



# The Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth

## COMMITTEE MEETING

Online <http://fm.ea-tel.eu/fm/4dac23-16134> 6 March 2009. 13.00-16.00

### AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. [Minutes](#) of 22.11.08
3. Matters arising
4. Reports (Written reports to be circulated in advance, please, minimal and urgent verbal reports only at the meeting)
  - a. [Chair](#)
  - b. [Administrator](#)
  - c. [Treasurer](#)
  - d. [Ethics](#)
  - e. [Networks](#)
  - f. [Publications](#)
  - g. Media
5. ASA conferences - review and plans
  - i. [ASA 2009](#)
  - ii. [ASA 2010](#)
6. Dates of meetings 2009
7. AOB

## ***Chair's Report March 6 2009***

### **Ofcom and English Heritage**

Since our last meeting in Auckland I have followed up two issues that we discussed there and at the November committee meeting. See [appendices](#).

One is the Ofcom complaint about Cicada productions in Peru, which is now under review. Prior to sending the complaint letter based on Georgie's draft to Ofcom, I consulted a lawyer specialising in media issues and made some further modifications in response to his advice on how to be ultra-cautious. I note that Cicada personnel are now speaking publicly about what happened in Peru, and wonder whether there is any link between this development and our complaint or whether it is simply fortuitous.

The other task was the response to the English Heritage consultation on the Druid request for the reburial of the human remains in the Alexander Keiller Museum in Avebury, on which we received the invaluable help of Jenny Blain. (Although I shared Jenny's dislike of the pro-forma, I did use it, though hopefully in a way that overcame the main problem she identified). I have attached the final versions of both these documents.

### **ESRC Matters**

The New Year produced various ESRC-related tasks. In January, ESRC organised a series of "town meetings" in various locations around the country, designed to provide an opportunity for discussion of the ESRC's new Strategic Plan and a proposed radical overhaul of postgraduate training, based on the creation of Doctoral Training Centres and smaller Doctoral Training Units. Quota awards would be assigned only to the former and the latter would be eligible for competition, CASE and research grant linked studentships. Ian Diamond made the presentations that started the strategic plan discussions off, the postgraduate training sessions being led by Judith Rees of LSE, chair of the Training and Development Board, supported by the ESRC's Jeremy Neathey. I attended the Manchester meetings.

On the strategic plan front, no major changes are envisaged from the directions already set. "Impact" will be a watchword in research evaluation, and one aspect of this that Ian Diamond stressed was that applied research and research that produced reports rather than academic publications should not be valued less than academic publications, a position that continues to seem somewhat at odds with the principles enshrined in the RAE and looking likely to be replicated in the REF that will succeed it. But there were plenty of assurances that ESRC would continue to fund a variety of different kinds of research, that fundable research did not necessarily have to claim any direct social or practical "impact", much less utility for the UK economy, and that it was not necessary to relate one's project to ESRC themes (which will not undergo radical changes, though there will be a few additions and tweaks). In general, most of those present at the meeting felt a sense of relief on hearing that no major shifts were going to occur in the ESRC's strategic direction in the near future. I asked about two things: the low success rate for standard grants (now rather persistently 14% rather than the 25% that ESRC aimed for) and whether the new theme of "understanding individual behaviour" might not be complicated a little by some consideration of the problem of explaining collective

behaviour that involved large numbers of people and might constitute a separate theoretical issue, of some relevance, for example, to understanding the social underpinnings of the current economic crisis. Although the latter suggestion may make its way to the ESRC final formulation of the issues, the best I could do on the funding front was to get public acknowledgement that everyone was conscious that the low success rate was a serious problem. But there is not going to be any significant redistribution of funding to standard grants to help solve it (as we requested in our written submission on the strategic plan). Before this meeting I had had an exchange of emails between Tim Ingold, our last representative on the Research Grants Board, and Sarah Randall from UCL. Sarah was not an ASA nominee for this board and is there principally as a social demographer (at Ian Diamond's personal invitation, it seems) but I know her well from my time at UCL and she will be doing her best to promote anthropological success and keep our community informed (within the constraints of board confidentiality, of course). Her experience to date confirms that the cut off point for funding is now far higher than it has ever been in the past, and ESRC have now published tables for 2008 grants results on their website that are not encouraging reading for social anthropologists.

The new postgraduate training regime proposals may, however, be much worse news. In essence, ESRC plans to abandon the recognition of disciplinary outlets and concentrate resources on these new training entities (which may be single institution or multiple institution consortia, but will be focused on providing "inter-disciplinary" generic training, and it is the quality of that which will secure their recognition). There are a lot of details which it is not appropriate to go over in this report, since the regime is still subject to some negotiation, but it is clear from the responses that I received at the Manchester meeting that the only guarantee that social anthropology will retain even the number of quota awards that it had in the last distribution under the old recognition regime is the "steer" that the Training Board will give the centres and units created on what discipline areas should receive what, and that the main priorities will continue to be economics and quantitative research. So there is a clear danger that concentration of what is already limited ESRC funding for training our postgraduates will increase yet further under a regime that is clearly designed to create "centres of training excellence" and it is clear that the generic agenda has advanced, despite protests, whilst ESRC will now be leaving the content of discipline specific training up to institutions. I have appended the fruits of my post-meeting consultations with colleagues elsewhere to this report, points that I have communicated to Jeremy Neathey. It is clear that there is a widespread discontent about the new model in a variety of disciplines, and although it is also necessary to recognise that some institutions are very keen on embracing it for reasons of self interest as potential "hubs", even amongst the model's advocates there is some recognition the new system could exclude even more excellent research units from easy access to ESRC postgraduate training funding. So this may not yet be a model that cannot be changed significantly, and at the time of writing this report, I am discussing what might be done to pursue our shared concerns with sociologists and economists.

