The AAA task force charged with reviewing and revising the AAA Code of Ethics submitted its final report and proposed draft of a new AAA Code of Ethics to the AAA Executive Board at the beginning of November 2011. The process we developed in 2010 to choose a Meetings Services support vendor worked well and our collaboration with Conference Direct continues to be positive. I have helped my successor, Leith Mullings, review the new process for handling Long-Range Planning developed during my term as President-Elect, and make plans accordingly for 2012.

Expanding our Public Presence
- Development of a new Anthropology and Public Policy Award by the AAA Committee on Public Policy and its endorsement by the AAA Executive Board in spring 2011
- Quick response to the Florida Governor’s October 10, 2011 dismissive public statements about anthropology
- Passage of two motions by the EB in May 2011 in direct response to US legislative activity and growing military and intelligence connections to universities and research institutes.
- RACE Project opened in mid-June at the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History, to much acclaim and attention
- Continued active monitoring by our Archaeology Division (AD) of legislation and administrative actions vis-à-vis historical and archaeological sites, (reaching out to me in my role as AAA President several times over the past year in search of public support and advocacy).
- Continued work by the AAA Committee for Human Rights’ special Task Group on Language to try to educate and influence the US Census Bureau in its conceptualization of households that may not just speak English.
- Continued AAA (staff and elected leadership) monitoring of national funding agencies and the Congressional discussion and legislative moves affecting the National Science Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the National Institutes of Health.
- Submitted a lengthy comment to the US Department of Health and Human Services regarding their Human Subjects Protection review.

Yet, what we need now is an exorcism of the Third world as a category. In our criticism of hegemony, we often internalize it as a category. What we need is the playfulness of the margins. The margins are large geographies of their own which need to be constructed with a different map. Fuentes complaint, “poor Mexico too far from God and too close to America,” can be modified as too close to an American university.

I hope I do not sound like a Rip Van Winkle waiting for revolutions that have already come. Of late, there has been talk about epistemologies of the south. Epistemology is too system-oriented now. There is a feeling that epistemology has to be reworked from philosophy of science and linked to life, livelihood, life cycle, life world. One hopes such an agenda also allows for a conversation between the totalitarian and subaltern views, leading to a new philosophical dictionary which allows us to live with science, nation, democracy without being othered in the process.

WAN to me is more than an achievement; it is a framework which allows us to live with science, nation, democracy without being othered in the process.

WAN to me is more than an achievement; it is a network of a different kind. It allows us to live with science, nation, democracy without being othered in the process.

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World Anthropologies

Revisiting the World Anthropologies Network Project

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The World Anthropologies Network (WAN) was established ten years ago in order to “constitute a dialogic space for discussing ‘anthropology’ in its relation to a multiplicity of world-making processes and events”. The network wants to “contribute to the development of a plural landscape of world anthropologies that is both less shaped by metropolitan hegemonies and more open to the heteroglossic potential of unfolding globalization processes” (www.ram-wan.net/html/home.htm).

The WAN did four things, and did them well. First, it became an alternative form and forum for storytelling, and for theories of narrative. In doing so, it both reinvented anthropology and relived it in a potent way.

Secondly, it moved from being a network to a commons, going beyond the standard languages of nation state, science and development. In this burst of reflexivity, however, it missed one point. It fed on the diasporic anthropology and its creativity but failed to ask whether the diaspora was becoming a new form of orientalism. Simply put, ask yourself whether peripheral anthropology becomes an articulation of the diaspora, and not the local academic. The latter’s story of survival might be skeptical of such articulations either in postmodernist or Marxist garb. Let’s face it: a lot of anthropology is done by people in other professions. The market survey and the journalist, the survivor’s testimony, the novel and the investigative report, may be the new forms of WAN in India where professional anthropology might be the stilted language of a few middle level mandarins. In that sense, WAN still has to contour the periphery rather than essentializing it.

Otherwise, the micro-phenomenology of academic life is lost in the grandness of professional narratives. Professionalism, rather than intellectualism, seems the burden of WAN.

Thirdly, WAN created an anthropology for silence and voice. It asked, can the subalterns speak? And it gave them that voice. But it forgot to ask, can the subalterns sing or dance? The map of WAN includes a vision where tribe, peasant, nomad, industrial, are not an evolutionary sequence but a polysemic contemporariness. Simultaneously, WAN speaks across the oral, textual and the digital and in balancing the three mediums, WAN becomes a network of a different kind.

Fourth, it seeks a cosmopolitan anthropology where most disciplines are content with an internationalist one. WAN has invented and consolidated a perspective which searches for the whole as a process and as a conversation. The whole is not legislated. It is not a planetary whole, or a systemic whole, but a paranchatic whole, where every level has an autonomy and a validity of its own. The power of the WAN is its unconscious panarchism, if it is an isn’t at all.

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