



# The Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth

## COMMITTEE MEETING

19 Amherst Road, Manchester. 10 November, 2006, 13.00 – 17.00

### **DRAFT MINUTES**

**Present:** John Gledhill (chair), Lisette Josephides (Hon Treasurer), Trevor Marchand (publications), Rohan Jackson (Admin), Andrew Garner (Membership/PG Liaison/Training), John Postill (Networks) Simone Abram (Hon Sec.)  
Present by skype (virtual link): Ian Harper (Ethics)

#### **Item 1. Apologies from:**

Alberto Corsin-Jimenez.

The committee offered its sympathy to Alberto, who has slipped a disc while on research leave.

Andrew Garner wished the committee to know that he has now been appointed to the civil service (the Defence, Science and Technology Laboratory of the Ministry of Defence). He has therefore signed the official secrets act.

#### **Item 2. Minutes** of the previous meeting of 27.5.06

Correction: Remove suggesting that JG request suggestions for alternative Firth speakers (under matters arising 3iii).

#### **Item 3. Matters arising**

Jean-Paul Colleyn did not respond to invitations to give a Firth Lecture at EASA, despite several emails and phone calls made by both JG and SA who actually spoke to his aunt (even if the invitation was rather late). As he is a personal friend of TM, he will make enquiries to find out what happened.

JG suggested a need to call for 2010 conference proposals now, to avoid the situation arising with the request to hold conference by Shankland. (see item 8.7 minutes of 0605 and last item below) Conferences are not normally called more than 2 years ahead, but committee agreed that 3 years ahead was probably reasonable. As we now have conferences to 2009, a call for further hosts will be made at the AGM in 2007. See also conference guidelines matter below.

#### **Item 4. reports.**

##### **4a. chair.**

From HoDs meeting, Jonathan Spencer requested further feedback from departments of the ESRC review. Our input on the consultation over RAE Metrics consultation does seem to have had some impact.

Combating Terrorism issue – The committee was updated on the lively discussion held at the HoDs meeting. JG noted that there was in fact no chance of anyone conducting field research on the basis of very small budgets, and that ironically the existence of the proposal potentially endangered people who would actually have more or less nothing to do with any new research.

Gustaaf Houtman is very keen for John to write something for AT. However, he did not feel it appropriate to write an editorial as ASA chair himself at the present time and has written a very brief statement for Gustaaf to cite in a personal capacity, not as ASA chair, not

wishing to exacerbate the current controversy by either appearing to chastise the members who favoured the proposal, nor raking up controversy while ESRC are in a process of redefining their approach (a point supported by Jonathan Spencer who is involved in the new ESRC committee). Lisette commented, however, that as no-one outside the HoDs knows who supported the proposal, then John's comments could not be seen to criticise individuals. JG read out a statement which he has offered to Gustaaf in a personal capacity.

Lisette also commented in relation to John's statement: why do we refer to the slaughter of 'innocent' civilians, as if it were acceptable to kill guilty civilians? John agreed that this phraseology should probably not be used.

AG suggested that any public debate or statement draws out very clearly the ethical issues, to make quite clear where the problems lie, as some of his current colleagues may not be familiar with these issues.

JG noted that Jeremy Keenan, Archeologist/anthropologist is writing for AT in relation to a campaign by the Angloamerican security apparatus to fabricate an "Al Qaeda" threat in the Sahel, branding the Tuareg as potential radicals...

Ian agreed that the blog could be used for a public discussion of these issues, although use of the blog has been disappointing (ie almost no-one has contributed). See Ethics report below.

JP suggested we discuss it on the mailing list as way of activating the list, and potentially migrating to the blog later. See item 7.

#### **4b. administrator**

**4bi.** All ASA membership records will move to the online system this weekend. Will enable others to work on chasing subs, will offer a searchable database by about February 07. Ro will be emailing about new member requests.

Still some arrears to recoup, because Ro has gone through all members' accounts individually and calculated arrears. Currently have about 500 members and about 20 new applicants.

