Media Anthropology Network

European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA)

E-Seminar Series

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E-Seminar 73

BOOK SEMINAR

The Routledge Companion to Media Anthropology

by

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Discussants

John Postill

14 November – 6 December 2023

Dear all

These are my brief discussant's comments on the Introduction to Costa, E., Lange, P.G., Haynes, N. and Sinanan, J. eds., 2022. "The Routledge Companion to Media Anthropology". Taylor & Francis.

Co-authored by all editors, this Introduction starts by reference to a set of four media anthropology books published at the turn of the millennium, namely Media Worlds (Ginsburg, Abu- Lughod, and Larkin 2002), Anthropology of Media: A Reader (Askew and Wilk 2002), Anthropology and Mass Communication: Media and Myth in the New Millennium (Peterson 2003), and Media Anthropology (Rothenbulher and Coman 2005) (see full references in Introduction). Back then, argue the editors, the subfield of media anthropology focused on representation and interpretation. Later, as the technological landscape changed, there was a greater interest in technology and materiality. This is an interest that the editors share, but without neglecting those earlier concerns, as we shall see shortly.

As its authors point out, this is NOT a methodology text or handbook on how to do media anthropological research; other texts have covered that ground effectively. Instead, drawing from a vast range of cross-cultural case studies over 41 chapters, this Companion is about 'human life as it is conducted through media' (p. 2). The authors define media as 'technologies that produce and shape content, and that provide connections between people, and between people and technologies' (p. 2). As this is anthropology, the idea is to go beyond the North Atlantic and to explore, among other things, the interplay between global centres and peripheries (p. 3).

The section that jumped out at me was the discussion of the four main approaches adopted in the first part of the volume, so I will focus on it.

This is the idea that one can look at media as, if I may jumble the original order, (1) practice, (2) representation, (3) infrastructure and (4) materiality. The editors suggest that these four overlapping ways of understanding media can teach us about 'the process of mediation'. Thus, media enable, and embody, specific 'forms of practice' that were not adequately addressed by earlier studies of texts and audiences. For instance, the chapter by Christoph Bareither is about 'content-as-practice', or how media creators' practices 'live on through digital content' (p. 7). Similarly, representational media don't merely reflect people, they also make 'human subjects', while infrastructures are more than mere props or 'backdrops' for action; they often support, or fail to support, people's needs (p.5). Finally, media materiality is not always fleeting, for there are tangible aspects to sensorially experiencing sociality via media technologies. As they aptly sum it up, media are increasingly part of humans' 'socio-material entanglements' (p. 7).

To these explicit approaches, I would add an implicit approach that crops us several times in the Introduction: the once-taboo idea that media have effects upon the world. For instance, when summing up the various chapters on media representation, the editors note that they are

all about 'the effects of representation' (p. 8). Elsewhere, they refer to 'the lingering effects of colonial representations' on present-day museums in India (p. 8), to the politics and effects of algorithmic surveillance (p. 11), and so on.

This suggests to me that here we have, potentially, a powerful conceptual toolbox/synthesis consisting of practices, representations, infrastructures, materialities and effects (or PRIME, for sort). It would be very interesting to see if this synthesis (or parts of it) would work on single case studies. For example, I'm currently reading Ingrid Kummels' latest book, "Indigeneity in Real Time: The Digital Making of Oaxacalifornia" (2023), a superb media ethnography of how Ayuujk and Zapotec migrants from Oaxaca, Mexico, living in Los Angeles use a range of digital media practices to navigate the Trump era.

On first inspection, I can see that what Kummels describes as 'a torrent of interconnected Facebook pages' or, in another context, the making of internet radios, could come under the joint rubric of materialities and infrastructures, or that, as she herself argues, mediated practices like 'migrant association meetings and their debates, food preparations, basketball tournaments' etc have had the net effect of creating a 'virtual Oaxacalifornia' post-2016 (2023: 175). But I'm only thinking aloud here...

I have several other questions and comments but for the sake of brevity. I'll hold onto them for now.

My questions to the editors, then, are as follows: How did this intriguing conceptual schema come into being? How do you see it potentially developing? Could it work on single case studies?

Many thanks

John Postill

Patricia G. Lange   **(plance@cca.edu)**   **15 November 2023**

Hello Media Anthro List,

Thank you so much for inviting us to discuss our volume. We very much appreciate this opportunity. Thanks to you John for launching this discussion and for providing some very interesting and provocative analysis to begin this conversation.

