited version was later published as part of my thesis. I called it 'historic method' and it was not until much later that I realized that it was 'autoethnographic'. (reflection)
>
> **Linda:** *I started a survey but felt that I could not get close enough.* Simultaneously, I collected observational data, got access to internal documents and wrote an extensive personal diary, but no-one could have prepared me for what I was to experience. Instead of enthusiastic employees and volunteers supporting suffering animals, I found exhausted shelter staff, overwhelmed by the sheer volume of animals that were traumatized, abused, aggressive, sick or just plain unwanted. For

every animal we could save and find a new home for, we were forced to kill at least the double. *I felt more and more that I needed to look at myself, my emotions. I found eco-feminism literature and there it was: Autoethnography.*

Lauri has reached a point where the positivist paradigm, which governs economics and business scholarship, stands in the way of his research interest:

> **Lauri:** A dilemma is that *I am part of what I wish to study. It felt unscientific,* how would I dare to do it? Autoethnography solves it. Autoethnography is *giving me the autonomy to feel what I feel.*

Finally, Anagnorisis:

> **Linda:** I went there to find meaning in the workplace. *I did find my values, because AE helped me to become authentic* and to dare being vulnerable. However, although the work involved life and death, *I found that the crass reality of how we organize our professional lives exists also there. I went through a personal growing process*; autoethnography is a tough school! (interview)
>
> **KE:** Professionally, I discovered *that managerial positions were not for me.* I appreciated the autonomy of a professional more and *I got the self-confidence to become self-employed* and to move to Australia with my family. Personally, *I discovered how organizational life can thwart even the best managerial intentions* – even the one I was instrumental in developing was not "good" for all of us. (reflection)
>
> **Lauri:** I am *learning to work with myself* in a different way than I would otherwise have done. I now want to work as an expert not only horizontally, but as career **–** *achieve the expert's freedom*. I have now got job offers that give such opportunities. *Competence liberates!* (interview)

What did we learn?

Lauri: That a doctoral thesis is a big job! What are my limits? How much time does it take? How many Christmas evenings? I have stressed, had stomach discomfort this summer. *I have learned to see things from the perspective of others. There is a freedom in writing that makes me reflect on my job in a way that I would not otherwise do.* (interview)

KE: I learned about *expressing emotions* and that theoretically demanding writing was fun. I also learned how my thesis: A "*knowledge perspective on organisation*" could be operationalized as a game, something that became a tool for management education later in my future work life. (reflection)

Linda: I applied and further developed a way to communicate emotional content in text and imagery; crystallization. (interview)

Reflecting

Lauri, in midst of process: Work life is more than money.

Linda, five years later: Although I was offered a tenured lecturer position at Griffith, I have returned to Finland. Here, I try to work according to my motto: "How can I serve?" I have space now.

KE, twenty-five years later: While in Australia I began to formulate my work life mission as "to help organisations be better for people". As a scholar, I'm still trying…

How does work become meaningful? When it aligns with one's personal values

The conclusion that work life is meaningful when it aligns with one's personal values is not a major insight, but in the context of this book *how we got there* might be of value. It was through an intellectually and emotionally very demanding process, by which we gradually liberated ourselves from constraints, both (self-)imposed and inherent in the social structures of Finnish and Swedish societies. The act to write an autoethnographic narrative, with our selves as the protagonist played a pivotal part, because it forced us to reflect about our emotions, and how they played an important part in what we did not see there and then - the discovery of something about *our selves*

that we had known all along - anagnorisis. As Lauri puts it: [It] *gives me the autonomy to feel what I feel.* Intriguingly, the process has also made us more critical against *the crass reality of how we organize our professional lives* (Linda), [that] *can thwart even the best managerial intentions* (KE).

Jeff Hearn: Three Phases of "Double" Organizational Autoethnography

So, what to tell? There are many ways … chronologically, or not; in one place or several; in relation to different people, forms of work or organizations. This writing is inevitably very selective, reducing many complications on how political economy work, doubly, both within and on organizations, to words on the page.

I. *Engrossment and escape from urban planning organizations:* It was in my late teens I shifted from Christianity to Marxism, and so to an interest in economics, political economy and imperialism. Whilst still at school and university, I worked over three summers in different town planning offices in London. My first job, temporary one summer, was to estimate the demand for extending the underground network south of the Thames into South-East London, and then later I was to tread the streets to gather planning data on small businesses in especially deprived areas. Economy infused the work, if often less than obviously.