**4bii.** RJ asked about the online directory. Key issues are: how complicated search criteria are required, is browsing desirable, and what level of security is preferable (open to all, selective access, etc). What other kinds of output are desirable – as pdf, csv, etc? email links, etc., should the media have direct access to the database? :

JG: Email addresses must not be made available unless it is only to members.

Ro discussed security with Darren, the technician. NomadIT are running all their systems compatibly, so that searching is possible through other organisations, such as EASA.

#### **Questions inc?**

After some discussion, the committee came to some unanimous decisions:

The database will be a members-only privilege (as the directory is), accessed by password using date of birth (which members can change if they are concerned about security).

Committee members will therefore be able to search the database in response to media requests. Access for members will be to all information currently available in the printed directory, and results of searches will be saveable as .rtf files. Simple search operations (boolean 'and') will be used to minimise technical complexity, with an option to develop this if demand arises. The database will also enable searches of conference abstracts which members have submitted through the system (ie through NomadIT's Cocoa system) to ASA and EASA conferences.

Once the system is in place, Ro will indicate what the total arrears are. Only 230 people pay by standing order. The other half probably still owe for this and/or last year. Should have positive bearing on finances in the next six months. He noted that we do not send copies of volumes (directories, monographs) to people in arrears.

**4biii.** Conferences: guidelines were circulated – we still need to review them. We agreed at last meeting that membership was not a necessity but should be encouraged. LJ Said that panel organisers should be members. See conferences, below.

**4biv.** Email and website: website will be revamped over the winter. Applications for membership will become much easier. The new site will also be adjusted for accessibility.  
**Action: RJ will send some draft new-looks for comments.**

Webhost. Have renewed with company that took over Joshua internet. Ran out of time for moving the site. Site seems to be more stable, but we get a lot of spam. May consider using Dreamhost that EASA uses, which has access to Mailman (for mail lists) and has little spam.

**4bv.** Ro asked about potential future needs. Video? Publications? See item 7.  
Ro asked whether people's conference papers should be accessible to other system-users. *After discussion the committee agreed that uploaded full conference papers should be accessible only to registered conference participants as they are in principle already available to conference attenders (ie if you go to a conference, it is to hear people's papers), and that it would be useful to panel members to read papers in advance.*

[TM asked why attendees of conferences aren't obliged to be members of ASA. SA noted that ASA has quite strict application criteria, and conferences are open more widely. JG remarks that conference convenors ought to be members, and hopefully panel convenors too. ]

Ro asked whether the ASA would find online voting/surveys useful. Committee agreed that voting was only an issue at the AGM, and that any change to current processes would need to go to AGM as a change of constitution.  
If online voting were used, levels of anonymity are the issue, as complete anonymity would suggest that people could not revise their votes if they made a mistake online.  
*The Committee agreed that semi-anonymity, where only Ro could access information would be best if online voting became an issue.*  
*Going to online voting would be a constitutional change and should go to AGM.*  
**RJ will circulate a paper about this.**

**4bvi.** Ro has circulated a document about backup of his databases in case of emergency.

**4bvii.** Annals. Agreement to start work on an early production for 07, skipping 06 because 05 went out in 06. several reports already in.  
**Action: Ro to ask Megan to contact overseas departments.**

#### **Item 4c. Treasurer.**

Firth fund. Have talked about consolidating the funds. At present there are some funds available and LJ invited new initiatives.  
AG asked for a pot to help postgrads to get to the New Zealand conference. Committee agreed that this should only be for students without access to research council or other funds.

***LJ proposed 10 PG travel studentships at around £300 each. After discussion, it was agreed that the conditions for funding would be that applicants have match funding agreed, that they have a paper accepted for the conference, and that beyond that, choice would be made by lottery.***

AG also says that AM has been told there are small funds available to run courses, and they would like to know how to access it. LJ suggests they make an application, with proposals and budget. ***Committee agreed that applications should consist of one side of A4 plus a detailed budget.***

LJ noted that Pnina Werbner had held back money from the Keele conference – it is normally handed over and subvention is agreed and returned as required (eg as happened in Aberdeen). The committee agrees that it never shares the risks of conferences (see also item 8b below).