The conceptual scheme for the book came into being rather organically as the four of us designed the volume to reflect the most up-to-date research in media anthropology. We sought overarching conceptualizations that applied to different forms of media that we saw analyzed in research studies. We felt it important not to become too siloed into a specific type of media, or even a particular genre, such as digital media. Even a specific category like that has complex relationships to other types of media, including analog forms. We wanted the volume to build on the work of prior ground-breaking scholars in the field as discussed in the

"Histories" section. We also wanted to invite conversation about different kinds of media, with an eye toward analyzing ever-changings dynamics such as how older technologies become integrated into newer ones or take new forms. At the same time, in surveying the literature we recognized that in addition to remediation, we were also interested in how new media may return back to older forms, such that prior media types and new forms integrate and move back and forth, rather than simply replacing prior modalities.

With those ambitions in mind, we sought organizing themes that both built on prior work but also provided room for observations and analysis of emerging media. The categories in the "Approaches" section, for instance, were crafted to be general enough to portray existing research while offering a fruitful rubric for future work. For example, data around themes such as "Media as Infrastructure" or "Media as Practice" or "Media as Representation" may look very different years from now, but the categories will likely retain analytical force across new types of media and analyses. We also wanted to have a space in the book that digs into contemporary issues. Our third section on "Thematic Considerations" facilitates a focus on media's usages that are particular to the current moment. For instance, we observed that while prior generations of mass media scholarship in media anthropology of the 1990s and early 21st were most concerned with revolutionary politics and social movements, the current moment has seen a dramatic rise in media that promotes traditional and conservative institutions and values. The section theme of "Thematic Considerations" therefore provides a space for contemporary exploration of new socio-cultural patterns.

Our definition of media was created to be intentionally broad, to encourage analysis of different dynamics of connection between people and technologies, as well as between people and between technologies. We do not see the volume as the last word on the analysis that it provides. In terms of its future direction, we certainly hope that we will not have to wait for over a decade to continue the conversation and engage in ongoing community reflection. We actually see the volume itself as a form of mediated connection to scholars working in different aspects of media anthropology, as well as interdisciplinary research. We envision the volume to be an ongoing nexus for many conversations and mediations within and across fields.

Your provocation and synthesis of PRIME is interesting in the way it captures the conceptual organization of the book, which is organized around (1) practice, (2) representation, (3) infrastructure, (4) materiality, and the (5) implicit theme of effects that runs through the volume. It is a very interesting way to propose a rubric that could be carried forward and used as an analytical framework in future studies. Of course, "effects" research continues to receive a certain amount of push back and skepticism, perhaps understandably so, given that effects are always entangled and complex. We must continue to hold our research to high standards when making arguments about what specifically caused an effect in a web of thorny social relations. Having said that, it is rather obvious, as you observed in your chapter, that media anthropologists continue to use direct statements and euphemistic terms to argue that media initiates effects.

The PRIME directive, or possibly better characterized as the PRIME synthesis, might be a great touchstone for new studies to explore complex nuances of media in their research projects. In the volume, we tried to avoid simplistic good/bad frameworks but rather kept

lines of analysis open to understand multiple dynamics happening in different directions at the same time. The PRIME synthesis is particularly useful in that the categories are broad enough to invite attention across different types of studies, while still making connections to and building on prior work. As far as your question regarding its ability to be applied to single case studies, I would say that the jury is still out and will likely depend on a particular study's goals. I would surmise that this rubric would be a very helpful framework to organize research methods, execution, and findings across studies. I imagine that parts of it would likely be more salient in certain studies, while other configurations might be more informative for other studies. A comprehensive project may ambitiously try to apply all of PRIME in one study, yet I would argue it is perhaps not necessary to hold a single case study accountable to address all of the rubric's vectors. Back in the day, I was mentored by wise scholars who believed that anthropology was a kind of collective conversation, and that no single study needed to or even could cover all aspects of rather broad intellectual terrain. One could imagine the rubric working across a body of multiple studies that together ultimately deepen collective understanding of media across field sites, researchers, and conceptual themes.

Looking forward to the conversation!

Patricia G. Lange

John Postill	(jrpostill@gmail.com)	15 November 2023

Many thanks for that swift response to my discussant's comments, Patricia!

The floor is now open to everyone on this mailing list.

