First thoughts about a TFC blog. (This is mainly directed at Geoff and Paul to see if they have any suggestions.)

Michaels document with Geoff's comments in red

We found with the IKRMNA project that the website (www.cdu.edu.au/ik) became an important part of the methodology. What it lacked was a visible ongoing conversation between the participants. The best we could do was document the research journey in a series of dated webpages (in 'About the Project').

Helen proposed a blog, and we started one up, but got lost very soon in all the categories. Helen and I both posted a message, but neither could find the other's message on the blog. So I suggest we have a single linear 'blog' organized purely chronologically, but highly mediated in terms of hyperlinks inserted by a moderator. Some contributions will be talking about technical issues others about philosophical insights, we might have some reflections by Yolŋu about their work, hopefully diagrams, photos and comments from the Yolŋu participants, we may have comments on useful texts the international scholars are reading. (If anyone has some writing or reflection which is more than, say, a paragraph long, we'll put them on the 'reflections and writings webpage' with a link to the blog.) I think this makes sense. You might want to consider some collaborative technology like 'basecamp' - http://www.basecamphq.com/ - which I think was a lot of the functions that you want without being too overwhelming. The problem with so many hyperlinks is first getting lost in hyperspace and second it adds a lot of work onto the mediator if you get too many messages. It might be good to enable easy tagging – something I'm no expert at all on.

Organising the blog chronologically and mediating connections via inserted hyperlinks would have the advantage of not separating the technical off from the political, the social, the pedagogical, commentaries on useful texts, etc. I agree fully on this philosophy – since we can't separate them in the real world why pretend we can in the virtual?

I also like the idea of having small mugshots of the contributors next to their comments (we did that with the MACP project see http://www.cdu.edu.au/centres/macp/whatemerged.html) – a good way of avoiding text and making searching for a person's contributions easier. I would also like to use the blog as a way of including the increasing number of interested people who would like to participate in the project by commenting from the sidelines. In this world of multiple linkages, I realize I don't know your connection with Robin Boast - Robin Boast rbb10@cam.ac.uk – he has done a lot of thinking on similar lines that I think you might get a lot out of (and he's way techier than I).

To achieve this different sort of blog (or pseudo-blog maybe) we would need someone to moderate it: Someone to upload the new contributions, maybe edit them to keep them short, (or do summaries with links to the 'writings and reflections' section of the website), put in the hyperlinks (which would need to be discussed carefully), add graphic material if any comes to hand, and send out news of updates to an email list.

I hope we could persuade Trevor to work with me to do that moderating work if it seemed workable and interesting. But first I want to ask everyone (especially Geoff and Paul who may have good experience in this area), whether they can think of a better approach than the 'pseudo-blog' to keeping the conversation under control.