Then, in the early 1970s, after studying Geography, Urban Planning and Sociology, and in order to get some quick cash I worked temporarily in a wholesale building suppliers, ordering bricks and kerbstones for building sites – capitalist economy at its clearest: buy from x, sell to y at a higher price – before full-time work in local government planning. My first task there was to evaluate, using gravity modelling techniques, the effects of a planning application for a hypermarket on the M1 motorway junction by the French company Carrefour – political economy embedded in abstracted consumer numbers. The work of urban planning in local government and later a new town development corporation was immensely absorbing, technically and intellectually, but it soon showed at first hand the power of land ownership, and local, sometimes national, politics. Through this, I also became more attuned, if passively, to how work organizations work,

specifically how economic and organizational processes can be seen through an anthropological lens.

Looking back, these were rather placid organizations harnessing specialized knowledge to deal with their organizational environments (Emery & Trist, 1965). However, the fact was *I had to get out*, before it was too late, before I was absorbed into this interesting, if alienating and passive, world, advising local councilors. Escape was made so much easier by my boss telling the young adult me my hair was too long (more organizational culture). I left to study organizations and management: the production and governing of individuals, and social control and coordination involved, as opposed to the instrumentalization of commercial reason in the 'market' (Bidet, 2016).

II. *Active engagement, gendered embodiment and another escape – from university organization and management:* So, after a Masters on Organization Studies in a Department of Management, I began university teaching, and learning, more about organizations. It was also around this time that questions of feminism, gender and profeminism came to the fore, personally and politically. First ventures into autobiographical writing were a short personal-political book on birth, children and childcare, written between 1978 and 1983 (Hearn, 1983).[3] In this, I used four broad frames: personal experience of being at a birth, work on and with children ("childwork"), doing politics for children, and theorizing reproduction in the widest sense. These represented an extension of 'the personal is political', to 'the personal is work is political is theoretical'. This frame has stayed with me since (e.g. Hearn, 2008). Most important was realizing that economy was based on reproduction as much or even more than production; seeing this meant drastic rethinking of economy, organizations and management as based in reproduction (O'Brien, 1981; Hearn & Parkin, 1986-87), away from malestream accounts of organizations, management, finance, business and political economy.

Back at the ranch, teaching in 1977 on organizations, it was thanks to the students' participation in co-planning the part of the course that I began teaching on "Women and

organizations," later becoming "Gender and organizations." At the time, this was novel, exciting, fed my interests, and was popular with most students; knowledge comes from margins.

Jumping forward, a key aspect in the 1980s/1990s was recasting gender and organizations in terms of embodied gendering of men and masculinities in organizations, management and economy (Collinson & Hearn, 1994): gender operating personally, politically, theoretically, and in/as work. This meant seeing both research and universities themselves through this lens, including harrowing research on men's violence and organizational responses to it (Hearn, 1998, 2014). A further test arrived when the staff asked me to become head of the three-subject department. It was a challenging, very embodied experience to try to do profeminist management at a time of neoliberal organizational transformation and resource cutbacks (Hearn, 2001, 2017), to manage in a different gendered mode that pleased some and confused others. In doing the impossible, I relied, 'traded', a lot on pre-existing, largely good, relations with most staff, and tried to balance conflicting interests, whilst disagreeing with some of them, and defending against pressures from management. It was physically exhausting being in-between top management and the academic shopfloor. This complex situation involved multiple social pressures within the organization and its disturbed and disturbing environment; survival, at several levels, depended on a good deal of flexibility around these various pressures (Emery & Trist, 1965). I came to realize I knew too much about how the place worked, how to (almost) get things done, and how limiting that was becoming; *I had to leave* before being stuck there for life, and so starting applying for jobs elsewhere.

III. *Dispersed management in a business school organization:* The move happened in two parts, first to another university, then to Finland, studying transnational business and working in due course in a business school – so moving from organization and management to a Department of Management and Organization. Work became more explicitly transnational, problematizing the nation, deconstructing the dominant, making the One(s) the Other(s) (Hearn, 1996), applying postcolonialism to the centre.

In 1997 my base became a business school, a place where "business," "firms," "companies," and "value chains" should be mentioned wherever possible, but not "capitalism," "capitalist," "exploitation," or "class". Managers and management were naturalized, hegemonic, ideological, sedimented. At first, I deliberately wore a jacket and carried a brief case; then later dispensed with both, and lugged a heavy backpack around. Yet, there, or here, it is always important to remember one works in a business school. In professorial discussions, I was often the odd one out.