The ESRC also saw fit to launch a consultation on the Research Ethics framework (as a "living document") in February with a relatively short response deadline. Nayanika and I have discussed this and I have had some discussion with Jonathan Spencer and Pnina Werbner (one of the anthropologists that we successfully nominated for the Virtual College), though input from heads of department on these crucially important matters remained astonishingly absent despite several promptings. So I guess we have to conclude that institutional ethics committees are not causing problems for anthropologists and we should therefore express

relative contentment with the way things are. I have focused the comments we have made on behalf of ASA on the lessons to be learned from the “Combating Terrorism” fiasco and the need for ESRC to put something about its own ethical responsibilities into the REF.

In general, the current group of HODs has not shown a great interest in exchanging ideas about any of the matters that have concerned us of late, and we are now moving into another round of discussions about the shape of the REF and other important issues. This may reflect a general feeling that it’s not possible to do very much about many of the developments on which we are invited to comment, but I hope that the face-to-face meeting planned for the afternoon of the final day of the Bristol conference will galvanise a bit more of a spirit of collective engagement.

### **RAI Money**

I wrote to Hilary asking about the surplus from the RAI grant for ASA 2008 but have not as yet received any response.

**Attachments:** [separate files](#)

## ***Administrator's report***

### **Finance/subs**

Most of our recent work has been around sorting out finances/subs. We've developed a ledger system that will make producing this year's accounts simpler, and give the Treasurer a better picture of things through the year. We're part way through the opening of a WorldPay account, as another online credit card option for subs. We are delayed in dealing with direct debits, but that's next.

### **ASAFilm**

8 entries were received, posted and circulated to the panel. Have you seen the email from TM about this? I am reviewing our technological approach to this, as it makes more sense initially (at least) for films to be posted to external sites such as blipTV or YouTube.

### **Conferences**

ASA11: I have responded with a little advice to 3 developing bids for 2011.

ASA10: I have been giving detailed input to Jon Skinner, so that a more precise budget and proposal can be shown at the meeting.

ASA08: I am working on the final accounts for this event. Things will be wrapped up shortly, whereupon I will email the committee.

ASA09: work is ongoing, with timetabling to be done this week, so that regn can open.

Forecast is for ~300 delegates with a more or less zero bottom line.

### **Other**

We will shortly be asking depts to update their online annals entry. Work on the Directory is also slated for later in the year, once the conference is over.

## ***Treasurer's Report***

1. Accounts are being prepared by Peter McCloskey at a slightly increase fee of £975 plus vat (= total £1,121 compared to £1,081 last year). This still represents a good rate when compared to other accountants. A draft has been prepared on Monday this week but there are a number of items which need to be inserted. Once finalised, I shall send the accounts out hopefully before Friday.
2. Income for subs for 2008 is £17,425 – representing an increase of about £4,000 more than the previous two years. These figures provided by Ro, comprises 295 UK, 62 'A', 69 'B/retired', 47 senior, 23 honorary, 7 associate. Plus ~60 joint students, which adds another £1,200 in subs. The amount is without the increased rates agreed at the last AGM – these increases should kick in this year.
3. There is about £1,200 of outstanding subs. Hopefully much of this will be collected, once the direct debit process is fully in gear. Ro/Megan have now created the 09 subs on the system. This means that they will be able to invoice all members. However, the Co-Op have also notified of charges of £100 for setting up all the direct debits. Once all subs are in and with the increased rates, this could mean a figure of around £20,000 for subs in 2009.
4. On the downside, the ASA deposit account (including the Firth Account) with the Co-Op is now generating only 1.45% rather than 5.45% in interest. This downturn is reflected across the board. This could mean that interest earned could be just a quarter of what it is now – that is, instead of earning around £1,500, the sums could be under £400, quite a substantial drop. The drop is accommodated by the substantial increase in income from subs this year so will not dent the funds too much.

## **Ethics Officer Report**

Since the Auckland session on **Ethics of Apology** I have had innumerable enquiries about the session and have received various positive feedbacks. In the process I have also been in touch with various Aboriginal academics and activists some of whom have revisited this issue in Australia on the occasion of the 1<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Rudd's offering of apology on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2008. I am also in the process of finalising the submissions from all the panellists and have also received submissions from others working on this issue. This being such a topical issue contributors were particularly interested in submitting this to a journal. I am waiting to hear back from Gustaaf (AT) for any signs of enthusiasm and have also talked to John about submitting it to Critique. Will keep you all posted about this.

There has been a flurry of email exchanges on the issue of **media and ethics** and I have been touch with Daniela Peluso and Magnus Course both of whom have sent me various documents, listserve discussions, comments relating to this issue. There was a discussion with the filmmakers at the Peruvian embassy and I am not aware of anyone who could attend this meeting. Daniela and Magnus are keen to be part of the filmmaking ethics session to be held in Leeds on 14<sup>th</sup> June **[? date]** and were wondering if those who have directly experienced the CICADA intervention would be invited (which I guess is unlikely?). Simone might know more about the Leeds events and the details. **Simone?** I am also picking up a few recommendations from the various email exchanges. We ourselves have discussed similar issues in past meetings. Some of these recommendations include:

- The Society for Visual Anthropology or ethnographic film-makers would do well to organize a series of workshops on ethics over the next few years at different professional meetings with an eye towards developing a code of ethics that takes into account issues not covered by the general AAA code of ethics.
- Some kind of media campaign that points out the bad taste questionable ethics of such programming.
- Or more specifically to develop this debate by setting up a code of ethics, guidelines etc for media, filming, etc re indigenous peoples etc taking place in PROTECTED AREAS, natural parks etc?

