

Workshop 48

Media and the Global

(Invited Workshop)

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‘Media anthropology’ is a relatively recently emergent sub field of social and cultural anthropology but already shows great internal variation. It reflects the diversity of media technology itself, from older media such as print via television to Internet. It involves studies of media production as well as consumption, although that simple distinction is dissolved in studies of the more interactive media. It may deal with different kinds of media content: news, fiction, advertising. As a part of anthropology, moreover, it tends to be concerned with the way in which media uses are embedded in different wider social and cultural contexts. In the EASA 2004 session on “Media and the Global”, we will include presentations relating to several of these aspects, but focusing on the way global and transnational interconnectedness affects and is affected by media use. This involves for example the growth of new communities of consumption, the appearance of new forms of transnational civic activism, or the circulation and transformation of media formats.

Exploring Scales in Media Anthropology: The Ivorian Patriotic Movement and the Mediatisation of Autochthony

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Since the military insurgency of 2002, the media landscape of Côte d’Ivoire has witnessed important transformations. More than ever before, national radio and television are instruments of populist politics and mass mobilisation. Apart from staging the vox populus in street interviews, talk shows, and debating programmes, the national media play a key role in the mediatisation of events that are themselves mediating/ media events such as mass demonstrations in Côte d’Ivoire and of Ivorians in the diaspora, ethnic delegations received in audience by the president, people’s parliaments in the capital Abidjan, the publication of popular political books and audio tapes, and street-corner viewings of political videos. Such media events and products explicitly present themselves as voicing the hopes and fears of ‘the Ivorian people’. In contrast, the international media are contested as the inimical voices of foreigners or allochthons with destabilising and imperialist intentions. These changes in media ideology, media formats, and use are emerging in the context of the rise of autochthony in Côte d’Ivoire and of a

Patriotic Movement that presents itself as an interest group of autochthones.

This paper argues that media anthropology can profit from adopting the concept of scale in order to get a better grasp on the dimensions of space and flow in mass media communication in general and on the phenomena presented above in particular. Scales are social and discursive constructs of related spaces that differ in size and level. In mediating between the local, regional, national, and transnational spaces of Ivorian popular expression, the national media assist in the invention of a new exclusive category of 'the Ivorian people' that is finding its voice and carving a living space for itself in a rapidly globalising world.

The Impact of New Media in Contemporary Art Practices in Africa

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Based on material collected on the occasion of the 6th Biennial of Contemporary African Art in Dakar/ Senegal 2004 and other recent exhibitions in Europe, the paper examines the increasingly crucial role of new media technologies in contemporary art practices and creations in Africa. The works under consideration either directly focus on the implications of media impact on certain aspects of culture and society or rely on a variety of new media tools in order to articulate questions of representation, identity and artistic form. The paper will be illustrated by a presentation of a few selected video and media artworks.

Nation-Building by Transnational Means: Kurdish Media Activism in Local and Global Contexts

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Kurdish migrants, mostly from Turkey but also Iran, Iraq, Syria and Armenia, form a considerable presence among immigrant populations in Western Europe. Like no other immigrant group, Kurds are making use of new media technologies to engage in political activism transnationally. At the same time, their political goals converge on the establishment of what some analysts of globalisation deem something of an anachronism: the establishment of a sovereign Kurdish nation-state and national territory, its population sharing language(s) and culture. This aim in turn threatens the interests of several nation-states whose territory overlaps with 'Kurdistan', most importantly Turkey, which in turn exerts pressure to stop Kurdish media activism both in Turkey and abroad. Local Kurdish organising and transnational networking produce a flexibility, though, that continuously foils the intervention attempts of the Turkish state. This paper examines the tensions between transnational media structures, national interests and local practices that characterise transnational Kurdish media activism today.