Life, organizational life, was now also transnational, now based in ICTs, driven by externally-funded research projects, abundant doctoral students, and involving multiple universities, countries and colleagues, most with little long-term security. It was everyday organizing and managing, but now in a dispersed way, and in a much less predictable environment (Emery & Trist, 1965). Indeed exactly where the organization began and ended was hard to say. The more established I have become in career terms, the more chaotic it seemed: a more turbulent field environment with rather unpredictable scenarios and few clear cause-effect relations between the organization and its environment. Even after official retirement, it was hard to leave, as the organizing and managing was and is now in email, the body, and the brain. The privilege of leaving remains, but being able to leave is more elusive.

In each of these examples, economy, and specifically management, figures in a "double" way – within the organizations themselves and on the topic of organization(s) – as part of organizational autoethnography.

Anika Thym: Autoethno/biographies on Financial Organizations

Observing and questioning economic inequalities globally – especially due to longer stays in Venezuela and Tanzania – motivated me to study economics and business administration in Switzerland in order to understand how people make sense of these unequal relations and practices of domination. From the beginning, the economics classes made me feel uncomfortable. The impression remained that crucial questions – concerning inequalities – were neither asked nor

answered. With help of the gender studies courses I took and my Marx reading group I came to question the limited and limiting positivist neoclassical paradigms that were dominant in my BA education. I followed this questioning in my MA in gender studies and sociology. This autoethnographic inquiry led me to analyze (auto)biographical self-investigations and reflections by men in positions of high economic power in my ongoing PhD project: How do some men in leading positions in the financial sector question and critically reflect on themselves, the organizations they work for, their work culture and the social relations they are part of? The material I use consists of five autobiographical books by men who were in leading positions in the German, US and UK financial sector and 23 biographically oriented interviews that I conducted with protagonists from Swiss financial institutions. With excerpts of one interview (Felix, 50 years old) and one book (Wötzel, 2009) I will expound on their relevance and possible new perspectives for organizational autoethnography – once focusing on the person in the organization and once on the person's perspective on the organization.

Although autobiography and autoethnography overlap in many ways and autobiography often includes autoethnography (Roth, 2005; Zech, 1988), there are also differences. One difference concerns the historical context of the development of the genre. While autobiographies became important in the 18th century, with the development of bourgeois white heterosexual masculinity and its self-stylization as superior (Wagner-Egelhaaf, 2000), autoethnography has its origins in the 1970s (Adams et al., 2014, 16) as a critique of positivist and objective methods, a growing concern for ethics and (identity) politics. Second, the authors have a gradually differing relation to their text in time. While autobiographies are written after things happened and rely on memories, autoethnographies are more a reflection that accompanies the experience in the moment for the purpose of investigation (Adams, 2011, 157). At the same time, some reflections may only be possible with some distance in time. Investigations of the self in the present or on the past are therefore differently situated, neither is necessarily ethnographically more or less insightful. Third, autobiographies follow different literary requirements concerning character and plot development

(Lejeune, 1989). Fourth, "[a]utoethnography requires a researcher to make personal experience meaningful for others, and, consequently, say something about cultural experience and/or motivate cultural change" (Adams, 2011, 158). This element of analysis and interpretation of the self and its context also occurs more extensively within the autobiographical books and biographically-oriented interviews I work with. Concerning these moments of reflection and interpretation for the self and for others I here expound on the autoethnographic relevance of these (auto)biographical reflections on the self.

The book authors and interview partners often aim at making sense of their stories "in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles" and they strive "for social justice and to make life better" – as is characteristic of autoethnography (Adams et al., 2014, 2). Thereby, the analysis of such autobiography and autoethnography is always itself an act, a deconstruction which may do the author justice or not (Roth, 2005, 15). I am applying a *critical sympathetic reading* to the analyzed narrations of (ex)bankers and focus on their critical self-investigation.

Investigating the self in the organization: doing and undoing hegemonic masculinity

In the interview with Felix (a pseudonym, translations from Swiss-German AT) he describes his critical self-reflections on his life in financial organizations. He was member of the board of a Swiss bank and head of all the bank's branches in one Swiss city. He describes the "*good feelings*" he had due to his leading position.

> *"You feel honoured, if you are offered such a position, you know, I didn't go ask for it, I was asked (…) and then you simply feel honoured, you feel like you are somebody, you define yourself through that. As a man maybe even more so.*"

He cared about the high position, the salary plus bonus, being known by over 200 people to whom he was boss and which gave him a feeling of being important and powerful.