Are we still planning on developing any such similar recommendations? **Georgie?**

How these discussions are also finding place in the **blog** is also important and would be interesting. Simone?

I have also had **various emails** relating to ethics from postgraduate students writing essays on the history of the development of anthropological ethics to Australian students planning to do research in UK and enquiries relating to ethical review processes in UK. I also sent John some comments relating to the ESRC review process of REF. I have sent my assessments of the ASA film submissions.

I have made various enquiries about organising an **ASA conference in India/South Asia in 2011** and have also chatted with Ro re logistical requirements etc. Some of the possible options are:

- GOA - ASK Stella Mascarenhas-Keyes?
- DELHI - IIT [VIBHA ARORA?]; JNU; CSDS/SARAI; OR NEEMRANA FORT
- BOMBAY - TISS [TATA INSTITUTE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES]
- HYDERABAD UNIVERSITY – it's a big campus and there are facilities, there is an anthropology department but Ro thinks colleagues might not be excited about

Hyderabad as a place. James might know about Hyderabad as well as he lived there for fieldwork?

- BANGALORE - CSDS
- WHAT ABOUT DOING IT IN SRI LANKA THOUGH THE FIGHTING IS GOING ON AND MIGHT NOT BE FEASIBLE. THERE ARE SOME GREAT ANTHROPOLOGISTS IN SRI LANKA.

Personally organising this in JNU would be ideal as it not only has a fabulous campus and has the facilities. It is also an intellectually vibrant place for sociology/anthropology. But this needs face to face conversation with colleagues for them to decide if they want to commit to it. A trip to work this out in July-August/October/December might be helpful. The issue of budget and logistics would need to be clarified before commitment can be secured. I can make prior enquiries by phone/email on my return from Italy in April, before we decide on the trip. This would also depend on the committee's decision from this meeting. There is the issue of Anthropology predominantly falling within the rubric of Sociology, in the subcontinent. This is because of how the discipline of anthropology is perceived in South Asia. I don't think the option of hiring a place and organising it ourselves [like ASA 2001 in Arusha] would go down well with South Asian sociologists and anthropologists which is a very strong, challenging and vibrant community.

**I enquired with the Immigration authorities** (as requested in the last meeting) relating to inviting scholars from non-EU countries who need visas to visit UK. This is significant given the recent changes in the points system etc and the possibility of sponsors having to put down a deposit for these invitations and to agree to monitor movements of their guests. I was told that this can only be decided on a case by case basis and depends on what the local British Council informs the respective individuals about the required rules and regulations. There was a similar article in the guardian on the 21<sup>st</sup> Feb. weekend which precisely cited similar regulations in the case of musicians and how it was becoming difficult to bring in non-EU musicians to perform in UK. I wonder if Prof. Guhathakurta for the Firth lecture had any troubles getting her visa.

I am also away for the Rockefeller residency fellowship from 12<sup>th</sup> March till 19<sup>th</sup> April and my email responses would be erratic. I will respond to emails after the 20<sup>th</sup> April.



## ***ASA Networks Officer report***

1) An action point from our December meeting was for me to get in touch with Jenny Blain and Josh Pollard re the consultation request on reburial. Jenny responded and was channelled to the chair as he reports on in more detail.

2) A second action point from the same meeting was for me to contact the Apply network via Katharine Tomlinson about their requests for ASA 10. I received no reply. Ro has mentioned the request to Jonathan Spencer when he sent JS an updated proposal for work on the conference in February.

3) The Apply network will be meeting on Monday April 6<sup>th</sup> at 7pm during the ASA. The event as advertised is: "An opportunity to discuss activities that have taken place and ideas for new ones. All are welcome to come." I will attend if possible.

4) The AOB network will be meeting during the ASA networks slot on April 8th. The event as advertised is: "The meeting will begin with a short talk and Q&A session by Professor Catherine Nash (Queen Mary, University of London) about her recently published book, 'Of Irish Descent: Origin Stories, Genealogy, and the Politics of Belonging', Syracuse University Press, 2008. The meeting will then open for any other business. All interested are welcome to attend."

## Publications Officer's report

### **1. ASA Monograph 46**

Despite earlier assurances that the current monograph was on course for completion to be mailed out to members in July 2009, there have subsequently been a number of hitches—including one of the contributors pulling out and a replacement being found—and the manuscript won't be with Berg until the end of July this year. This would mean a likely mailing date of March 2010. Although Berg will do what it can to reduce the production schedule once they have the manuscript, it looks very unlikely that it will be with members in 2009.

### **2. ASA Monograph 47**

A detailed book proposal is expected at the end of this month, and I have made it clear that the committee needs to approve this and may expect changes. Veronica Strang is collecting draft versions of the chapters likely to be included before finalising the proposal, so, once we had approved/amended the proposal the editing time should not be as long as for the previous volume (particularly as Veronica is currently on leave, so able to devote more time to the volume). She has so far been extremely organised and appears to work effectively to deadlines, so there's a good chance of this one also coming out in 2010 (probably around September/October time) and allowing us to catch up.

