



The Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth

Annual General Meeting

LSE Clement House 1-2.30 pm 17 March 2008

1. Present

John Gledhill (Chair), Simone Abram (Secretary), Raminder Kaur (Treasurer), Trevor Marchand, Nici Nelson, Mukulika Banerjee, Karin Barber, Shelagh Weir, Andrew Garner, Olivia Harris, Rita Astuti, Deborah James, Leo Howe, Jonathan Spencer, David Mills, Elizabeth Tonkin, Georgie Born, Nayanika Mookherjee, Hilary Callan.

2. Apologies

James Staples, Marilyn Strathern, Roy Ellen, Wendy James, Caroline Humphrey

3. Election of President

Our last president was Sir Raymond Firth, who as president for life had a very long term. The Chair proposed Dame Marilyn Strathern to become the new ASA President to celebrate her forthcoming role after her retirement from her professorial position. Marilyn has been tireless in her support of the discipline and of colleagues. The proposal was seconded by Andrew Garner and supported by all members present.

Leo Howe welcomed the election, and noted that all the members of the Cambridge department were delighted that we were honouring Marilyn.

4. Election of new committee members

New committee members:

- Nayanika Mukerjee to replace Ian Harper as Ethics officer,
 - Georgie Born replacing Alberto Corsin-Jimenez as Media officer
 - James Staples to replace Trevor Marchand as publications officer,
- were accepted by the AGM.

5. Minutes

Were approved.

6. Matters Arising – were all covered in reports.

7. Reports

a. Chair

The chair alerted the AGM to the outline in his report of the committee's activities over the year: the new blog, new film site, the publication series, and the overhaul of the web-site and noted that membership is now sustained at over 550.

The chair thanked the outgoing officers – particularly Trevor whose patience and calm have been exceptional in difficult circumstances. He thanked Andrew Garner for fulfilling several roles, including organising a welcome pack for postgrads. He has not been directly replaced, because we have co-opted Ian Fairweather from C-SAP to help galvanise postgraduate activities. Thanks also to Ian Harper and Alberto Corsin-Jimenez for the work they have done also in demanding posts. Re resolutions from the AGM2007 – the first was related to the radicalisation and violence programme. This is reported on in detail in the chair's report but it is clear that the ESRC did respond to our objections, which is evident in the projects actually funded, but in addition it has changed its protocols for dealing with new concordats and programmes which should prevent a repeat of the events of last year. ESRC has initiated yet another consultation, this time over PGR recognition exercises. ASA was not included in the consultation. Jonathan Spencer explained that the consultancy came out of the his and Jonathan's work on the 1+3 report that they presented. He noted that there has been widespread agreement that the PGR recognition procedure is expensive and illegitimate, but the questionnaire that was circulated by another consulting organisation asks how the process could be extended. Jonathan contributed with very blunt messages that this was undesirable. Another consultancy was orchestrated on the Future of Funding which appeared to be asking whether the points made in the report were true. Jonathan was concerned that the level of expertise in the ESRC is so low that it is hard to see how they might transform any lessons into practice.

The chair raised the issue of the European Reference Index for the Humanities of the AHRC – that the AHRC refuses to consult the ASA on this issue which is potentially seriously open to misuse. The list was supposed to ensure that journals that were important as specialist sources of information only as national circulation (inc in minority languages) would be recognised. So the aim was to recognise important and excellent work wherever it appears, however the process of identifying journals was without rigour and quite anomalous. The chair asked the AGM whether they would prefer him to pressure the AHRC on the issue or to leave it and assume it will die its own death. The problem of the latter is that publishers (e.g. Taylor and Francis) are already using the index as a league table, leading to some kind of credibility.

Jonathan Spencer suggested it would be more effective to leave it to the AHRC's own constituents such as History, who are very vociferously opposed to the index. Georgie Born suggested that EASA ought to have a structure which enabled it to have a response to such enquiries at the European level. Elizabeth Tonkin suggested that people who will attend the EASA should propose a liaison role between EASA and national organisations, but it was also noted that EASA do not currently have such a structure and hence cannot be relied on in the current instance. The chair agreed to talk to EASA but leave the AHRC correspondence for now.