> "*You are with important people, go to important meetings with important people, you can take decisions that have consequences. You get the feeling of, I can move something.*"

He feels good about his position of power and reflects that defining himself though wage work and high social and economic status, is linked to his ambition to incorporate a "hegemonic masculinity" (Connell, 2010) and be part of the "hegemony of men" (Hearn, 2004a). Beside this process of *doing hegemonic masculinity*, he also describes a development of *undoing hegemonic masculinity* and of "*transformation.*" Felix explains how he suffers from the objectively, quantitatively overwhelmingly high work load, how he reached a limit and how his family "*broke apart*" as a result of his work situation. He had to reorient himself professionally and let go of the things that were the basis of his self-esteem. He had to "*let go of all the protheses where one thinks that they define you, which give you self-value.*"

Interestingly he then sees the status symbols as protheses. Things that were necessary for him to function, but in hindsight allowed him to work in a way he didn't consider healthy. The crisis and loss of those protheses allowed him a change in perspective.

> "*In the end it was the loss, the job-related loss, loss of status and the loss of the family or relationship, that lead to a restart. Both was very painful. The professional and the private loss. (…) you can say, figuratively speaking, you are in your cheese dome, with a golden, thing on the top, and then someone comes <snaps his finger> and hits the cheese dome and all the shards fall off and you are suddenly naked, and realize, oh, no protection anymore, from no side, right? Nothing is as it was … … and then coming out of that and to say, I am leaving my comfort zone, the cheese dome, the status-orientation, the security-orientation, the material. Losing all that in order to win something new. Or to realize something new and build something new. I think that was the path that made me, I believe, as I am today."*

Felix reflects on how this painful process of undoing hegemonic masculinity allowed him to lead a more self-determined and less status-oriented life. Crucial for him was the moment of self-reflection: "*I believe, self-reflection enables us to go in new directions concerning behavior, and, thus, how do I act, how do I perceive the things I see … I believe, if you want to progress and develop … that works, I am deeply convinced, primarily through self-reflection.*"

These excerpts of the interview with Felix show how reflection serves him for his critical self-inspection. A new moment of critical analysis and of sharing his autoethnographic observation for a scientific study to be published. It shows how Felix oriented himself towards a career in financial organizations and how this made him reach personal limits. How the work culture forced him to undo his hegemonic masculinity and reorient himself in life.

Investigating organizations (re)producing the hegemony of men

Rudolf Wötzel's (2009; original German; all translations AT) describes a similar biographical development as Felix in his autobiographical book. He worked for the UBS, Deutsche Bank and Lehman Brothers in the field of mergers and acquisitions. After a burnout he goes on a hike through the alps during which he decides to drop out and work instead in a restaurant in the Swiss alps. His book contains some thick descriptions of the work cultures in his banking career, which can be read as hindsight autoethnographic reflections. In one passage he describes his colleagues:

> Winner types with lacquered side partings and smug, perfidious, confident grins. The hard leather soles of their flawlessly glistening hand-made shoes clicked in a distinctly male way on the floor (…) W. [distancing himself from his former self, he calls his banker-self W.] looked into the grimace of his permanently grinning counterpart. He felt a strong inner urge to hit into this perma-grin, simply so that it would stop. But he grinned back and began, with inner reluctance, to sell himself to his counterpart. W. was disgusted by himself (Wötzel, 2009, 52f.).

Later, he further describes his colleagues typical "carefully differentiated attitude towards other hierarchy levels: towards the own boss with eloquent submission, towards equals with artificial camaraderie, as one encounters it among members of elite clubs, towards subordinates, but only if one needs something from them, patronizing pomposity. The rest, 99.99 percent of humanity, are irrelevant (…) and to be treated accordingly" (ibid., 96). He thus describes and criticizes the strategically inauthentic work culture and hegemonic male performance of his colleagues, the

institution's lack of responsibility concerning their actions and the negative effects on others and society as a whole. In particular, he questions the growing global inequalities that result from this institutional apparatus. Wötzel thus gives insights into his financial organizations and their work culture by means of autoethnographic thick descriptions of his work relations.