### **3. Permissions**

No requests for permissions since the last meeting.

# APPENDICES

## ***OFCOM COMPLAINT***

January 13, 2009

Mr Philip Graf CBE  
Chairman, Ofcom Content Board  
Ofcom  
Riverside House  
2a Southwark Bridge Road  
London  
SE1 9HA

Dear Mr Graf,

### **Cicada Films project in Peru**

I am writing to you as the Chair of the Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth, and on behalf of the ASA's Executive Committee, to make a formal complaint about the following matter. My colleague Professor Georgina Born contacted you earlier this year about the same matter to ask for initial advice about how we should proceed in raising it. At that time you kindly put her in touch with Mr Chris Banatvala, the Director of Standards, with whom she had a useful telephone discussion.

The matter about which we are making a complaint concerns the activities of a London-based television production company, Cicada, when engaged in a field trip in preparation for a reality television series which they intended to film about an indigenous group in Peru, the Matsigenka, in late 2007.

Before proceeding, I should clarify that the ASA is aware that, as you explained in your email reply to Professor Born, Ofcom is a post-transmission regulator whose responsibilities lie in the area of material which appears on our screens. As far as we are aware, the reality series that Cicada intended to produce has not as yet been screened; indeed we do not know what stage of production they have reached with this material following their Peruvian visit. But in Professor Born's conversation with Mr Banatvala, he acknowledged that there might be exceptional circumstances, such as illegal activity in the making of a programme by a British television company, as well as unethical behaviour particularly towards vulnerable people, in which Ofcom might be minded to investigate a complaint and, possibly as a result, take action. Moreover we gather that the protection of vulnerable people in the making of television programmes is a matter with which Ofcom has been concerned in the past, for example given the need for due care with regard to children approached to participate in reality television programmes.

In light of these preliminary points, I would like to outline the Cicada case, about which we are complaining. Here we rely on a report giving detailed evidence about the case that the ASA

commissioned from an expert Peruvian anthropologist, Daniel Rodriguez, after we received initial representations on the matter from concerned UK-based anthropologists specialising in the region and news of the events appeared in the UK media. I have enclosed a printed copy of this report, 'An epidemic outbreak among the Matsigenka in initial contact (November 2007), Manu National Park (MNP), Peru'. It is also in the public domain on the Association's website at:

[http://www.theasa.org/downloads/rodriguez%02008\\_ASA%20report%20Yomybato%20epidemics.pdf](http://www.theasa.org/downloads/rodriguez%02008_ASA%20report%20Yomybato%20epidemics.pdf).

It is important to emphasise that Dr Rodriguez's report relies in turn on several Peruvian statements and reports which themselves contain detailed evidence of the events. They include: a) an official report from December 2007 by Dr Wilfredo Huamani Oblitas, Head Manager of the Manu province health services (see note 3 on p. 4); b) an official report from February 2008 by INRENA, the Peruvian Forestry Agency (see note 9 on p.5), which has responsibility for controlling access to the restricted areas of the MNP inhabited by indigenous groups including the Matsigenka (this report was signed by the national director of the Peruvian Natural Protected Areas); and c) an open letter detailing the events by the anthropologist Glenn Shepard, an expert on the Matsigenka who has worked in the area for over twenty years and who was present in the community at the time of the Cicada visit and was therefore a first-hand witness. All three reports were highly critical of Cicada. On the basis of these reports, Dr Rodriguez's report aims to elucidate the specific responsibilities of the production company in relation to an epidemic outbreak of illnesses among a Matsigenka group, reported in December 2007.

There are two core issues of alleged Cicada misdemeanours discussed and documented in Dr Rodriguez's report. The first concerns the unethical status and potential illegality of the Cicada team's alleged entry into certain protected areas of the MNP where particularly vulnerable Matsigenka groups live. Detailed evidence provides grounds to suspect that Cicada violated the terms of the permit issued to them by INRENA, travelling into strictly controlled areas inhabited by very vulnerable indigenous groups with whom contact is severely restricted in order to protect them from the health and social risks associated with contact. Cicada was specifically prohibited from travelling into areas known as 'zonas de protección estricta' (strictly protected zones) where groups live who have experienced very little contact with outsiders; yet there are grounds to suspect that they did enter such areas and did contact those groups. These alleged violations of Peruvian law therefore constitute the first cause of our complaint.

The second cause of our complaint is the even more serious matter that Cicada's alleged illegal entry into restricted areas of the MNP and contacts with 'initial contact' Matsigenka groups living there can be linked, according to Dr Huamani's official report of December 2007, to an epidemic outbreak of serious respiratory and gastro-intestinal illnesses, illnesses that in turn led to the deaths of eight Matsigenka in the remote areas. While the link between these deaths and Cicada's permit violations is, as is inevitably always the case in such events, circumstantial, the regional health and anthropological experts took the view in their reports that the evidence that Cicada personnel were the most likely vectors of infection was substantial. Glenn Shepard noted, moreover, that he had explained the grave dangers of contacting such remote uncontacted peoples to the Cicada team before they set out, an expert warning that Cicada appears to have ignored. Failure to follow such informed advice

from an expert would in itself appear to be reckless and unethical behaviour, given the high level of vulnerability of these people.

