Collaboration between researchers and their “informants” in business and organizational ethnography has become an increasingly important dimension of both anthropological and organizational studies inquiry [1]. However, although both disciplines have explored pushing theoretically and methodologically beyond the norms of solo research, there has been relatively little dialog between the two. Given these parallel, but siloed, developments, I suggest that discussions about para-ethnography and feminist para-ethnography, emanating out of cultural anthropology, are of relevance to thinking about the nature of collaborative research not only within anthropology but also in the broader scholarship on organizations, society and change emanating from business schools. More specifically, the concepts of para-ethnography and feminist para-ethnography provide interesting avenues into thinking through the relationship between academia and the realms of corporate, and other organizations, and more broadly the cultures of expertise. This includes the positionality of ethnographers and their interlocutors, and how the incorporation of participants as more than informants provides the potential for new intermediary forms of knowledge making and intervention in the world. As such, this essay marks the beginning of thinking about ways to bridge a divide between (1) a recent surge of interest among anthropologists in creating new kinds of ethnographic and theoretical partnerships that are expanding the boundaries of disciplinary practice and impact (Boyer and Marcus, 2021a, b; Davis and Craven, 2016; Holmes and Marcus, 2021); and (2) recent work in business schools on the role of critical academics in working with wider networks and allies to bring about change (Contu, 2019; Hoffman, 2021) [2].

About a decade ago, I published my ethnography *Wall Street Women* and an article entitled, *Towards a Feminist Para-Ethnography on Gender Equality Policy Making in Business* (Fisher, 2012a, b). In the article, drawing on nearly two decades of research – fieldwork with women on Wall Street, consulting work as a business anthropologist and a new project on global gender equity initiatives based in the United Nations – I discussed the challenges of studying ethnographically the global gender policy movement. Working in new assemblages of institutions, persons and practices, I wrote, had altered my understanding of the purpose of anthropology. It had entailed a shift away from following, analyzing and describing, in my case, the first generation of Wall Street women from the fifties to 2010, several years after the financial crisis. Attending UN gender equality conferences, composed of state, corporate, and academic actors coming together, for example, I suggested, entailed the recognition that I was navigating a field in which others were already conducting research, taking action, and...
making policy on gender, and that these elite actors were themselves already engaged in some form of ethnographic inquiry.

My article argued that global gender equity initiatives were feminist para-ethnographic sites. My term built on the work of anthropologists Douglas Holmes and George Marcus on para-ethnography, “the conception that traditional objects of study have developed something like an ethnography of both their predicaments and those who have encroached upon them, and their knowledge practices in this regard are in some ways parallel to the anthropologist’s and deserving of more consideration than mere representation in the archives of the world’s people that anthropologists have created” (Holmes and Marcus, 2006, p. 35) [3]. In the essay, I described my experience zig-zagging from a purportedly “pure” academic ethnographic project on finance (my book about Wall Street women) to ostensibly applied ethnographic projects on behalf of businesses, and to participating and observing in a set of meetings about global gender initiatives in which I was no longer sure of the boundaries between of/for business, researcher/informant and business/non-business. With respect to the latter types of projects, I increasingly found myself engaged in the para-ethnographic, navigating a range of collaborative and experimental projects.

More recently, in the midst of the pandemic, I find myself engaged in the para-ethnographic once again. Specifically, I have moved from conducting a project on the future of work based on in-person fieldwork in Copenhagen from 2017 to 2018, to spending the past year at my dining room table in Manhattan, zooming with workplace experts based not only in Copenhagen, but Paris, Chicago and other global cities. Engaging in conversations with these experts has entailed the recognition that I am digitally navigating a field in which others are already conducting research, writing reports, participating in webinars, and influencing decisions about the future of work, and that these elite experts are themselves already engaged in some form of ethnographic inquiry.

Given that the changing conditions of our world, including the rise of the knowledge economy, the globalization of business, as well as the financial, environmental, humanitarian and now particularly the pandemic crises, are reshaping the field-sites and forms of ethnographic inquiry of what constitutes business and organizational ethnography from the material to the partially digital, I want to raise a number of central questions in this essay: What exactly is business and organizational anthropology/ethnography in the 21st Century? What is the relationship between ethnographers and their interlocutors in the field of business and other realms, and how do these relationships shape the production of knowledge? And finally, how might academics (anthropologists, organizational scholars and others) reconceptualize working with one another (and other partners) while engaging in international as well as interdisciplinary collaborations that traverse the humanities and sciences in innovative ways?

