



The Association of Social Anthropologists of the UK and Commonwealth

COMMITTEE MEETING

19 Amherst Road, Manchester. 9 March, 12.00 – 16.00

DRAFT MINUTES

Present: John Gledhill, Lisette Josephides, Trevor Marchand, Cathrine Degnen, Simone Abram. Ian Harper, Alberto Corsin-Jimenez, Ro Jackson attended via internet chat (Skype) from Edinburgh, Barcelona, Sydney respectively.

1. Apologies

Andrew Garner, John Postill

2. Minutes of 10.11.06

Accepted.

3. Matters arising

There were no matters arising that were not included in agenda items.

4. Replacement of officers/use of deputies

The chair extended a welcome to Kate (Cathrine Degnen) who is taking over from John Postill

Raminder Kaur has agreed to stand for election as treasurer at AGM – Lisette anticipates a handover to the new treasurer at the next committee meeting after the AGM.

5. new membership applications

JG read the list of applicants. The committee noted that some applicants do not have two referees who are members of the ASA. It was agreed that those who do not will be invited to find referees in accordance with ASA membership rules. The following applications were approved pending complete references.

name	Status	action
Dr Nicholas Swann	accepted	
Dr Anna Waldstein	only one referee. Ref 1 is Roy Ellen..	Ask Roy Ellen to suggest another referee
Dr Thomas Wormald	accepted	
Dr Dario Novellino	accepted	
Ms Stefannia Klapppa	need 2nd ref	One reference required
Dr Suzanne Goopy	Needs 2nd ref	ask Sarah Pink for 2nd ref?
Dr James Staples	accepted	
Dr Gisa Wieszkalnys	accepted	
Dr Mette Louise Berg	accepted	
Dr Cosimo Zene	(studies of religion, reader at SOAS, trained in anthropology). Trevor offers 2nd ref.	accepted
Yarden Evav	Pg membership	accepted
Dr Silvia Posocco		accepted
Ms Evi Eftychiou	pg membership	accepted
Vibha Arora		accepted

Dr Matthew Hodges	Needs 2 nd ref.	One reference required
Dr Melissa Demian	accepted	
Dr Richard Vokes	accepted	
Prof Donald Sutton	Donald Sutton. (Eminent Chinese historian/ anthropologist). Neither refs are ASA members – although 'Woody' Watson used to be a member.	write to say we'd be delighted for him to be a member and could he get two members to act as referees.
Dr Elizabeth Mei-Li Roberts	Upgrade from pg to full.	One reference required
Filareti Kotsi	accepted	
Petra Rethman	No refs. Kate knows her and is happy to endorse her application.	One reference required

6. Anthropology's image and public engagement

a. ASA, RAI and the BBC – regrouping and strategy

Further to our email discussion with RAI about BBC4's so-called 'Anthropology week'. AJC had seen two of the films and agreed with JG. He was very disappointed with the way in which the films treated anthropology and its intellectual project. He felt that there was a case for writing to the BBC, and could not understand the RAI's position of stepping back from sending a letter even after John and Hilary made a good case. JG's argument was that the point of the letter was that there was a case that the BBC had contravened its charter (to educate) by misrepresenting the discipline. However, without the support of the RAI (and those members of council who are also members of ASA), we would be unlikely to achieve anything and could be badly bruised by such an encounter. Few of us had seen the films – hardly any of us have access to digital tv, so we can hope that the audience generally was very small.

JG noted that the first appearance of Marilyn Strathern shows her wearing white gloves, and hence looking rather eccentric. Only later in the film does it become clear that she is using them to take a Kula valuable out of a museum case. In a programme which was otherwise well-edited, it did look like a deliberate attempt to misrepresent her.

JG identified a series of problems with RAI – partly that their media officer is giving the producer access to our 'experts'. John was called by a producer wanting to send people into a very dangerous part of Mexico. He put to her Lisette's point, which was that there are female anthropologists who have already done that, why not make programmes about them. The producer agreed this would be better but that the BBC insisted on commissioning the kind of programmes we are criticising. Ian also noted that he was contacted by independent film company who wanted to fly people in to 'close contact' with healers etc. they wanted to call it 'medical anthropology'. He said it's not anthropology. He mentioned contemporary issues about pharmaceuticals, but they were only interested in the 'exotic'.