Our aims in detailing this case and the evidence surrounding it are twofold. First, and specifically, we ask you to enquire further into the Cicada case and consider whether Ofcom should take steps to censure the production company for its role in these events. While, as I have said, we realise that Ofcom's role is not normally to pursue issues of this kind that occur in the production process, we would argue strongly that this case raises extremely important questions that come within Ofcom's remit concerning unethical and unacceptably risky behaviour towards highly vulnerable people in the production of television. Second, and whatever the outcome of this specific case, our aim is to bring to your attention the more general principle that, given the very vulnerable status of indigenous groups worldwide and the extremely grave risks associated with unethical activities towards them, Ofcom should act to encourage the television industry to develop an ethical code or a code of best practice concerning its activities in relation to indigenous and tribal peoples. Such codes should of course be adopted by both the production sector and the broadcasters, which, by continuing to commission these programmes, bear particular responsibility by creating incentives for the producers to continue to make them and to create increasingly extreme versions of the genre. The ASA, which is responsible for the UK's ethical guidelines for anthropological research, would be keen to offer its expert professional opinion and advice in the development of such codes.

To conclude: while our complaint in this letter concerns a specific set of incidents related to the alleged activities of one television production company in Peru in late 2007, we would like to reiterate that the risks are high of further serious unethical behaviour towards vulnerable indigenous groups by television production companies given the expansion of the tribal reality genre on television in Britain and internationally. For this reason we urge you to respond energetically to our complaints, as well as to consider how it is possible to foster due awareness and caution among the television industry – both the production companies and the broadcasters who commission these programmes - about the dangers associated with unethical behaviour towards indigenous peoples.

I look forward to your reply, and I trust that you will endeavour to investigate these matters further. Please feel free to use email for future correspondence should this prove more convenient.

Yours sincerely,  
Professor John Gledhill  
Chair, Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth  
Max Gluckman Professor of Social Anthropology, The University of Manchester

## **AVEBURY RESPONSES**

I can't copy this doc, but key answers from Chair on behalf of ASA were:

Logically members of CoBDO are as closely related or not as anyone else. But the criteria of the DCMS Guidance in this respect are simply not relevant to resolving the issues posed by this situation, even if CoBDO agreed to their relevance.

Demands for reburial of human remains originated amongst indigenous groups whose ideas about life and death made the practices of museum display and research on ancestral remains profoundly painful for living people. In these cases there was generally a direct genetic link between the claimants and the bones, and a continuity of belief, although the absence of direct descent relations would not necessarily make the sensibility grounded in the belief less convincing as a case for the desirability of reburial of the bones of persons who were not close ancestors. In this case we do not know the beliefs of the original population (although it might not be impossible to make inferences about such matters) and CoBDO do not make a claim for continuity of belief etc with the human remains. But we do not consider it necessary to CoBDO to make a claim of direct connection, genetic or cultural, to raise the question of whether our contemporary uses of these bones might not have been profoundly shocking to the people who buried them and whether we should consider that in deciding how to treat them respectfully today. Furthermore, to take the position that reburial is appropriate seriously, we have to recognise that Western ideas about life and death are not universal and that for some people in our own society today the bones themselves should be respected as part of a continuing life. These are the issues around which the debate should now focus and they do not depend on establishing connection to have ethical significance.

It is clear that EH and NT have taken the sensibilities of CoBDO very seriously, which we applaud and welcome.

## ***Ethics Consultation response***

### **Key Issues**

1. Have there been any key developments in the last three years within social science, or within research more generally, that need to be more explicitly addressed within the Research Ethics Framework?

Y

#### **Comments on this section:**

The anthropological community has experienced some difficulties with the specific ways in which certain research agendas have been “securitized”, such as studies focused on Islam at home and abroad. Some of the issues raised have past historical precedents which played an important role in stimulating redrafting of disciplinary ethical codes in directions that correspond very closely to the terms of the present REF, which was well received by our community at a public meeting held to discuss it at the ASA’s annual conference in 2006. Nevertheless, what the controversy that arose over the “Combating Terrorism by Countering Radicalisation” programme highlighted was the desirability of including an explicit statement of the ethical responsibilities and commitments of ESRC and other research funders, including government departments, in the REF, which at present focuses exclusively on the responsibility of grant holding institutions, via their RECs and PIs. Since the purpose of such a statement would be to avoid possible misinterpretations of the nature, aims and objectives, and potential impacts on research subjects of ESRC sponsored research, it could consist of a reiteration of the lessons that all parties agree were learned from this particular experience and the response that ESRC adopted in acknowledging the problematic nature of the original call. This could include reference, for example, to the public disclosure of results of sensitive research, general ethical screening and considered drafting of programme calls prior to their being issued, and the oversight of commissioning panels incorporating a broad range of views, as well as reiteration of the basic principle that all ESRC sponsored research is independent academic research that must comply with the REF in areas such as avoiding harm to research subjects and that institutional RECs must ensure that any research conducted by their staff for ESRC conforms to these standards. Such a statement would conform to the very welcome ways in which ESRC has responded to past controversy, reduce the risk of further controversy in areas of research which are likely to remain sensitive or any new initiatives, and provide an important level of protection to ESRC itself in the event that some research that it sponsors did cause controversy or harm not anticipated in the ethical review to which it was subject, a risk that can never been entirely eliminated however diligent and thorough the review process might be.

2. In your experience, is all social science research being reviewed on a consistent basis or is ESRC funded or submitted research treated differently?

Y

**Comments on this section:**

ASA has no evidence for the differential treatment of ESRC funded or submitted social science research.

3. Are you broadly content that the delegated authorities and management procedures associated with research ethics within ROs/ Universities are clear and that delegation and decision making is properly, diligently and equitably exercised?