I argue that there is no one such thing as business or organizational ethnography (Fisher, 2017, 2019). Nor is the field simply defined by its inhabitants, academic anthropologists/ethnographers studying business and organizations and those working on behalf of industry, along with the distinctions and overlaps between them (Fisher, 2017; Moeran, 2015). Business here is not conceptualized or studied as an isolated organizational form or practice. Instead, as pioneering organizational anthropologist, Marietta Baba drawing on new institutional theory points out, business refers to an institutional field composed of organizations and actors including, for example, firms, suppliers, consultants, customers, even activists and artists, and beyond (Baba, 2012). And these institutional fields produce different forms and articulations for collaborative business and organizational anthropology and ethnography.

**Collaboration in anthropology and business schools**

My narratives about my experiences and my methodological reflections of engaging in my earlier project on Wall Street, and now the future of work, are not simply anecdotes or even
only ethnographic insights into ideas about work. They are of relevance to thinking about the nature of research not only within anthropology but within the broader scholarship on organizations, society and change emanating from business schools.

First, they are part of a broader set of conversations within anthropology about the refunctoning of ethnography. Here I refer to debates around the role, methods, and conditions of ethnography when anthropologists move into terrains such as finance, science, Hollywood and international institutions in which they increasingly are engaged in “studying sideways” – working with experts whose craft in some ways parallels his/her/their/our own (Hannerz, 2004; Holmes and Marcus, 2006, 2021; Ortner, 2010, 2013).

Second, my accounts are also germane to the work of organizational, business, and management scholars and ethnographers working out of business schools (Hoffman, 2021). Notably, although the ideas of para-ethnography and feminist para-ethnography were established in organizations (Central Banks and Wall Street), they are largely absent from the organizational and management literature, with the exception, to my knowledge of my earlier work, and that of organizational scholar Gazi Islam (Fisher, 2012b; Islam, 2014). Nonetheless, they are of significance to these scholars, who like their anthropological counterparts, not only recognize that the knowledge workers they study draw on social science theory and method at work, but are themselves, “increasingly self-conscious of their own status as professional workers, organizational insiders, or field researchers linked to specific organizational contexts, rather than as detached and autonomous observers (Islam, 2014).” As such, my work is of relevance to discussions in the critical studies of organization and management that highlight the embeddedness of researchers in complex relationships with their informants, and that recognize, as management scholar Alessia Contu argues that “academics are always already embedded in a praxis where knowledge (its production and circulation) is paramount” (Contu, 2019, p. 3). This includes the work of scholars who pursue postcolonial feminist and other feminist praxis in relation to organizational and management theory and research, and whose work addresses the challenges such frameworks bring to ethnography, including issues of positionality (Deschner and Dorian, 2020; Manning, 2016; Ozkazanc-Pan, 2008, 2012) [4].

In the remainder of this essay, I build on my consideration of the histories, methods, theories, and epistemologies of the growing fields of business and organizational anthropology/ethnography. Specifically, I present a narrative account of my recent and ongoing endeavors, including roles and positions, as part of several collaborative projects, each with an eye on how the pandemic is reshaping our collaborative efforts: These include my participation as (1) a consultant to transnational networks of policy makers on gender, labor and finance; (2) an advisor/informant to directors and producers of films about gender and the economy; (3) a researcher on the future of work and (4) a collaborative researcher in Global Foresight: Anticipatory Governance and the Making of Geo-Cultural Scenarios, a collaborative research group set up by Christina Garsten of the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University and Swedish Collegium for Advance Study, along with a group of affiliated anthropologists as well as management and legal scholars.