**Action: SA will write to Pnina congratulating her on the success of the conference (see below) and including response to her report.**

Replacement of Lisette. JG suggested Mukalika Banerjee, UCL. Other suggestions are Raminder Kaur, Sussex. Mark Harris, St Andrews, used to run Prickly Pear, is very organised and responsible. Need someone who will prepare all the accounts for the accountant, otherwise our bills are enormous.

LJ noted that gender is an issue on the committee and strongly urged the committee to approach female candidates in the first instance. The committee were asked to send recommendations of female anthropologists who might have financial experience.

**Action: SA will write to Mukalika, first, and if she is not willing or able, then take up committee recommendations.**

#### **4d. ethics.**

Ian was contacted again via Skype from Nepal. He was able to make 2 points.

Ian had emailed people widely about the blog, and although he had received positive responses, none had resulted in additions to the blog. Clearly blogs need to be led from the front. SA suggested that guest editors might be asked to lead the blog for a limited period.

**Action: IH will invite people with particular ethical issues to take on the blog.** EG Martha Mundy who led on the anti-terrorism debate, Olivia Harris, maybe Jonathan Spencer. Contributions should be short and succinct.

Ian's second point was about finding a suitable slot at the ASA07 and future conferences for ethics debates, to try to institutionalise an annual reflection on ethical processes. He has been contacted by the South African association after his and Alberto's piece was published.

Action: Ro and Ian will liaise with ASA07 to ensure there is a suitable slot. Ian will be in touch when he returns in January.

(Ian then left the meeting as the connection was poor, with lots of feedback)

#### **4e. media**

nothing to report

#### **4f. networks.**

No report. JP is now working for a new university (Sheffield Hallam) and wonders if he actually has time to be networks officer over the next few months. Would like the committee to consider finding a replacement officer. Catherine Tomlinson or Kate Degnen were suggested as active network leaders.

JP was encouraged to consider the option of job-sharing his position, or finding a deputy.

**Action: JP to decide whether and/or how he wishes to continue as Networks Officer and email the committee to notify them of his plans.**

#### **4g. AM**

**4gi.** 3 points. AM had a meeting at EASA which led to a proposal to WCAA for a postgrad network. JG was not sure what happened to it but explained that the basic problem is that WCAA has no money itself. It was set up specifically not to replicate organisational structure (ie not to become another bureaucracy) but as a network, hence it can be rather difficult to coordinate action. It was agreed that all member organisations would be consulted on what they do for Pgs, but as all associations have different organisations, they have very different approaches. No response has yet been forthcoming from the facilitator. JG is going to a meeting of WCAA in Cape Town in December, so he will ask.

**4gii.** Rebecca Marsland has got a post replacing Ian Harper in Edinburgh while he is away. Therefore the email has become less active. AG has asked her to estimate the time she spent updating the AM website. She estimates about 15 mins per day. Gives an idea of how much funded work might be necessary. AM Have discussed whether people advertising posts through AM should be asked to pay a fee for access to fund the website.

**4giii.** Rebecca M and Patrick Hazard have produced a welcome pack for PG students joining anthropology departments. AG will circulate. We will discuss at next meeting.

**Item 5. replacement of officers.**

Covered above.

**Item 6 publications.**

Berg will do a combined mailing of the two monographs this year.

We have traditionally given 2 copies of new monographs to the centre for anthropology at the BM as an independent library of any particular university. The committee agree to continue this with all new copies.

TM reported a problem with cosmopolitanism volume. Pnina has informed TM and Berg that she is planning a final manuscript by Feb with Oct 07 publication. Oct 07 in time for RAE and AAA. Berg has serious problems with that. Books coming out are already advertised. Cannot have an imprint in a book unless it comes out that year. Also a problem in that we would be issuing 3 books in one year. TM would prefer that we stick to our schedule that the conference book emerges 2 years after the conference.