Y

You may wish to distinguish where your comments relate to your observations on UK HEIs/ROs as a whole and your own particular institution.

**Comments on this section:**

Consultation of UK social anthropology departments has not revealed any causes for dissatisfaction in this regard.



## ***Further feedback from social anthropology on new Postgraduate Training proposals***

To: jeremy.neathey@esrc.ac.uk

Dear Jeremy,

Since the regional "town meetings" took place in January, a growing number of colleagues in anthropology and other subjects around the country have been expressing their views on the proposed new Postgraduate Training regime, so I feel it may be appropriate to feed back some of this further input to you.

It is clear that the proposals have been well received by some institutions that expect to benefit from the new system as potential TDCs, but even here we can see a concern with the broader picture and the need to consider the strength of UK social science as a whole. The 2008 RAE has confirmed that the overall international standard of all UK anthropology departments (and indeed much of the rest of UK social science) is extremely high, while the differences between departments are really very small, and specialist excellence widely distributed. Since social anthropology is already concentrated in research-intensive institutions, selectivity in allocation of what is now very limited ESRC postgraduate training support is already extremely problematic for us as a community.

Problem one is clearly that if the ESRC's aim is to assign the best students to the best supervisors, the proposed new system may make that still more difficult, given that the training represented by the PhD project itself is even less central in this generic training focused approach. The inclusion of small groups located in small institutions in the new form of recognition is clearly problematic, and there is widespread questioning of the TDU model (of the kind that came up in the Manchester, and I believe, other meetings). The problems of converting big centres into hubs providing part of the training for students doing their PhDs in other departments are quite considerable and their economics highly questionable in terms of the relatively small amount of funding coming from ESRC.

Another problem, which has much vexed colleagues in Scotland in a variety of disciplines, including Economics as well as Social Anthropology, is that having toiled recently to establish discipline-based consortia of evident excellence, they are now told to go back to the drawing board with a non-disciplinary consortium structure. This makes little sense practically and raises the whole question of whether disciplinary consortia might not be a better model for at least some regions of England as well (Wales and Northern Ireland present further problems, especially as the latter is not in the ESRC system for postgraduates). At the very least, the possible role of discipline networks should be given further thought within the new proposals.

Thirdly, the further thrust towards generic training runs quite contrary to what has been asked for in repeated exercises to test opinion on how to achieve greater flexibility. The proposals on flexibility of and within programmes are welcome and sensible. But the proposals on how to promote inter-disciplinarity where it is desirable are also poorly thought out for social science disciplines such as social anthropology which face in many different directions, not all of which are within social science or even humanities. All this must be thought through in terms of the full range of possibilities that an institution and cluster of institutions might offer if

we really want to encourage innovation. But it seems vital that disciplines not be perversely encouraged to forge inter-disciplinary alliances where there is no real intellectual need or justification for this, and indeed, that ESRC recognize the ability of researchers and students firmly located in a discipline to relate their work to other disciplines and talk to colleagues in them without encouragement.

Fourthly, we do not think that the residual competition is big enough (bearing in mind the range of grants that ESRC includes beyond the competition grants as such in specifying what TDUs might get) to ensure that undesirable concentration effects that already exist will not be compounded in subjects such as social anthropology. The existing concentration already means that there are high quality research departments with unique sub-field specialisms that seldom if ever get access to ESRC funded students. The only remaining guarantee that critical mass will be maintained nationally for disciplines is the steer of the Training Board, and we do not regard this as a very robust and transparent guarantee of happy outcomes (quite aside from the fact that it puts a heavy burden of responsibility on Training Board members). So there are quite a number of reasons for thinking that these proposals may not result in an enhancement of the quality of ESRC funded students' training and may in some cases militate against it, even if genuine centres of excellence are created (in reality rather than as an outcome of the concentration effects). The old recognition system was tiresome, but it did ensure that pockets of excellence in smaller institutions could be identified and there was already a high degree of concentration in it. Most anthropologists are sceptical of the possibilities of a continuing improvement of the quality of generic training beyond the levels currently achieved, and worried about the impact of generic training on the quality of disciplinary training that it is possible to give within the relatively short UK academic programme. It is clear that a system that is uninterested in the actual supervisory capacity of an institution in a field in which regional/country expertise as well as thematic expertise tends to be important may well not allocate grants nationally in an optimal way in terms of quality unless students who seek the grants are obliged to conform with the expertise actually on offer, and if that happens, then British social science is likely to narrow its range of expertise in undesirable ways.

These proposals seem to have forgotten that the PhD project is likely to be the basis for a research career and publications rather than a kind of "practice" and this is a serious defect in the proposed changes. We do not feel that ESRC has yet made a compelling case to justify these changes as an advance (rather than a response to political pressures) and hope that serious consideration will be given, in particular, to ways of mitigating the potentially undesirable concentration effects of the proposed new system.

With best wishes,

John Gledhill  
Chair, Association of Social Anthropologists  
of the UK and Commonwealth

## **PREVIOUS MINUTES**

### **ASA committee 12.12.08**

Moving to direct debit – Rohan needs to finish the transfer. Little activity expected before spring. Darren is better so Rohan hopes for progress on the directory of members.

John suggests creating common format to EASA and ASA membership, to save time and create the possibility to search across both databases. All 3 (RAI too) are on Ro's database so it makes sense administratively. There may be data protection issues. And of chargeable searches. Perhaps we could have a basic public search and a restricted professional search. Committee discussed the interest categories – to allow some unity of search terms. Country and region are easiest categories to dictate. The categories/keywords are currently free text with a free text search. First, we agreed that when we ask people to update their entries, we recommend that they include geographical search terms.