In the narration of these various endeavors/roles, I critically interrogate different types of collaborative ethnographic engagements with individuals, businesses and organizations while simultaneously investigating their overlaps. Drawing on Stockholm project, I conclude with a discussion of forms of collaborative conceptual work, transpiring within the research group, separate and apart from our individual fieldwork projects, and how such forms might provide models for future collaborative work not only in business and organizational anthropology but business schools more broadly (Marcus, 2013; Korsby and Stravrianakis, 2016).
Into the para-ethnographic

My own experience and perception of working within para-ethnographic sites derives from my long-term involvement with a small set of the first generation of women working on Wall Street. For the first two decades of my career, this entailed shifting back and forth between more sustained fieldwork in the women’s firms and professional and political networks, and more intermittent visits and attendances at their networked events in New York City and Washington DC, interspersed with conducting somewhat parallel fieldwork on behalf of profit and non-profit organizations. More recently, over the past decade as a faculty member at New York University and the University of Copenhagen, it has involved traversing back and forth between university life and a variety of projects, some of which emerge out of my ties with Wall Street women. Still other projects develop out of more academic and practical concerns, concerns that I share with others about the shifting role of business in relation to society, particularly in the wake of the recent global financial, environmental, humanitarian and now pandemic crises.

When I was in the midst of completing the research for my Wall Street women book, and as the financial crisis was unfolding in 2010, the women were themselves reaching the ends of careers on Wall Street yet involving themselves in new projects which I wrote about in the end of my book. Notably, most of their projects were global in nature – Barbara Krumsiek (her real name) for example, whom I met originally in 1994 working on Wall Street, had become the CEO of Calvert, a global leader in socially responsible and sustainable investing based in the Washington DC area. In 2004 she and her firm created the first global code of corporate conduct focused exclusively on empowering women and on advancing and investing in women worldwide. Five years later (one year after the onset of the financial crisis) the firm partnered with the United Nations Global Compact and UNIFEM to create the Women’s Empowerment Principles.

As I began attending yearly conferences on the Women’s Empowerment Principles (WEP), and interviewing the various players that created the WEP, I realized that my original project on Wall Street had not only been ethnographic but already para-ethnographic, that is, some of the Wall Street women and I had in some ways engaged in somewhat parallel endeavors, interpreting, assessing, and redressing gender inequality in finance and beyond. As I met various people associated with the WEP, I found myself interacting with an increasingly complicated and vast cast of actors from non governmental organizations (NGOS), the State Department, the UN, Wall Street, corporations and academics. And as I engaged with them, it became increasingly clear to me, as I have written elsewhere, that I was embedded in neoliberal feminist para-ethnographic spaces (Fisher, 2017).

Wall Street, connectivity and capital

Wall Street women’s networks extend far beyond their original or current companies. Their networks constitute something akin to what anthropologist Christina Garsten, drawing on her work with networks of think tank professionals, calls “an economy of connections”. Specifically,

The networks . . . constitute something like an “an economy of connections” in which referrals and references take the form of valuable symbolic capital in a highly competitive and politicized form of exchange. That is an economy, in the sense that social connections and referrals are provided as gifts between trusted parties. The connection may provide access to yet other valuable resources, like information, attention, or a job opportunity, which may in the long run, translate into financial resources. Introductions and referrals to high-ranking, influential people are seen as gifts, in the sense that they are tokens of a relationship that is seen as valuable enough to invest in and in which there may be an anticipation of reciprocity. In return, the recipient of the gift is expected to recognize the value in the act of the giver, to provide the giver with the information about the unfolding of the contact and be ready to assist with useful connection in the future (Garsten, 2013, p. 151).
My first experience doing fieldwork on Wall Street women was as an outsider brought in by an insider, notably Candy Straight (her real name), an investment banker. My academic credentials counted for something, but it has really been since the publication of my book – its coverage in the international media and academic journals, plus my giving talks – that I have something to return as well as connecting and moving within a range of loosely related professional women not only in finance, but the policy world and even, as I will discuss shortly, Hollywood. Thus, over time, I have become increasingly aware of circulating within an economy of connections composed of women (and men) not only in finance, but politics, film and civic society.

Feminist transnational para-policy ethnographic sites. Recently, my networking in global policy circles has brought me into more formal transnational female-driven collaborative networks that seek to create policies and commitments that foster gender equality and economically empower women. Specifically, in 2017, I joined an invited group of United States Delegates to the Women’s 20 (W20), the official G20 engagement group focused on gender equity. Together we work to mainstream gender considerations into G20 discussions and the G20 Leader’s Declaration.

The Women’s 20 is, in effect, a feminist para-ethnographic site, in which various gender experts (policy makers, business-people, civic actors and academics) collaborate to write a formal communique to the G20. The communique presents various policy recommendations on gender and labor, financial and digital inclusion, and the underlying rational for the policies. Writing the communique is an arduous process, often requiring weeks, if not months, of the W20 delegates working and reworking drafts and the coming together in a final meeting to hash out the structure, narrative and details (including specific wording) of the document.

