



# The Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth

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## ASA Committee Meeting, 10<sup>th</sup> Nov 2006

Venue: 19, Amherst Road, Manchester; Time 14.00 – 17.00 (lunch 13.00-14.00)

### Agenda

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of 1.4.06
3. Matters arising
4. Reports
  - a. Chair
  - b. Administrator
  - c. Treasurer
  - d. Ethics
  - e. Media
  - f. Networks
  - g. Anthropology Matters
  - h. PG Courses
5. Publications – and subsidies
6. Profile of Anthropology – new ventures?
  - a. Online publications
  - b. Email seminars
  - c. Media response database
7. ASA conferences
  - a. Firth Lecture
  - b. ASA 2006 - review
  - c. ASA 2007
  - d. ASA 2008

## Chair's Report

ASA responsibilities certainly kept me busy during my sabbatical last semester but at least most of the news to report is good.

### ESRC

The site visits for the ESRC International Benchmarking Review took place in mid-May and the report was delivered to the steering committee in early September, prior to its presentation at a well-attended public meeting at the EASA conference in Bristol. A considerable amount of liaison and face-to-face discussion took place between the International Panel, ESRC and myself throughout this process. The report is now published, along with the Steering Committee's response and sincere vote of thanks to the members of the International Panel chaired by Don Brenneis. The result of this exercise is clearly very good news for our subject, since it identified a large number of areas in which British anthropology was judged at the international cutting-edge, whilst avoiding the trap of singling out certain areas at the expense of others, and it also suggested that our impact beyond the Academy was greater than we ourselves imagined (and stronger than that of anthropology in the USA), advising the profession to shout about its achievements a little more loudly. Finally, the IBR panel strongly advocated the use of qualitative methods in such evaluations, and drew explicit attention to the likely drawbacks of a purely metrics-based approach. In the discussions with ESRC that followed the delivery of the report it was made clear that whilst new resources would not be showering into our laps in vast quantities, any proposals for new schemes for academic exchanges, fellowships and possibly targeted postgraduate awards, particularly in relation to the interfaces between academics and practitioners, would be boosted by the report's conclusions. We can surely also expect to continue to have a higher than average ratio of grants awarded to applications on the basis of this quality evaluation. This may actually be one of its most important consequences, providing we ourselves remain vigilant in monitoring what ESRC does. Since ESRC argued, for example, in response to critical points made in the report, that it was more than eager to fund imaginative but riskier proposals and give anthropologists big grants for multi-sited projects, we now have a significant advantage in scrutinising the extent to which future patterns of awards confirm these assertions. Furthermore, we also now have a good basis for defending an RAE result that ranks all anthropology departments highly – something that has sometimes been attributed to our close-knitness and questioned by others in the past.

My endless grumbling to ESRC about our lack of an anthropologist on the Research Grants Board could become grumbling directly to Ian Diamond in the course of the IBR process, and ESRC has now appointed Harvey Whitehouse as successor to Patricia Jeffreys (who is now in India on two years research leave and has played a really useful role in our struggles against the Combatting Terrorism programme – see below). It would obviously be preferable if these processes of appointment to ESRC Boards were more transparent (as we have said many times in the past) but it is actually quite difficult to complain about our demand being met in this somewhat backstage manner – these board positions are normally advertised as open to a group of disciplines, so there is a never a guarantee that the anthropologist will be chosen, and I guess this was a vacancy created by a resignation outside the normal cycle. We did, however, have a democratically nominated candidate for the Research Grants Board selected by an earlier HODs consultation in Deborah James, and although issues of institutions, regions and gender balance also enter into these things, Oxford already looked rather over-represented on this board before Harvey's appointment to me!

Jonathan Spencer has been conducting the ESRC's review of the 1+3 training model, to the first round of which 14 individual departments contributed through answering the questionnaire that was circulated. I summarised the disciplinary view as ASA's contribution to the consultation, circulating the document to all departments for approval first. We are continuing with this process, having had a presentation from Jonathan at a HODs meeting in London on October 28, and further feedback from departments is being sought. The HODs meeting discussion is reported in detail in Simone's excellent minutes so I will not say more about this here.