So the strategy that 'we come up with good programmes, they'll buy it', is clearly a failure – as Paul Henley and Andre Singer have already argued. If Paul can't get the BBC to buy programmes, it's hard to believe anyone on the RAI is going to be able to do so. But as the RAI won't take any stand against what the producer herself thought was a loaded presentation, then we have little ground.

AJC confirmed that young anthropologists have been pitching fantastic ideas to the BBC and other broadcasters for at least 25 years, which casts doubt on the RAI's

suggestion that lack of anthropological engagement was the problem. He also felt that the consultation about the letter within the RAI was about how individual anthropologists had been treated/represented by the BBC and did not address the substance of the letter, which was the representation of the discipline as a whole. AJC suggested that the ASA contact Georgian Born for inside institutional advice about how to engage the BBC in a meaningful discussion. JG volunteered to discuss the issue with his media contacts after the annual Forman lecture at the RAI film festival.

A discussion about the alternatives for action covered the potential for Channel4 to use any protest as fodder for scandal, that a defensive response will indicate a deep insecurity of our discipline, that most TV is rubbish anyway, and that ITV is currently in a deep financial and identity crisis.

In terms of action, the committee agreed that promoting its own alternative channels for media about anthropology was the most constructive way forward, and that if they were successful, we can anticipate further media interest on our own terms. Ro has already set up a YouTube site for ASA. TM argued that many film makers could produce very-short-films suitable for YouTube and indicated that he would be able to produce such a film out of a full-length film of his own. AJC reported that some time ago Granada Centre students produced 10-second films for an advertising competition, which threw up some very creative products. SA suggested that ASA sponsor a competition for You-Tube films to attract shorts for its website. She proposed that TM work with Ro to produce a film of 2-3 mins length as a trial, to indicate what could be done.

The committee agreed to the following:

To launch a competition for short (3-5 minute films) for the ASA's YouTube site.
Space on ASA website – commission short (max. 3 min films).
Offer first prize of 100 pounds, two runners up of 50 pounds, and if the winner has a full-length film, guarantee showing it at the ASA conference.
Ro can give the winners the ability to upload their own films.
TM has a film which he can provide a 3 min element – will work with Ro to get it on the site as a trial and as an example to encourage others.
Use site to link to other references, courses, etc.

If successful, films may be pitched to Channel 4 for its shorts slots. ACJ noted that there is also a need to emphasise existing high-quality films which aren't otherwise recognised as anthropological (e.g. Molly Dineen's films). JG proposed that we compile a filmography? The RAI archive is not at all complete (particularly the photographic archive) and offers a very archaic version of the discipline.

b. Pamphlet series

SA presented a list of people she will invite to be consulting editors, with a prospect of reviewing a maximum of one paper a year.

The series will be announced at the ASA AGM 07, including a call for papers and plan to launch in 08.

SA will act as editor until we see how many papers may be published, and at that point we will consider calling for a managing editor and consider remuneration.

7. Reports

a. Chair

See chair's report. An active group trying to get the ESRC 'radicalisation' programme pulled. The committee and members of the HoDs group consider that the programme is dangerous – and that the danger could be a bullet in the back of someone's head in four years. ESRC demands to demonstrate the risk are unrealistic. A review of the programme is not sufficient. The programme needs to be pulled. JG will compose a new letter to HoDs should be shared with other senior academics with the aim of building pressure on ESRC to get the programme pulled. Another message was received from Felicia Hughes-Freeland in Swansea indicating that the anthropologists there are thinking of appealing over their non-inclusion in the forthcoming RAE, but that it doesn't look promising.

b. Administrator

Kate and Raminder were added to committee email address. Lisette will remain on the list until she formally hands over. Ro will resend the email with questions about the online Directory search facility with John's response.

SA to put forward to AGM reduction of fees for members of over 50 years standing.

This issue of the annals requires 2 sets of reports as we have missed a year's issue. We need to be ready to go and publish immediately following the AGM to include this year's reports. Can be ready for **end of April**. Reports will be submitted to Ro by the AGM. John will add a very short intro.