While I have been working as an advisor to the W20 for several years, my sense of it being a feminist para-ethnographic enterprise became particularly acute a month into the pandemic lockdown, when we were actively writing the preamble to the communique. Here is an excerpt from my fieldnotes:

On the morning of Friday April 17th 2020, as a faculty member in Columbia University’s School of International and Public Affairs Gender and Public Policy Program, I attended a webinar on the Gendered Dimensions of the Pandemic: the implications of Covid-19. Various scholars and activists sounded alarm bells about the potential devastating effects of covid on women. That afternoon, after the webinar, I opened up my email to work on the pre-amble to the W20 communique draft. I was somewhat surprised that it barely mentioned the pandemic, let alone its consequences on women. To be fair, it had been written just prior to the global lockdown. But I immediately wrote an emphatic email to my US colleagues:

Dear all: Apologies for the delay in my remarks on the text. My main comment regards the overall text. This morning I was in a two-hour international meeting with academics, activists, and policy makers about the gendered impact of the virus and pandemic It is clear that the pandemic will impact every sphere of life as we have known it and that women are and will continue to be particularly badly affected. Given this, it seems to me that the current text does not sufficiently identify and address the gendered impact of the covid virus in general and how, in particular, the pandemic and subsequent lock down, and “reset” will impact the areas we are targeting in the communique such as labor, for example. It’s clear that there are more women on the front lines of this crisis, and they are in poorer paying jobs. It seems to me that we need to make more of a connection between what is happening in the gendered labor market and what will happen and what measures and practices need to be put in place. I think we need to do this in all sections, so in financial inclusion etc. In conclusion, we need the G20 countries (and their mostly male leaders) to be held accountable. This is my opinion as a feminist economic anthropologist. I believe we discussed this as an issue in our last zoom call. Perhaps it has been decided not to fully flag the crisis? Thank you for your time and consideration.
My colleagues agreed, and in a flurry, we redrafted the preamble to include the pandemic and shared it with the other delegates who agreed. Of course, neither I, nor the US delegates as a team, can take full credit for the shift in the narrative of the communique to address the gendered dimensions of the pandemic. There were, to be sure, other voices emanating from other W20 delegations, including those of Saudi Arabia who hosted last year’s W20. However, I can report that our collectively taking a stand was, at the very least, in part responsible for the W20 as a whole taking a strong policy position on the gendered consequences of the pandemic early on. As such, I read our para-ethnographic collaborative efforts as an example of feminist academics and others working together to have important political effects on the lives of women.

Feminist para-cinematic ethnographic sites: equity – reinventing Wall Street films (2014-present). In my Wall Street women book, I wrote about the women’s ties and networks, how they changed or remained the same over time and how particular women “acted as ‘brokers’” for female financial friends, bringing in and connecting the women to various institutions of power, over time, including corporate boards. In other words, the women made up an economy of connections. While I understood the importance of having specific relationships with the women to gain access to their firms, networks and projects, I did not, at the time of the writing of the book, realize how deeply embedded I had become in their networks and how some of the women would act as brokers for me, post the publication of the book, connecting me to various actors and institutions – what were in effect para-ethnographic sites of various forms – not only in finance or policy circles such as the W20, but as it turned out Hollywood.

In the summer of 2014, I received an email from a woman I call in my book Constance Burke.

Melissa – I am introducing you to Sarah Thomas a film maker who is making a film that focuses on Wall Street through the eyes/experience of women. I was recently introduced to her by a former (male) colleague at my firm, and I suggested to her that she should read your work and meet with you. “Constance”

Soon thereafter I met with Sarah and her co-producer Alysia Reiner, in Sarah’s Soho loft in downtown Manhattan, about their indie-film – Equity – in the making. I became, in effect, an informal advisor/informant – informing them of the history of women on Wall Street and their lives which in turn helped them to shape the screenplay. I also connected them to one of the women in my book, Candy Straight, who became the film’s Executive Producer and main investor. In a fascinating ethnographic twist Sarah and Alysia then drew on Candy and my Wall Street ties to find women to interview and shadow in their firms, effectively reproducing some of the very same ethnographic techniques I had originally used in researching my book.