## **AHRC**

I have also responded to the consultation on AHRC's proposed new funding model for postgraduate training, again on the basis of a HODs meeting discussion. This model will reduce the present national open competition for awards to only 25% of funding and dedicate the remaining 75% to block grants made to institutions on the basis of five year strategic plans. Exactly how these block grants will be allocated remains rather too obscure for comfort but departments are quite divided about these proposals, with some strongly opposed to the entire BGP scheme and wanting to retain a fully competitive system. It does not appear that this is actually now an option, however, so our representations have had to focus on protecting anthropology as (generally) a "marginal" AHRC subject from the vagaries of institutional politics and the preservation of some degree of internal flexibility. It is, however, also clear that some institutions have been very supportive of anthropology as an AHRC subject and that the scheme would be likely to work well for some departments, particularly since AHRC still funds stand-alone Masters degrees. So this is not necessarily a totally negative development, though institutional funding selectivity and reduction of competition awards would clearly be likely to produce winners and losers, as the ESRC quota regime has done, but with the additional complication of the intra-institutional politics involved.

Another AHRC consultation concerned their new Strategic Plan, a document definitely shaped in a mould! A few people sent helpful comments about this and looking at the final version I notice that a few of the things we objected to have disappeared, no doubt because many made the same comments.

## **British Academy**

This was yet another consultation, covering all the Academy's funding schemes, and we got a slightly better response rate from departments on this one – though the exercise of asking for input also usefully revealed that not everyone was aware of the existing range of British Academy schemes. Simone helped me out by collating the responses on this one, which coincided with other consultations in what may have been a record season for this sport!

We were not successful in getting the British Academy to buy our bid for funding under their Learned Societies scheme since they took the position that this money had to be dedicated to particular areas/regions and could not be "global" or multi-regional. Since ASA cannot possibly function as an Area Studies association this seems a little unfair, since the purpose of the proposal (promoting anthropology and the circulation of anthropologists from less privileged regions) was welcomed: however, we were encouraged to seek support for such initiatives from any learned societies that were given funding, though no further developments yet seem to have occurred under the scheme.

## **Metrics and the Future of the RAE**

I responded to both the ESRC and DfES consultation on this, at great length in the first case, once again circulating the "line" for approval by all the departments after initial input – which was restricted to a small but helpful number of HODs. The timing of these consultation exercises clearly does not maximise inputs given that so many people are away in August and early September (and it has been a bit of an irritation that I have had to return earlier than I would otherwise have done from Brazil to field them for two years running). However, it is clear from the RCUK submissions to DfES that these efforts have not been in vain as far as ESRC and AHRC has concerned: whilst ESRC is willing to contemplate some move towards metrics, it also advocates retaining an element of peer review (AHRC is even stronger on this) and argues against introducing any new system too fast. Looking at the full ESRC submission to the DfES consultation it is also possible to identify specific points of detail from our submission to ESRC's consultation of us, and the anthropology IBR is mentioned explicitly as a win for qualitative evaluation. So while

there are other points that we may be less pleased with, and the actual outcome of all these submissions remains to be seen, so far so reasonably good.