The chair recorded our great sadness in losing Mary Douglas, Lisa Kroll and Charles Jedrej this year. These were all people who gave a great service to the Association and who made important intellectual contributions to the discipline.

b. Treasurer

The treasurer, Raminder, reported that the ASA aims to transfer all accounts to the Co-operative Bank to ensure the smooth running of accounts and a smooth handover when new officers join the committee.

The treasurer explained why the current unrestricted funds have dropped to only £760 this year. In consequence, the committee proposed to raise the subscription fees between £2.50 and £10 per member.

Members (UK) £40 -> £50 including monograph

Members (W. Euro, Can. USA, Aus and low-wage members) £29 (euro) £31 (else) -> £35 all categories, includes monograph

Retired, unwaged, low-income countries £7.50 -> £10 not including monograph.

Over 70: Free membership.

Estimated income increase would be about £4000.

The AGM noted that Subs were last increased about a decade ago.

David Mills said he thought it was still a very good deal in comparison with many other associations. Andrew Garner strongly supported the proposal and noted that the subs were still very low.

The AGM accepted the proposed increase unanimously.

8. New members

A list of new members was read out, and it was noted that most of these were younger members.

9. publications

Trevor asked members to support the new monograph coming out this year and noted that increasing costs were putting us and Berg under some pressure. Berg has renewed their website and includes the details of the monograph series on that. Trevor encouraged members to encourage students to look at the film site and to submit films to the site and enter the competition for screening at RAI Ethnographic Film Festival.

10. Conferences

No bids have been received for the ASA 2010 conference, and we also welcome bids for ASA2011. The Chair urged members to bid to host conferences.

A report from Veronica Strange was read out and will be included on the website next week.

ASA2009 will be held in Bristol April 6-9.

11. Members' resolutions

Nayanika brought a copy of a resolution that was sent to all ASA members and has been discussed on the ASAblog about Counter-insurgency programmes. The pledge was prepared by David Price, who has been very involved in the production of a pledge of non-participation in counter-insurgency programmes, in reference to government programmes that are covert and aim to dominate populations.

Jonathan Spencer noted that in the spirit of Ian and Alberto's work on the ethics discussion, his concern was not the politics of the pledge, but with the intellectual and ethical implications that might foreclose further arguments. In particular, in relation to general issues of humanitarian values, this is incoherent because all sides argue that their position is humanitarian. Because international intervention is also phrased in the language of sovereignty, this pledge is rather unsatisfactory. Nayanika suggested that in terms of the blog comments already made, there is a more complex picture, but asked whether rewording would make it more reflective of this complexity. John Gledhill remarked that the people drafting the pledge have written it in a language that would encourage the maximum number of people to sign it.

Hillary Callan suggested we compile a list of things we will not do.

Andrew Garner suggested that the language of the pledge was simplistic.

Jonathan spencer suggested a resolution that we recommend it to the membership in the hope of raising a debate.

Simone Abram suggested that the pledge adds nothing to the much more considered ASA Ethical Guidelines.

Georgie Born agreed that recommending members to read it is sufficient, it is not making a significant contribution, and the pledge has been on the ASA website for over a month already.

The meeting agreed that members present although sympathetic to the aims of the pledge, could not endorse it on behalf of ASA members, but encouraged members to read it themselves and consider signing in a personal capacity.

12.AOB.

Nayanika was alerted by colleagues about a London-based TV company, Cicada Films, proposing to 'make contact with partially isolated Yomybato Indians of West Peru', ...

The allegations are from the local indigenous group that it has led to the deaths of three children and one adult from respiratory illness, which the film company has denied. It was noted that this was under investigation.

Nayanika also invited members to help construct the next blog on Immigration.

The meeting closed at 14.35.