Spending time with the actresses, screen writers, Wall Street women individually, and at fundraisers and ultimately film festivals, on the one hand allowed me to engage in more traditional ethnographic research, resulting in a 2016 article: Wall Street Women in Film (Fisher, 2016b). It also thrust me into what I call a feminist-para-cinematic-ethnographic site in which I collaborated as an expert informant and collaborator in the making of the film. In January of 2016, the rights to the film were bought by Sony Classics, and it opened first in the USA and then parts of Europe and the rest of the world including Japan, the following summer. In yet another wrinkle in the para-ethnography, Candy Straight and I brought the movie in 2016 to financial firms, universities, and museums, to show and to use as a pedagogical tool to discuss gender and diversity in the workplace. And, a year later, in 2017, I showed Equity to women in Germany as part of an invited speaking tour, at the invitation of the United Embassy in Berlin. The tour was designed to help women advance in their careers in finance and other industries.
And my collaboration with filmmakers has continued into the present moment. In November of 2020, a well-known feminist activist/filmmaker wrote to me: having read my Wall Street women book, she wants to develop a film on women, gender and the global economy. That collaboration is still unfolding, and I find myself once again embedded in the feminist para-cinematic ethnography. And this time, I have been invited to help shape the vision and story line of this feature film.

*Future of work para-ethnographic sites: (2017–present).* So far, I have discussed projects in which I have been explicitly invited in as a collaborator and have tried to be cognizant of how my presence and impact as a feminist anthropologist can be effective in the world. I want to turn now to focus on my own project on the future of work. During my research this past year, a particular event has triggered and shaped most of my conversations: the pandemic, or more specifically the radical restructuring of knowledge-based work that stopping it has required. Thus, my research during this period has consisted of discussions with workplace experts, often called futurists, around the world. While the topic of conversation varies, of key concern amongst most of my interlocuters is the fate of the physical office.

The site of my fieldwork is Zoom, and I connect with interlocutors around the world from my own living room. Notably, digitally extending my network of workplace experts beyond my initial field sites in Copenhagen in 2017 has made my ethnographic research far more multi-sited than I ever envisioned prior to the pandemic. Beyond this, the experience has entailed the recognition that I am embedded in a *virtual* para-ethnographic, that I am digitally navigating a field in which others are already conducting research, writing reports, participating in webinars, and influencing decisions about the future of work; and, once again, I recognize that these elite experts are themselves already engaged in some form of ethnographic inquiry.

Take, for example, my monthly conversations with the Director of Global Research for a global corporate real estate firm whom I will call Diana. Since our initial introduction last March, I have received monthly email requests from “Diana” labeled “let’s talk” and “catch up.” Notably, our discussions do not neatly fit into the standard ethnographic interview format in which I, the anthropologist, ask questions to uncover the “native’s point of view” or “local perspective” on the future of work, to elicit data that I then analyze and interpret. Instead, our conversations are back and forth discussions of our ideas, thoughts, and sentiments about the future of work, workers, and the office. Sometimes Diana tests ideas she is putting forth in soon-to-be published articles. Indeed, I often hear about research just conducted, her own and others’. I offer my own thoughts and interpretations, sometimes interjecting anthropological concepts of work, gender, race and power.

So how and why do I read our conversations as emblematic of the para-ethnographic?

In the expert research culture of the built environment, namely global corporate real estate, researchers, executives and brokers have had to act extremely quickly in the midst of the pandemic. This has entailed creating and analyzing “real-time” data. On the one hand, these knowledge workers have been constantly generating a skein of information – typically, highly quantitative survey data about work, workers, workplaces, industries and markets – since the onset of the lockdown. On the other hand, they also collect a different kind of information in ongoing conversations with a network of experts (managers, office workers and others, including anthropologists like myself). This information about buildings, space, people, cities and markets is endowed with social perspective and meaning. It is the latter, rather oblique form of knowledge practice, which I have observed in my conversations with the Director of Research and others in the built environment industries – again, typically glossed as “let’s talk” or “catch up” – that I would argue the para-ethnographic takes form, and it is under these conditions that key cultural practices of workplace experts converge with my own analytic endeavors as an ethnographer.
In other words, when the Director of Researcher and others similarly positioned in the “built environment” industry talk with me (the anthropologist) and various other experts (as I have come to learn they have been continually doing since lockdown), they are doing something that approximates ethnographic labor: they are trying to grasp and represent the social and cultural nature of the pandemic moment. And they do so in order to create public narratives about the future of work for a particular purpose: to anticipate and perform the future, to capture shifting configurations of feelings, expectations, and sentiment about, in this particular case, the office, capital, and real estate (Holmes and Marcus, 2006, p. 38). As such, I read their practices as instantiations of global foresight and anticipatory governance, where anticipatory governance is broadly understood as organized attempts to steer large-scale changes in the built environment by predicting and forecasting what may be about to happen in the world of work (Garsten and Sorbonne, 2018).