## **Combatting Terrorism**

The existence of a joint FCO/ESRC/AHRC programme with potentially problematic implications was drawn to my attention privately in June by James Fairhead, who sits on the ESRC Strategic Research Board. Matters came to a head when efforts to get the programme discussed by ESRC boards came to nothing and the scheme was launched in October as a call for bids that was not fully public, through the convening of meetings to which a select group of scholars, including some anthropologists, was invited. Fortunately, several members of our community privy to the call, in particular, Martha Mundy and David Seddon, told me and I then alerted the HODs, circulated the documents, and called for a general discussion within the discipline. All this was sufficient to spread awareness of the scheme beyond those invited to the meetings and to the press, in particular, Phil Baty of THES: although I stress that none of us was directly responsible for the press getting the story, we did respond to requests for interviews about it and made it clear that we saw the scheme as problematic in ways that transcended the immediate ESRC governance issues and the unusual circumstance of an ESRC Research Programme without a completely public and open call for papers. Whatever the original intentions, I and many others saw the papers released on the scheme as ethically problematic, potentially deeply damaging to the reputation of British researcher abroad, and indeed, likely to add to threats to the security of researchers who had nothing whatsoever to do with the programme. Although a few colleagues within the subject (including two others who were invited to the meetings) did not feel that the programme was as problematic as the rest of us did, one of them expressing this view to the HODs by email, the overwhelming force of opinion was against this position, and I was soon engaged in considerable correspondence with a range of concerned and often very senior academics, including people from outside anthropology, anthropologists from outside the UK and social scientists with past experience in security matters. This led to a rapid axing of the original programme by Ian Diamond and the creation of a new panel to produce a new one, which, I am assured, will include anthropological critics of mark one and guarantee to produce a programme of totally independent academic research devoid of ethical risks whose results will be entirely in the public domain. Although we will have to wait to see what finally emerges I did have a number of telephone conversations with Ian Diamond and he responded to all my requests and suggestions positively, so as things stand ASA is very happy with the ESRC's response. We also discussed the lessons to be learned from this experience at the HODs meeting on October 28, and it became absolutely clear that the two colleagues who felt disappointed that the original programme had not gone ahead were in a minority. The position that if the FCO wishes to commission research, it should do so directly and that ESRC (and AHRC) must preserve their independence (and be seen to preserve their independence) was clearly endorsed by this meeting as a strong majority view.

It will be necessary to monitor the future development of this programme.

## **ASA 2006**

The conference returned a substantial surplus and although getting a cheque from Keele has taken some time and required additional correspondence, we must clearly be thankful for Pnina's achievement in this regard.

## **Other Matters**

I have been in correspondence with a couple who feel themselves subject to social censure over their marriage – between a man and his brother's former wife. Apparently G.P. Murdoch was an inspiration and Lucy Mair consulted at an earlier point. I seem to have provided them with some comfort.

## **Admin report**

### **Membership**

Import of membership data into NomadIT's new online system (as used for EASA, EASA06, and ASA07) is underway. This will involve 3 months of a final chasing of arrears, so that in Feb we can start on as close a 'new/clean' slate as possible. The import means that online alteration of contact info and interests directly by members is possible. It also facilitates the development of a searchable directory in early 2007. Various issues to be discussed on this - may have bearing on recent 'media' discussion.

### **Conferences**

2007: 32 panels proposed. Call for papers in a week's time. Plenary speaker list is being drawn up mindful of ASA membership. Discuss timetable to ensure ASA's needs are met, in terms of meetings for networks, and other, so far unidentified stuff (such as ethics meeting).

2008 site under development.

2009 acceptance email has gone to David Shankland. To discuss response.

Attaching conference guidelines for discussion. Last meeting we agreed that membership not a necessity but to be encouraged. Other aspects (such as network meetings, abm, and other inclusions to be made a required feature) to be discussed. Pat Caplan also wrote to us regarding this and a summary of what she wrote is also attached.

### **Email and website**

My intention is that the site will be given a new, more modern look over the winter. I will post possible looks for the committee to comment/decide on. I will also review the structure and inform the committee.

We have renewed our hosting for another year with the successor to the unreliable JoshuaInternet. I was loathe to do this, and have been considering possibilities for hosting the ASA domain on NomadIT space. However we were unable to reconcile all issues in time. Over the next year we will investigate this option, and report back. It would allow for cheaper and possibly better hosting. The ASA email attracts a lot of spam. The host is clearly not running a very good filter system. I have done what I can to improve the spam settings; and will be removing all live links to ASA email addresses from the site as it is redesigned.

The future: briefly discuss future web needs (Video a la YouTube/Google video; online directory, posting of full conf papers and online voting.)