Discussion

The Economic and the Financial under Capitalism

Having said all this, organizational autoethnographic approaches are not simply matters of either reflexive method or disciplinary positioning. They are built on the shifting form and character of the sites in question, in this case, of the economic, financial, business and managerial. Here, we highlight three key features. First, capitalist economy is (probably inherently) subject to major changes, booms and slumps. As capitalism develops, the organic decomposition of capital[4] rises more than the rate of surplus value, the relative importance of direct exploitation of labour diminishes, the rate of profit and new value falls, and then in due course investment and Gross Domestic Product slump … or in other words, economic crisis ensues.

Second, the global economy, and global capital accumulation, are incredibly concentrated, and probably becoming more so. Analysis of all 43,060 transnational corporations in 2011 found 147 own interlocking stakes of one another, and together control 40% of the wealth in the whole network (Vitali et al., 2011). A 2013 study of the largest corporations in four countries found growing concentration of ownership in the hands of finance capital over three decades (Peetz et al., 2013): "When one organisation alone controls more than 6% of shares in very large global corporations, and 30 control more than half of all shares in these corporations, that signifies very high concentration"; "BlackRock Inc. is relatively unknown outside financial circles, but it owns the largest share in the biggest 299 companies in the world" (Peetz & Murray, 2017).

Third, financialization – the rising ratio of financial profit to profits in productive sector – has led onto huge and fantastic economic inequalities. Thomas Piketty (2014) explained how

returns on capital (especially financialized capital) are tending to exceed the rate of GDP growth, and thus act as a driver of increasing economic polarization and threatening extreme inequalities. Thus, "(a)lmost half of the world's wealth owned by 1 percent of the population. … the bottom half of world's population owns the same as the richest 85 people in the world." (Fuentes-Nieva & Galasso, 2014, p. 2-3; see Hardoon et al., 2016). Fuentes-Nieva and Galasso (2014) continue: between 1980 and 2012, the richest 1% increased their share of income in 24 out of 26 countries for which they had data; in the US, the wealthiest 1% captured 95% of the post-financial crisis growth since 2009, while the bottom 90% became poorer.

The Global and the Transnational

These economic and financial matters are clearly not confined to local, particular or exceptional organizations, but extend across the globe, with transnationally organized finance and economy. This raises the question of how to move away from the local ethnographic moment and methodological nationalism, and bring together organizational autoethnography and transnational economy, finance and research sites (Hearn, 2004b). Michael Burawoy and colleagues' (2000) collection *Global Ethnography* is one model here; other inspirations come from migration studies, transnational feminism (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994), and transnational studies (Khagram & Levitt, 2008). Guided by such approaches, organizational autoethnography assist in exposing and problematizing post- and (neo)colonial, (neo)imperialist, racist, patriarchal, homophobic logics of political economy. Furthermore, the economic and the financial are intimately related to environmental concerns. This is reflected below in Karl-Erik's discussion, when Linda writes "We are literally raping the Earth, I thought, and after this insight everything felt meaningless. I took the next flight back to London and submitted my resignation" – thus questioning the whole enterprise of extractivism (see Tilley, 2017, on extraction and extractive or piratic methods in social science). Organizational autoethnography can run counter to extractivism, in both critical substantive content and academic form and ethics.

The Limits of Neoclassic Economic Theory

In these dire economic contexts, organizational autoethnography facilitates critical reflection on the experience of the limits of neo-classical economic theory in one's work-context and therefore question it. Autoethnography allows for a critical analysis of capitalism that shows the mechanisms of class productions, which neo-classical economics avoids mention, thus covering up the injustice of things as they are. It also shows the messiness of life, which is often not captured by the idea of the *homo oeconomicus*. A challenge to organizational autoethnography may lay in understanding the relation of autoethnographic 'subjective' experience and the 'objective' complex happenings in an organization (see Longlands, 2019).

As will be shown, many of Anika's interview partners began to question how class relations are created within the legal trade between supposed equals (as Marx 2010 also did). Why do they have high salaries and carpenters or cleaners low ones, when everyone works so hard? Where does the money come from, that ends up as their bonus? They show how money is being redistributed from bottom to top through the structuring of financial products or unequal information and how the market does not allocate scarce resources in an intelligent or fair way. How is it that wealth does not trickle down to the poor, but rather to luxury shops and Ferrari dealers, and disadvantages the poor further, as autoethnographic explorations in the autobiographical books discussed below by Anika show (Anderson, 2010; Handon, 2015;). These men demonstrate on the basis of their work experience how society does actually not – as neoclassical economics argues – face a "trade off … between efficiency and equity" (Mankiw & Taylor, 2011, p. 5), but now finance is often inefficient *and* produces inequity and inequality.