TM would like to respond to PW asking for a final proposal for the next committee meeting and that a volume would come out in 2008.

*The committee backed TM fully.*

JG noted that Pnina was told that she had to submit a proposal to the committee, and as she hasn't delivered one to this meeting, she will have to wait until the next meeting.

**Item 8b. Pnina's report** – was taken early in order to ensure it was discussed.

Pnina's report argues that parallel sessions should be dissociated from the conference theme.

The committee disagreed on the following principles: A provocative theme encourages people to apply and attend, it ensures that key debates are addressed in a full manner, and a theme enhances the potential for a resulting monograph.

Pnina also suggests that the ASA could make a great deal more profit from its conferences. The committee were quite aware that money can be made from conferences, but opposes this direction as the ASA is a member organisation which aims to keep its operations affordable for members and accessible to non-members. Further, income can only be raised by either raising the conference fee or substantially increasing the size of conferences. Neither of these are routes that the committee can endorse. Income might otherwise be raised through the provision of free accommodation, which is rarely forthcoming.

The committee further noted that Pnina's beliefs about the income raised from other conferences is erroneous (eg EASA is likely to make a loss, or possibly a very small net profit).

Pnina further proposes that 4,000 should be kept aside for reducing risk of future conferences. The committee reiterated that ASA does not underwrite the risks for any conferences. Furthermore, it is for the committee to decide how its finances are put to use. Pnina also suggests the committee should hold a community bank account at Barclays bank. The ASA already has a community bank account with the Co-operative bank, a much more ethical bank than Barclays.

Pnina also argues that ASA should pay for officers to attend its conferences. But ASA officers who run the AGM must attend, and their conference fees have therefore traditionally been included in costs.

The committee agreed that there must be a contract letter with conference organisers which should make clear that if a surplus arises, it will be paid to the ASA in full following

the conference. Nothing should be held back. This letter should also make it clear that the ASA does not underwrite losses. While this agreement has held for previous conferences, it is clear that there are organisers who need to sign up to a contract in order to meet this obligation.

**Action: SA will write to Pnina, congratulating her on the success of her conference, and responding to the points in her report on behalf of the committee.**

Pnina also submitted conference accounts which were unsatisfactory, as they do not itemise key items, such as conference income. The committee agreed that it was not worth pursuing Pnina any further, but that it would be sensible to accept the income and draw a line under the conference.

**Action: JG will circulate those parts of the accounts which were given to him in electronic format.**

### **Item 7. Profile of anthropology.**

A Sub-committee of SA, JP and AC-J met at Bristol and discussed the public face of anthropology and on activities for ASA. They made the following proposals:

**7.1** The ASA should begin a series of email seminars on working papers (in the manner of the EASA Media Anthropology network run by JP). JP notes that his network is run through the 'mailman' system, which is available on the ASA's server. He also invites particular non-members to participate on a temporary basis as relevant, which helps to enliven debates.

The committee agreed in principle to this proposal and agreed that SA should put in place a number of potential seminars before inviting people to join via the ASA mailing list. The mailing list should be used to alert members to the discussion, but the discussion itself will be through a separate list.

**Action: SA to start up the project, but the editing/chairing role should circulate.**

**7.2** The committee has previously agreed that a pamphlet series would be a useful project. Pamphlets should be fully refereed and free to download. In addition, they may be a cross-over project, if they are generally written in a style which is accessible to interested non-members, although they must also be of sufficient quality and depth to interest members as well. JG showed the **committee** some copies from Berghahn's 'Global Issues' series of popular pamphlets, to demonstrate that this is a niche with viability.

The committee agreed that this proposal should be developed.

Action: SA to draw up proposals for the pamphlet series.