### **Online publishing**

I have discussed this with Hon Sec and she will report on this. Perfectly feasible on this site and without very little web investment.

### **Backup**

I have now written the attached backup strategy paper for NomadIT, ensuring continuation of service in the event of my incapacitation. Comments at meeting appreciated.

### **Annals**

Sadly due to pressure on NomadIT of EASA work this summer, nothing has progressed with the 06 annals. We have begun work towards early 07 production.

## Treasurer's report

There has been little activity in our accounts since the Committee's April 2006 meeting, so my report is brief.

1. Update on accounts.
  - Firth Fund holdings (restricted funds) stand at a little under £27,000, as no Firth award was made this year. It was suggested at the ASA committee meeting in May 2005 that the ASA approach the RAI to discuss the possibility of consolidating the different holdings in one Fund, but there has been no follow up. The committee may want to discuss the benefits of a consolidated holding and how we would like it to work for us. Richard Fardon has already indicated that the fund has no stipulated terms beyond that it should be used for the benefit of the Association and students.
  - The (joint) Barclays and Lloyds accounts stand at £10,515, inclusive of the recent cheque from Keele – see below. I will transfer some of these funds to the National Savings interest saving account after establishing imminent disbursements (Ro – can you advise on admin and annals costs?)
  - National Savings account (unrestricted funds) stands at over £15,000.
2. ASA conference  
The income from the Keele conference - £6,200 - has surpassed all previous ones. (£500 not claimed from ASA should be added to this figure, cancelling out ASA office holders' registration fees normally expected from conference organisers.) Pnina has kept back £1,200 for the moment, against publication subvention costs to Berg, and will pass on to ASA what is not used up. Pnina has also raised the question of VAT charged to the conference. She is taking this up with Keele accountants; I might consult our own accountant when she hits a brick wall. Elizabeth Kirtsoglou, or Durham, still owes £315. (Ro, has this been paid into the conference account?) I recommend that this committee write an official letter to Pnina congratulating her on a successful conference and thanking her for the income generated.
3. Two large payments have been made to Berg: £2,817 as part of our normal contribution for ASA conference volumes ('Locating the Field'), and £1,000 special subsidy towards production costs of 'Creativity and Cultural Improvisation'.
4. Although our coffers are not exactly bulging, we can afford a little outlay for a new initiative that will bring anthropology to the public eye. Any modest ideas?
5. My term of office terminates in April/May 2007, and the 2007 conference will be the last at which I will present the ASA accounts. Action must be taken immediately to locate my replacement – much as I like working with you all!

Lisette Josephides, Honorary Treasurer

## ASA Publication Officer's Report

1. *Update: 2003 Decennial Conference, Manchester Anthropology & Science (Editors Edwards, Harvey, & Wade)*  
Advertised in Berg catalogue for 2007. Publication scheduled for March 2007.  
Note that Sarah Gibbon's contribution to the volume has already been published in a volume by Palgrave. Permission to re-publish has been received, but as a consequence Berg will not be able to re-print it as an e-book.
2. *Update: 2005 'Creativity & Cultural Improvisation' Conference, Aberdeen (Editors Hallam & Ingold)*  
Manuscript was submitted in August 2006 and is advertised in the Berg catalogue for 2007. Publication scheduled for February 2007.  
Note that a £1000 subsidy for the inclusion of images was paid for by the ASA. The final manuscript exceeded the normal 100,000 word limit by nearly 20,000 words. In order to avoid this occurring with future volumes, the series editor at Berg, Hannah Shakespeare has amended the 'editors' contract so that the first paragraph now reads:  
  