All officers send reports to Ro asap. Reports include main issues that have arisen during the year and key achievements.

c. Treasurer

See Treasurers report. Under 2) Separate account for ESRC courses still has money in it. We anticipate that these courses will not resume (more or less impossible under Full Economic Costing), in which case we could use them for other purposes. LJ would like to close that account to simplify our accounting situation. Funds might be used to subsidise students travelling to Auckland for ASA08. **This subvention needs to be announced at AGM and circulated through AM and should go on the ASA08 website (Ro).**

Under 3) new treasurer needs to follow up the fees from Pnina.

AG proposed funding other things, but there has been no action from AM – **AG needs to follow up.**

Durham still owe money for the Keele conference – although Elizabeth was run over – she is apparently now recovered and so **Ro can chase Bob Leighton for money.**

d. Publications

TM. 2 volumes coming out this year: 400 to be published for double mailing in April. The book proposal from Pnina from Keele 06, as previously circulated, was discussed. TM noted that Pnina had not respected the requests of either ASA or Berg, and that she had caused offense to both TM himself and to Hannah Shakespeare at Berg, even though all editorial communication ought to go through TM. TM was concerned that she may have jeopardised our relationship with Berg and has therefore warned Pnina not to make further contact with Berg.

The committee agreed that the proposal was not of adequate quality to be approved for publication. Criticism included the poor rationale for the book and lack of coherent argument, a poor structure with no link between or within the sections, no

consideration of any paper from outside the plenary panels, no clear discussion of what Cosmopolitan is, factual errors in the introduction, poor quality abstracts included and some papers proposed with no abstract attached at all, poor geographical breadth of papers, repetition and excessive length. There are further issues of length and cost. Hannah Shakespeare has asked for an absolute limit of 130,000 words. ASA has announced that anything over 100,000 is not acceptable unless it comes with subsidy. Hannah argues that the volume becomes unwieldy.

TM will go back again to Pnina to indicate that the committee will not approve the current proposal for publication in the ASA series without significant amendments. As the committee in this instance act as referees for the book proposal, this decision is binding. TM will request a succinct rationale for the purposes of Berg and a longer one for the committee, requiring a clear argument of how this volume contributes in original ways; a clear argument for each chapter (which may itself promote a restructuring of the book) and rationale for each section of the book, a list of courses on which it would be used and how it may be of interest to other fields. TM will draft a response and circulate it before sending it to Pnina.

JG noted that in future we must insist that the conference book is produced on the basis of a review of *all* the papers presented at the conference and chosen on the basis of originality and significance of contribution to the conference theme, and that implies that there is space for chapters from more junior members.

e. ethics.

IH Apologised for a relative lack of engagement during his sabbatical. He again noted that the ethics blog is not active, and proposed that a blog group be set up to keep an eye on ethical issues and put notices up. He requested that committee put forward people who might contribute. The committee suggested Mark Harris, Robert Gibb, Angie Hart, David Price, Andrew G. Areas of medical anthropology may be fertile ground for issues to discuss.

Ian will not be available to facilitate the ethics discussion at the conference. He proposed to invite Pat Caplan to chair it. The committee was happy to agree.

f. Media.

TM commented on the amount of spam arriving to his ASA mail address is huge. (Ro – issue about changing server and changing website may help).

SA had had a conversation with a freelance science journalist about the Survival International press announcement on our support for their campaign.

ACJ suggested that the AT article about Dutch exotic wife-swap has been very useful to alert media companies to the potential implications of their work.

8. ASA conferences and AGM

a. Firth Lecture

JG reported no further progress with a date or a speaker, and that he is dependent on LSE. JG will report back when LSE make some progress.

b. ASA 2007

A process will have to start at ASA07 to discuss a conference on the issue of conflict further to our email correspondence with the CAAIA.

The committee chair, Treasurer and Sec. will not need to pay up front for ASA07, but must register – Ro kindly registered committee members.

RJ. Events: Kate has already discussed Anth of Britain meeting. Apply hasn't put forward a proposal yet. Same for AM. (a new persons appears to be moving in to get AM running again, so it may liven up.)

CD will see if anyone wants to run an AM meeting at the conference.

IH will email the committee to get some movement.

Conference going according to plan, registrations in, papers going up on the site in the next fortnight. Seems financially sound.

c. ASA 2008

Need to start accelerating efforts as soon as 07 is over.

SA asked for assistance in persuading airlines to sponsor.

JG, SA, RJ will meet with Veronica at the forthcoming conference.

(NB annual reports to be prepared for AGM and distributed via website asap please)

Date for next meeting.

8 June 12noon.