Ro asked whether some money should be invested to have a worldpay function – because EASA members have complained about paypal. Worldpay is easier to use and takes a smaller cut. The cost is a couple of hundred pounds. To be used for membership payments, conference payments, etc. Ro will get the figures and check with Raminder. Committee agreed for Ro to look into this and go ahead with Raminder's approval.

Travel grant for RAI was 900 – only half was disbursed because of a drop out at the last minute and the other applicant had her funds covered already. We will ask the RAI if this can be transferred to the next conference with a top up from ASA to pay a sufficient amount to bring a Southern scholar to ASA09. Ro will send John the exact details and John will contact RAI and make the request. Partial payments are a problem. ASA is already funding a Firth lecture for ASA09. Raminder suggested we ask applicants for a budget so we can assess how much it would cost us. There are often visa problems, we might be able to apply for a waiver on deposits for visas. JG has close contacts in the foreign office for visiting scholars, but Home Office are belligerent and refuse to allow people in. John had a Cuban scholar visiting who, despite residence in Spain, was refused a british visa from Madrid. Nayanika will explore visa regulations when she is back in UK in January.

WCAA website. JG saw Thomas Reuter who is president elect, but paralysis has set in because the coordinator is not doing anything. The website is out of date, and membership details are not up to date enough for conference administration. The site is on a server in the states but is edited from Brazil. John thinks a majority will be in favour of Ro building a new site and maintain it. Wenner Gren might fund the construction cost, but because of grant cuts, they will not be able to fund it further. Annual cost might be in the region of £700 a year? (Assuming no great changes). With content management, it would be less. Setting up a new website is more like £1500, but moving it to another server is simpler. ASA could offer a sum of money and AAA could offer much more. Others include Casca (Canada) RAI, Brazil, Japanese, Portuguese... Veronica suggested each organisation paid 1% of membership income. WCAA should remain a network without an infrastructure, but it does organise meetings – 'to bring the global level playing field into focus' but it will not organise world congresses, etc. face to face interaction is very useful, but there's no basis for funding. So all it needs is a one-off fund to set up the website and a small sum for maintenance. ASA agree to give £300 to get the ball rolling.

ASA09

38 panel proposals received. Timetable has only 6 panel sessions (cf this conference had 14). Each panel wants over 2 sessions. Simone argued that too many panels fragments a

conference and is self-defeating. Bristol panels will be plenary panels with 3 speakers each. Parallel sessions allow people not to be excluded. If plenaries are a genuine discussion between a real number of people, then that gives it a greater unity. The committee discussed session organisation and numbers of sessions. The committee recommended the Bristol organisers take a strong editorial approach to panel selection and organisation.

ASA AGM will be held at Tuesday lunchtime. Committee will discuss by email the organisation of the conference programme (brochure).

Ro will follow up with Pnina whether we have had the final payment from the Keele conference.

Apply have asked whether they can contribute to having a more significant role in a conference. Simone suggested that they liaise with the Belfast organisers. Kate will liaise with Kathryn Tomlinson.

Andrew Irving asked advise on how to go about calling for ethnographic research in terrorism study. John suggested we recommend that they abide by the ethical code of the ASA. In the last controversy, the foreign office did at least acknowledge that the process should be open. Druid – burial request. Dimitrious explained that druid object to new archaeological technologies that potentially prove that the remains are not druids or that do not connect with current druids, and that druids are small minority who do want to know about archaeological discovery. The North American case is simpler, where keeping human remains is an offence to living people for whom the ancestors are not dead. Here, the Druids are only empathising with what they imagine the Druid groups might have wished. The issues is whether the current Druids can show that they are sufficiently disturbed by the unburied... However, many of the remains were never buried in the first place but were placed in burial tombs that could be visited. Reburial seems to indicate a return to the tombs were they were found – which means to return it to Avebury world heritage site which suggests some further issues. Current Druids are taking inspiration from other reburial campaigns. JG suggests that there is a difference between cases where there are living people connected to the bones than where people have imagined connections. But the question of what kind of connections there are, are problematic. Dimitrious suggested talking to Josh Pollard at Bristol and Jenny Blain at Sheffield Hallam. The committee tended to favour the position where bones need not necessarily be held in museum storage, but access for research purposes is important. The difficulty here is the lack of connection between current Druids and the bones.

Kate Degnen will consult with Josh and Jenny and report back to the committee.

Nayanika reported from the Ethics meeting that it went well, and recommendations included having a bigger session in future conferences. Participants suggested that the thee would have been goodf or a plenary.  $\frac{3}{4}$  of speakers suggested offering papers for publication.

Simone requested that they be submitted to ASAonline.

Simone reported that she has been offered a selection of papers on Cuba for asaonline.

Simone reported that the blog was not as active as we had hoped because of competing debates.

There has not been the progress on the media/film debate because Georgie's approach to RAI left us without progress. JG asked about progress on the letter to Ofcom that Georgie offered to write. He was concerned that he will not be available to respond to a letter in his name. Georgie has indicated that she wishes to step down from the Media officer position as she cannot give it the time it needs. Nayanika suggested asking Paul Basu who is moving to UCL. Andy ?? at Manchester. Garry Marvin? Narmala Halstead? The committee suggested that Georgie find a replacement – Garry might be a suitable candidate.