The Lure of Capitalism's Machine Room

Organizational autoethnography can play a major role in helping at least some people in today's organizations to understand their "true self," and thereby the reality of today's

organizational work life. For example, Karl-Erik's former publishing firm and financial analysis served the Swedish stock market, its listed corporations, the world of finance and the banking industry during the roaring 1980's. They were serving the Swedish machine room of capitalism as it began accelerating. It was dramatic, captivating and exciting. Relatedly, Karen Ho's (2009) excellent ethnography tells the Wall Street insider version (also see Zaloom, 2006). They were not inside, but were tantalisingly close to experience first-hand the fabulous incomes and dazzling lifestyle of their brokers, and suddenly financial analysis expertise became elevated from nerdy backstage to frontstage. The temptation became too much; several of the best financial analysis partners left, and the partnership broke.

Hegemony Self-Critique of Bourgeois Men and Masculinity

Organizational autoethnography may accompany a process of hegemonic self-critique, exploring and questioning the discipline of economics and dominant neo-classical theory, the (global) capitalist political economy, finance, business and management (for the term, hegemony self-critique, see Thym, 2018, 2019). Critical knowledge not only comes from the margins, but can also come from the centres of economic power – as the critiques from within multinational companies and financial institutions mentioned show. Organizational autoethnographic explorations of companies and of the self also show how capitalist economy is intrinsically linked with bourgeois hegemonic masculinity.

The men in Anika's interviews and the analyzed books wished to be in a powerful position, to manage others, be someone's superior, desired for status in the public or private sphere and the recognition granted through it especially to men. Aspects of what Bourdieu (2001) coins "libido dominandi" constitute characteristics central for the functioning of a capitalist political economy, as many critical researchers of men and masculinity have shown (cf. Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Hearn, 2004a; Connell & Wood, 2005). Due to this constitutive connection of bourgeois capitalist society and hegemonic masculinity, the men reflecting critically on class relations do so while

simultaneously changing their selves as men towards more social, and sometimes also gender, justice. They liberate themselves from hegemonic masculine capitalist "character masks" (Marx, 2010; Jackson, 1990/2014), and feel they can live more authentic, ethically more fulfilling lives. They change their ethics, their values, and chose to live differently, individually and in the world.

Conclusion: Are Economic Enterprises and Organizations (Becoming) Bad for People?

We, the authors of this chapter, have worked in and with organizations and corporations, big and small for many years, and we have rarely, perhaps even never, experienced a "good-for-people" organization. The issue is not poor management; most, if not all, managers we have met are morally honest and working hard for, and caring about, their people, although a change of subjectivities is no doubt a necessary part of an emancipatory transformation. However, they and the executive levels are formed and constrained by the relentless machine driven by the whip of competition. Information and communication technology is on the verge of dehumanizing organizations, not least through surveillance capitalism (Zuboff, 2019). The human side of management is losing ground, especially since the end of the Soviet Union, which 'liberated' capitalist societies from their 'obligation' to compete with socialist states with regard to redistribution, social security and stability. Meanwhile, the technology side is expanding under the banner of "Growth", and the imperative "Improve performance!" supported by the dubious carrot "Innovation is Good" (see Sveiby et al., 2012). For whom? The employees? Their families and communities? Society? The environment? In facing such questions, organizational autoethnography assists in opening a critical space on experienced material realities of economy, finance, business and management.

Organizational autoethnography directed to economy, finance, business and management enhances knowledge of experience of organizations, understanding of institutions, and challenges and preconditions for improvements for how we organize life in a people- and nature-oriented way. It acknowledges diverse perspectives – academic, personal, political, inside and outside organizations – on political economy, autoethnographic sources, and changing global economic,

productive and reproductive fields in which they are situated. It strengthens critique of domination concerning the individual and the collective, centre and margins. Organizational ethnography seeks to overcome separation of the political economic and the personal, by questioning the first through the second.

Notes

1. We are grateful to the editor for his constructive feedback on an earlier draft of the chapter.
2. Karl-Erik Sveiby gratefully acknowledges his cooperation with Linda Tallberg and Lauri Storbacka.
3. JH: A little later, one of my close departmental colleagues put the short personal-political book on their 'Human Development and Socialization' course reading list, without even mentioning beforehand, which seemed odd, but not problematic.
4. The organic composition of capital refers to ratio of the value of materials and fixed costs [constant *capital*, from *earlier labour*] embodied in production of a commodity to the value of labour-power [variable *capital*] used in making it.

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