"The Editor hereby agrees to write or prepare and to deliver the Work to the Publications Officer for the ASA Monographs series (hereinafter referred to as the 'Publications Officer') at the Editor's own expense. When completed, the manuscript for the Work as provided by the Editor shall be not more than X,000 words in length which shall be taken to include all bibliographical references, and notations and any other matter and shall include other materials as the ASA or its Publisher may reasonably require and specify."
3. *Update: 2006 'Cosmopolitanism' Conference, University of Keele. Cosmopolitanism & Anthropology, Editor Pnina Werbner.*  
Initially, the editor aimed to submit a proposal for the volume by mid-June 2006. A detailed outline was instead sent in July and again in October, but a finalised proposal has not yet been submitted.  
Pnina Werbner expects the volume to follow the main themes presented in the five plenary sessions. She has suggested that the volume may be longer than the 100,000 word limit stipulated by Berg, and has indicated that she may search for a subsidy like that received by Ingold & Hallam (2005). Hannah Shakespeare informed Pnina in August that Berg would require a subvention of £650 (to be finalised at later stages of the publication process) to cover the proposed additional length of 130000 words. Also, for a book of this length, an additional subsidy of £1000 would be required for the proposed 20 illustrations. The source of these subsidies remains unclear, and Werbner has not made this clear to me or to Berg. In October I wrote to Werbner to request that she submit a final proposal at her very earliest convenience. This must be reviewed and approved by the ASA committee and by Berg. In another correspondence with Hannah Shakespeare, Werbner informed that she is on schedule to submit in 'February' for an 'October 2007 publication'. These dates are seemingly set by Werbner herself without consultation with the PO or Berg. Hannah Shakespeare politely informed her that all information for Berg's 2007 publications has already submitted and that a 2008 publication date is the earliest possibility for the *Cosmopolitanism & Anthropology* volume. Shakespeare explained that books need to have the imprint of the year they are published in. In a less-than-genteel response, Pnina stated that she "intends to be quite ruthless" about getting it out in time for the AAA (or the RAE – this is unclear?), and she "does not care about when [Berg] advertise it in [their] catalogue". Quite clearly, Berg would like to stick to the existing pattern of publishing ASA volumes two years after the conference year. Aside from the disruption that a rush publication of *Cosmopolitanism & Anthropology* would cause for Berg, it would also mean that the ASA would be producing three publications in 2007. This may be problematic for membership fees that cover annual publications and incur additional mailing costs in 2007.

4. *Update: Social Anthropology Handbook, Editor Richard Fardon, Sage Publishers.* John Gledhill has confirmed that Jean and John Comaroff have agreed to write the introduction to the volume. The project remains in early stages of planning. The ASA will receive potential revenues from sales and a special purchase price will be offered to ASA members.
5. *Donation of monographs to the Centre for Anthropology*  
I propose that we donate two complimentary copies of *Locating the Field* and two copies of all subsequent ASA monographs to the Centre for Anthropology at the British Museum. To be discussed and agreed by the ASA committee.
6. Permission to re-publish chapters from past ASA monographs has been granted to the following:

Malcolm Hamilton – permission to re-publish:

Spiro, M.E. (1966) 'Religion: problem of definition and explanation' in M. Banton (ed) *Anthropological Approaches to the Study of Religion*, ASA Monograph no. 3, London: Tavistock  
in his edited work *Sociology of Religion: critical concepts*

Professor Skultans and Ms Blencowe – permission to republish:

Skultans, V. (1976) 'Empathy & Healing' in J.B. Loudon (ed) *Social Anthropology & Medicine*, ASA Monograph 13, London: Academic Press;  
and Skultans, V. (1977) 'Bodily Madness & the Spread of the Blush' in J. Blacking (ed) *The Anthropology of the Body*, ASA Monograph 15, London: Academic.  
in the forthcoming collection of works, *Empathy & Healing* (Berghahn)

Ms Bickersteth – permission to republish:

Kahn, Joel S. (1975) 'Economic scale and the cycle of petty commodity production in West Sumatra', in Maurice Block (ed) *Marxist analyses and social anthropology*, Malaby Press: London, pp. 137-158.  
in forthcoming *Southeast Asian Development: Critical Concepts in the Social Sciences*, Jonathan Rigg (ed), Routledge July 2007.

Trevor Marchand, Publications Officer