ASA2010 will go to Belfast. Ro will recirculate the proposal. We should now call for 2011.

Publicise 2010. CASCA has expressed interest in holding a joint meeting, but they meet in

May which is difficult timing, although there is space for negotiation. Conferences abroad do really need to have an invitation – the local host has to want the project to happen. The committee discussed possible places to organise future conferences, particularly in India. Nayanika and Raminder will explore the possibilities.

1. Film competition?
2. ASAonline – we do need to get something out of this conference. We should suggest to Veronica that a selection of papers goes to ASAonline.

Ro thinks this conference should make money – they could possibly use money to produce a second book – but this is a difficult precedent. A second book could not be an ASA monograph, but some surplus can be used for a second book.

Ro noted that the subsidy for student places for NZ students was taken from the conference budget, but the ASA put money for students. Committee agreed that if this was the case, then the money ASA put in for students must also come from the budget. Either it comes from the associations or the budget, but not one rule each. In principle, this is the ASA conference, and surplus is shared between ASA and the local host.

## **ASA09**

All proceeds well with plenty of interest: there are just under 300 papers and we expect ~325 delegates; the budget is looking reasonably safe although our commitment to accommodation payments may remove any surplus (we have had to pay already for the hostel accommodation and so will lose money on any non-take up of beds).

The timetable & registration are to be released/ opened on Monday; all current info on the conference can be seen on the website.

## **ASA10**

### ***The Interview – theory, practice, society***

**13-16 April 2010**

Dr Jonathan Skinner (QUB), Dr Dominic Bryan (QUB)

#### **Rationale:**

The focus of this ASA conference will be upon the interview and its connections with social anthropology. We feel that this critical and most basic of elements in fieldwork and the production of ethnography merits careful theoretical, methodological and textual/ethnographic consideration. We should like to host such an inquiry at the Queen's University Belfast where there are academics with specialist interests in the interview in Anthropology, History, Psychology and Sociology; and in interviewing circumstances in Northern Ireland and on the borders.

The interview – formal, informal, structured, semi-structured and unstructured – is integral to anthropology as a constituent of ethnographic practice. We meet and talk with our subjects, informants, respondents. Their answers and our subsequent actions and further questions inform our anthropological writings and guide our research. But just what exactly is the relationship between the interview and the anthropological text? How explicit are we as to our interview techniques and methods and to what extent do they feed into our actions and writings? How 'experienced' are we as interviewers and interviewees in this 'interview society' of ours? What, then, is the relationship between anthropology and the interview?

This conference seeks to consider questions, issues and examples concerning the nature of the interview from the theory of the interview, to the practice of the interview, and to the use of the interview in ethnography. We therefore encourage panels and abstracts in the following areas:

- Interview Theory
- Ethnography and the Interview
- Interviewing and Anthropology
- The Interview Society
- The Interview as Research Method
- Gender, Ethics, Risk and the Interview
- Interview Case Studies
- From Interview to Text
- Life History and Oral History Interviews
- Biography, Memory (Remembering) and Subject Construction

#### **Possible keynotes:**

Professor Liz Stanley (University of Edinburgh)

Professor Ruth Finnegan (Open University)

Professor Norman Denzin (University of Illinois)

Professor Vincent Crapanzano (City University New York)

Professor Jaber Gubrium (University of Missouri)  
Professor James Holstein (Marquette University)  
Professor Andrew Sparkes (Exeter University)  
Professor Emeritus Elizabeth Tonkin (Queen's University Belfast)  
Professor Vieda Skultans (Bristol University)  
Professor Henrietta Moore (LSE)  
Professor Bill Watson (University of Kent)

**Conference administrator** – NomadIT with QUB Eventus

**Venue** – Stranmillis College, QUB, Belfast

**Suggested dates** - Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> April to Friday 16<sup>th</sup> April 2010

**Budget Support**

ASA Conference support £500 float  
Institute for Irish Studies support for £500  
School of History and Anthropology internationalisation grant bid for £2,000+  
Wenner-Gren Foundation Conference Grant



## ***Proposed budget for ASA10 in Belfast***

<b>Income Item</b>	<b>Amount</b>	<b>Expenditure Item</b>	<b>Amount</b>			
Publisher income	2300	Abstract book	2010			
Registration income	35275	Ad in AT	350		<i>regn rate</i>	<i>no.s</i>
Banquet income	9380	Posters	300	<i>Non-member</i>	140	100
ASA contribution	500	Badges	335	<i>Member</i>	105	150
Inst for Irish Studies	500	Conference venue	5175	<i>Student</i>	65	85
Possible QUB Internationalisation	2000	AV supplement	1000			335
		Catering	9952			
		Reception	5126	<i>Bqt factor</i>	0.7	
		Banquet venue	75	<i>Catering factor</i>	0.85	
		Banquet food	9380			
		Band	1500			
		Post-graduate labour costs (300hrs@£5)	1500			
		Conference taxis	100			
		Plenary speaker costs	0			
		ASA committee presence	885			
		Eventus admin	2000			
		NomadIT travel & expenses	400			
		NomadIT administration	9870			
		PayPal costs (3.5% of 80% of regn income)	988			
		Contingency 3% (not incl plenary costs)	1104			
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>£49,955</b>	<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>£52,049</b>			
<b>Running profit</b>	<b>-£2,094</b>					

Ro: clearly we need to hone this further to ensure the bottom line lifts above zero. But at present this is the rough budget we are working with.