**7.3** The sub-committee identified the potential of online videos to raise awareness of anthropology. Alan Macfarlane's site (with a series of interviews of well-known anthropologists) is already accessible online. JG noted that the Granada centre produce many student films, some of which are of sufficient quality to be associated with the ASA website. However, JP noted that it would be more effective to start to move anthropology materials into the public domain, rather than try to bring the public into the ASA's domain. The committee agreed that we should encourage, or organise, the publicity of anthropological film through popular public sites, such as u-tube. There is currently little linked to anthropology on the utube site, a gap which we could usefully help to fill, although with caution, given the unpredictability of what else might turn up from a search for anthropology. The committee needs to find someone to lead who has knowledge both of visual anthropology, ethnographic film and the internet. Several names were mentioned: John Hutnyk, Steve Lyons, Andrew Irvine, Gary Marvin. JG also noted that Manchester were advertising a post in visual anthropology, and that the appointee may be an appropriate person (depending who is appointed). JG also has the equipment and knowledge to digitise films, although his time is limited.

**Action: Ro will investigate setting up an ASA account on Utube. Liaise with RAI film committee?**

**JP will ask Sarah Pink who would be good people to ask.**

Will consider later (or suggest to Andrew) circulating a request through the HoDs list for relevant short ethnographic films or extracts

7.4 The sub-committee wondered whether media training was available for anthropologists, or whether we ought to take action to ensure it is provided. Although ESRC offer media training, it appears to be mostly concerned with branding.

**Action: AG will request that C-SAP consider offering media training.**

**Item 8. ASA Conferences**

**8a. Firth lectures.**

Jean-Paul Colleyn was invited at rather late notice to give a Firth lecture at EASA in Bristol, but did not respond, despite being emailed and called by both JG and SA. Although it was late notice, Colleyn was in Paris, and was invited to defer to a later date, and SA got as far as speaking to a member of his household, but he did not respond at all.

**Action: Trevor will try to find out why Jean-Paul Colleyn did not respond.**

We must have a Firth lecture in 2008, and we have agreed that it should be combined with the LSE Methods conference, and therefore will liaise with Olivia Harris.

**In the case of any other Firth lectures, we** need a rising star who has not been heard by everybody before, and JG would prefer a speaker from abroad.

Suggestions for 2007 were also invited (few names were put forward, Vered Amit at Concordia was suggested) – plus where and when. Possibly alongside other functions.

**Liaise with ASA07 to investigate whether to combine with one of their keynotes.**

**8b. ASA 07**

Ro reported a discussion on where to pitch the registration fee. A small grant is coming from **Wenner-Gren**, and a small amount is anticipated from British Academy. With about 150 participants, to make £1,000, the charge could be 130 for non-members, 100 for members and 50 for students. The committee agreed that this was an appropriate amount. *In principle, plenary speakers may have their registration fee waived but pay their own expenses. Keynote speakers' expenses may be covered.*

So far the organisers have received 33 panel proposals. Ro will liaise to specify when ethics meeting and Firth lectures should happen, and will draft a contract letter for circulation

**Action: Ro to draft a letter and circulate.**

**c. ASA 08**

Information from Veronica is ready on the website but not yet available. Ro is working on the graphics. Veronica has also sent AG the **Wenner-Gren** application and outline of sources of funding and asked AG to take the lead in applying, or alerting members what is available. AG will also investigate whether British Academy block grants are available for conferences in NZ.

**d. 2009 conference**

LJ noted that she was not clear that the proposal had been accepted at the last meeting, but that DS had been asked to revise his proposal. SA was also not aware that the proposal had been accepted, nor that the proposal had been circulated. JG pointed out that the previous chair, Richard Fardon, had put the committee in a position of obligation to accept the proposal.

Ro read out David Shankland's response to its request that the name of the conference be changed. The committee are not happy with David's wish to call it 'anthropology and archaeology' and stand firm by their request to change the title. Archaeology can be in the sub-title but not the key title.

**Action: Ro will circulate David Shankland's revised proposal for further comments from the committee.**

The committee did not have time for a full discussion of revised conference guidelines. This

will be high on the next committee agenda.

**Date of next meeting.**

9/3/07 **12 noon**. Amherst road. (Ro may not be available but will be accessible by phone in case of doubts).