Given all this, I want to point out that I am increasingly cognizant of my own role as an academic navigating these spaces: How might my participation contribute, unwittingly, in imagining and building a future that reproduces class, gendered and racial hierarchies in the workplace and labor market? And more notably, how might I bring my feminist anthropological perspective to bear that can, in its counter-storytelling, as discursive practice and mobilizing tool, disrupt and dislodge hegemonic ideas about such hierarchies?

Para-ethnographic workshops on future foresight and anticipatory governance. Although collaboration is not entirely new to anthropology, during the 20th and now into the 21st century, an individualist model of field research has come to dominate the discipline (Boyer and Marcus, 2021a, b, pp. 3–4). As such, historically, it has been relatively unusual for anthropologists to have the opportunity to discuss their fieldwork, data, and analysis, and work together with counterparts (not just local interlocutors) as an ensemble, on a sustained basis, to create new forms of knowledge or even new subfields within the discipline. This is changing. We are in a time of increased experimentation. A range of such projects have been undertaken including, for example, the Anthropology of the Contemporary Collaboratory at the University of California, Berkeley, and the Center for Ethnography at the University of California, Irvine, where collaboration is considered the regulative practice for research (Korsby and Stavrianakis, 2016).

I want to conclude by presenting a brief narrative account of a collaborative endeavor I have been a part of for the past five years. The group-based project, funded by the Swedish Foundation for Humanities and Social Sciences, and headed by anthropologist Christina Garsten at the Department of Social Anthropology at Stockholm University and Swedish Collegium for Advance Study, is entitled, Global Foresight: Anticipatory Governance and the Making of Geo-Cultural Scenario. It is composed of ten researchers, mostly anthropologists but also a few management scholars and a legal scholar, from a range of universities including Stockholm University, New York University and Copenhagen Business School. Each researcher is involved in their own particular para-ethnographic fieldwork with a set of actors, with each of these actors, in turn, working within global organizations engaged in the practice of future foresight and anticipatory governance – central bankers, security professionals, Davos attendees, and in my own case, professionals working in facility management, corporate real estate, and think tanks on the future strategies of work and the workplace. As Christina Garsten explains, “The project, as a whole, aims to investigate the practices of future foresight in selected organizations to advance knowledge on the underlying cultural rationalities and forms of knowledge that make up the basis of scenarios and models for future governance. By way of comparative analysis, we wish to arrive at a deepened understanding of the crucial tenets of knowledge that undergird the future modelling of foresight professionals (Christina Garsten, Global Foresight Website).”
Notably, multi-sited ethnography (Marcus, 1995) which took a hold in anthropology in the 1990 and 2000s breaks with traditional ethnography that remains in a single field (such as a city or organization) to follow people, connections and relationships across spaces. Increasing, it has proven difficult and costly for individuals to undertake, while simultaneously remaining steadfast to the detail and emotional depth expected in anthropological writing. One such response to the situation, as George Marcus and Dominque Boyer recently argue, is collaborative modes of inquiry and writing. “Where collaborative partners work together on project design to elicit complementarity from individual research objectives, new qualities of multisitedness can be derived from parallel research inquiry and conversation (Boyer and Marcus, 2021a, b, pp. 7–8).”

I am interested in locating yearly workshops that take place amongst the core group of Global Foresight para-ethnographers as an example of a form of collaborative, multi-sited anthropology in which knowledge production and intellectual creation not only take place within the field, but sites allied to research. Specifically, I read the workshops as examples of sites associated with individual’s fieldwork projects in which explicit comparative, multi-sited, conceptual work takes place. More specifically, they are spaces in which researchers engage in a kind of multi-sited inquiry of future foresight and governance. Below I discuss two such workshops, five years apart, and unpack what I mean by collaborative, multi-sited inquiry.

