



European Association of Social Anthropologists
Association Européenne des Anthropologues Sociaux

To: Workshop proposal convenors

From EASA President

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Subject: Workshop decision-making process

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Open letter to workshop proposal convenors from the Scientific Committee of EASA 2012 Conference Nanterre

Following the request by a number of workshop convenors that the Scientific Committee clarifies the process that has guided the selection of workshops for the EASA 2012 Conference in Nanterre, the Scientific Committee wants to make the following points:

1. In the first meeting with the local organising committee (Feb '11), the material conditions of the venue at the Université de Nanterre (number of rooms available for workshops, delegates that could be accommodated in plenary session halls, etc.), as well as the convenient length of the conference (number of total days, number of hours per day) were considered. These aspects unavoidably set limits to the number of workshops that could be planned for.
2. An additional consideration was to keep the conference within the range of 1200-1400 delegates (a slight increase from the two previous conferences in Maynooth and Ljubljana) in an attempt to avoid the AAA 'mega-conference' model.
3. A final consideration was to retain the 'EASA model' of 20 minute presentations and a maximum of three 1h30mn periods per workshop.
4. All of the above considerations led to limiting the number of possible workshops to a 130-140 range, which meant an increase from the previous conferences (Maynooth 125, Ljubljana 121, Bristol 102, Vienna 76).
5. The call for workshops subsequently produced 242 proposals. The Scientific Committee was faced for the first time in EASA conferences' history with the need to make a selection that would be leaving out around 40% of proposed workshops.
6. The criteria that were agreed upon by the Scientific Committee in a second meeting (Oct. 2011) were: First, all the workshops not complying with the explicitly stated rules of having at least two co-convenors, and from different institutions would not be considered. Second, each member of the Scientific Committee would rank each workshop on a scale of 1-3 according to precedence based on quality.

The Scientific Committee considered using other criteria such as privileging co-convenors from different countries, including a balance of European regions, or including one workshop per EASA Network. Only the last criterion was retained and included as a preference criterion in the quality assessment.

Since the list was produced, we have tracked down a couple of apparent infringements to the 'rule' of convenors having different institutions which we are now addressing. It should be noted that these occur not because of lack of vigilance or uneven application of the criteria, but due to the way in which second/third convener contact details are entered in

EASA's electronic conference system, and the fact that we had aimed to turn around decisions on the workshops very quickly in order to give more time to eventual paper presenters.

The fact that the Scientific Committee is a large group of 16 scholars with different interests and anthropological backgrounds was deemed to be a balancing factor of subjective biases in the unavoidably problematic and polemic selection of workshop proposals.

After the Scientific Committee of 16 members ranked the workshops a line was drawn at 142.

This was a very difficult decision and one that we knew would cause disappointment. All members of the Scientific Committee witnessed how some of their preferred workshops were not accepted. However, the process was done in good faith, trying to preserve the qualities of size and conviviality that have made EASA conferences a particularly appraised genre.

We are aware that *a*//selection processes are imperfect and can be bettered, and the Executive Committee remains open to suggestions for future conferences. In the present conjuncture we ask convenors with workshops that were not included to try and understand the complex considerations that guided the process and decisions of the Scientific Committee.

*The Scientific Committee
EASA2012 conference, Nanterre*