Local and Global ‘Infiltration’ of the Danish News Media: A Case Study of Media Anthropology

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This paper presents a case study of how the Danish media dealt with the appearance of young Muslims in one of the two governing political parties in the summer of 2001. The Danish media used global sources and globally circulating stereotypes of Muslim terrorists to oust Muslims from access to the Parliament (Folketinget). The paper discusses how the media used the case and how it played upon and further supported popular understandings of Danish – Muslim relations as incompatible and antagonistic. This case study is one of the prime stories in a larger research project that examined the Danish media coverage of religion from an anthropological perspective. Therefore, I will also discuss the specific anthropological perspectives and set it within the framework of media anthropology.

The Global Computer Clubhouse Network and Their Local Answers

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The spread of new information and communication technology (ICT) is seen as heralding the arrival of the Information Age. Nowadays modern citizens need certain digital skills in order to participate adequately in the information society, in particular when governments will deliver their services more and more on the Internet. However, with the emergence of ICT new processes of exclusion have been created, especially members of ethnic groups, who can be called the ‘information poor’.

Various initiatives have been taken to reduce this digital divide, e.g. Intel Computer Clubhouses Network. This is an American organisation that has the aim to teach ‘under-served’ youth technological skills in a computer clubhouse. The first Computer Clubhouse has been established in Boston, in 1993, many others followed in the USA, Europe and Israel. Other objectives are that young people will develop self-esteem and self-efficacy through using computer technology.

This concept suited perfectly with ideas of the Dutch government to set up computer centres in socially deprived urban areas.

In the Netherlands they introduced this computer clubhouse and customised it in the Dutch local context. Based on a case study this paper will discuss theoretical issues concerning the question of how international flows of ideas on ‘information poor’ transgress national boundaries and how the content of these ICT-projects are locally adapted.

When is Television Malay? Transnational Affinities, Local Articulations

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When is television Malay? Under what circumstances is it possible or “desirable” to mark a set of production practices, audience, and programmes in ethnic terms – and leave other sets unmarked? Based on fieldwork done on the making of a minority language television channel in Singapore, the paper demonstrates how the ethnic label may be conceptually and politically problematic. The channel in question is targeted at the Singapore Malay, who is demographically, economically and politically marginal. The irony is that the Chinese dominated state is geographically in the heart of a sprawling region some called Alam Melayu or the “Malay World”. The state-owned channel aims to “equip (the Malays) with the attitudes, values and instincts that make them vibrant and proud citizens” (Channel News Asia, 30/1/2000). The ethnography, however, shows how its producers, mostly ethnic Malays themselves, constantly shift between several worlds and modes of identifications: between regional affinities and local pressures; between the demands of the state and the lure of global markets and images; between televising a “unique Singapore Malay culture” and the practical concerns of filling airtime with programmes gleamed from transnational others with “cultural affinities”. Television production is shot through with contingency and the impossibility of articulatory closure.

Why Can't We be Like Storybook Children? Media of Violence and Peace in Maluku

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How does one proceed after violence? This paper explores this question by comparing the media landscape of Ambon during the three year Moluccan conflict with recent radio and TV public service announcements promoting peace and reconciliation on the island. The media of violence is made of multiple conflicting messages, fragmented information, and stark oppositions that do not add up to any comprehensive image of the situation. By contrast, in the post-conflict period, a reduced repertoire of images and voices where the figure of the child prevails convey a simplified image of the past, the future, and interreligious relations. Taking this seeming discrepancy as its point of departure, the paper focuses on the relationship between violence and representation in order to examine how responses to violence both obscure and encode the complexities of violent historicities. Additionally, the paper situates the child-centred ads and child-directed programs within the global context of the international humanitarian, crisis, and aid organizations which often sponsor them and provide models of the child “at risk”, within the long-standing close connection between the Indonesian state and children, as well as within more immediate Moluccan concerns about social reconstruction

and peace.

Selling International Development to a Variety of Publics: The Medium and the Message from the Japanese Government

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Calls for the greater transparency of government activities, citizen involvement, and efficiency in the face of Japan's long recession, domestic insecurity, cases of corruption, and current structural reforms have pressured development agencies to market their activities to the public through videos, the internet and print media. Some of this publicity is also circulated to international audiences. This paper illustrates the ways the Japanese government, as a major foreign aid donor, makes the case for continued financial support of humanitarian and social development activities far from home.