In November of 2016, several months after the project's initial launch in Stockholm, our group met at New York University's Institute for Public Knowledge for a “Conceptual Workshop.” We spent two days talking about our individual field projects and working collaboratively to begin to develop analytic vocabularies that make up the field of anticipatory governance – again, expert attempts to steer large-scale changes by predicting and forecasting what may be about to happen. In other words, having now spent some time in the field separately in our individual projects, we were interested in thinking together about how we might begin to outline a conceptual framework in order to understand how organizations attempt to anticipate the future, and particularly how knowledge for purposes of anticipation is produced in organizational settings. As such, the group engaged and continues to engage in what anthropologists Dominic Boyer and George Marcus recently call “collaborative analytics” the kinds of insights that can only, or best, be realized in the context of juxtaposing or co-creating concepts that they can port across different fieldwork contexts (Boyer and Marcus, 2021a, b, p. 3).

More recently, this past April, a year into the pandemic, our group, along with several visitors from other disciplines, met collectively for seven hours on Zoom. We came together to discuss one key collaborative analytic proposed by one of the group’s researchers, anthropologist Peter Mancina: the idea of failed futures. We talked about what is happening in our respective field sites as, in many instances (not all), futurists had failed to predict the pandemic. In addition to formal presentations, each of us talked about how certain forms of failure and certain visions of the future persistently fail. It generated a lively conversation and opened up new ways for me to think about the future of work, including how failure and the specter of closed office buildings haunts the future of work. And collectively, it enabled us to think across our field sites.

Conclusion
I conclude with a discussion of some of the forms of collaboration taking place in the Global Foresight Project in order to invite you, the reader, to imagine: Could similar collaborative concept projects be done at business schools? No doubt other forms of participation and collaboration are already taking place. But perhaps there are other ways to collectively create innovative ways of engaging in business and organizational anthropology/ethnography
together at the national, international, and global level, and in the process forge new developments in this emergent field. I certainly think so and look forward to watching these developments unfold.

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Notes

1. This essay is based upon a keynote presented at the Research and Impact Away Day at Essex Business School on May 6, 2001, and a talk given at the University of Massachusetts at Boston School of Management’s Organizations and Social Change (OSC) Research Seminar on May 7, 2021. A much earlier version was presented at the University of Copenhagen’s Department of Anthropology, November, 26, 2017.

2. The works cited are not intended to be an exhaustive list, but rather an indication of some of the major scholarship emerging on collaboration and engaged scholarship, feminist and otherwise, in anthropology as well as within organizational, business and management studies based primarily in business schools. For an overview of the legacies of anthropological collaboration and discussion of recent types of partnerships in anthropology, see Boyer and Marcus (2021a, b). For an overview of feminist anthropology and methods, including how feminist ethnographers link their findings to broader publics through activism, advocacy and public policy, see Davis and Craven (2016). For an important essay making the case for business school scholars engaging in intellectual activism see Contu (2019). For an important discussion of the history, current state, and future of critical feminist approaches to studying management and organization studies, especially with respect to gender, work and organizations, see Pullen et al. (2019).

3. I first became aware of the very early work anthropologists George Marcus and Douglas Holmes were doing on the idea of para-ethnography at a Workshop on the New Global Economy I co-organized with sociologist and management scholar Doug Guthrie at the Goizueta Business School at Emory University in 2001. In 2006, Holmes and Marcus published one of their first essays, Fast Capitalism: Para-Ethnography and the Rise of the Symbolic Analyst, in a volume I co-edited with anthropologist Gregory Downey based on the workshop entitled: Frontiers of Capital: Ethnographic Reflections on the New Economy (Duke University Press, 2006). I am indebted to the pioneering work of Marcus and Holmes on this particular form of collaborative endeavors within my home discipline of cultural anthropology.

4. In my 2012 article on feminist para-ethnography, I addressed the relative lack of attention within anthropology to bringing feminist, postcolonial, and critical race theory, along with collaborative methodologies, to ethnographic studies of elites, business and finance. This was in stark comparison to work in organizational research on gender in business which drew on critical management and feminist perspectives. Notably, during the past decade this has changed within anthropology, along with increasing attention to constructing postcolonial and other feminist forms of ethnography in organizational studies. I discussed some of these more recent developments within anthropology in a 2016 article on gender in finance. I hope to discuss the developments in both fields in greater length, along with their implications for feminist para-ethnographies, in future writings.

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