To post, all you have to do is email medianthro@lists.easonline.org directly -- with cc. to me so that I check that your post reached the list. The list server can be quirky. You can individually check, too, by visiting the list's archives via the media anthropology network's website.

Please try to keep your questions and comments brief and on-topic.

John

John Postill	(jrpostill@gmail.com)	16 November 2023

While we're waiting for comments from others on the list, perhaps I could add a thought on the e-seminar conversation so far.

Patricia, Ingrid and Elisabetta all mentioned previous media anthropology collections and how they relate to the Companion and other recent publications.

Take the media anthropology reader Media Worlds (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod and Larkin 2002) and how it's organised into the following sections: Cultural activism, The cultural politics of nation-states, Transnational circuits, social sites of production, and The social life of technology. The title of the latter section, of course, is a play on the title of the edited book The Social Life of Things (Appadurai 1986).

My own 1990s PhD research into media and nation-building in East Malaysia predates Media Worlds, but later, as I prepared a book based on the thesis, I could see it fitted in nicely with the 'cultural politics of nation-stages' theme, while drawing from 'The social life of technology' for one of my chapters.

This example shows, I think, how important edited volumes can be to the tricky task of locating our work - PhD or otherwise - within a vast and changing epistemological landscape. The four (or five) main themes of the Companion can likewise play this part if we see them as scholarly conversations that are still ongoing, conversations with both continuities and changes in relation to prior attempts at tidying up our messy subfield. That is, we don't need to take on the Companion's entire synthesis/paradigm (as I may have unwittingly implied in my first post). Research 'gaps' are all very well, but scholarly conversations are even better.

Speaking of messiness, I seem to recall that many years ago we discussed with Philipp Budka and others on this list the institutionalisation of media anthropology (or lack thereof). I think it was Mark Hobart who argued for its lack of institutionalisation as an advantage. I agree with this anarchic view. We want to keep this small subfield low in institutionalisation and open to other fields -- while making it better known across media and communication studies. The Companion is very much written in this spirit, it seems to me.

Finally, echoing Ingrid's comment, I think it'd be great to also have in the coming years a media anthropology *reader* (i.e. a selection of already published texts, a la Media Worlds) that included translated texts originally written in languages other than English.

More posts, please. The more the merrier!

John Postill

References:

Appadurai, A. ed., 1986. The social life of things: Commodities in cultural perspective. Cambridge University Press.

Ginsburg, F.D., Abu-Lughod, L. and Larkin, B. eds., 2002. Media worlds: Anthropology on new terrain. University of California Press.

Hi Media Anthro List,

First of all, I think it's a great idea that the presenter and commentator are bringing "The Routledge Companion to Media Anthropology" into this e-forum for reading and debate. And I congratulate the editors for having accepted the challenge of outlining former and current key themes in media anthropology – a rapidly expanding subdiscipline – by publishing this volume. So far, I have only read the Introduction, but I am acquainted with the work of many colleagues contributing to it which have inspired me. When reading the Introduction yesterday, I found interesting (and accurate) how it highlights media anthropology's messiness and openness and its development at intersections; I read about the themes defined by the volume with much curiosity. All this made me reflect on how I have in fact made use of media anthropology handbooks for my ethnographic research up to date and on the heterogeneity of my own reading activities.

To get to my point quickly: I have regularly consulted media anthropology volumes (like the 2002 "Media Worlds"; see for example Schein) but admit that even back then I had some tentative doubts concerning the insights they would provide for the particular emerging theme I was engaging in at that moment and how to approach it. The limitations I suspected were not only related to the temporal factor – the difficulty of obtaining a timely publication on what is emerging – but above all to the "bubbles" of reading and citing communities. I'll try to explain: My own ethnographic research for "Indigeneity in Real Time" (the recent book John Postill mentioned) is about the politics of space and time based on Indigenous media activism challenging right-wing populism which shaped governmental policies during the years of the Trump administration. Mediatic community building between Mexico and the US indeed relies, among other things, on installing their own infrastructure (like setting up equipment in a Los Angeles backyard for livestreaming and digital networking), notably as part of communal practices geared towards representing a transborder future. So PRIME (practice, representation, infrastructure and materiality) can be used in the way John Postill and Patricia Lange suggest, as lines of investigation I included that allow for comparison across different types of studies.

Yet if "The Routledge Companion to Media Anthropology" would have already been available during my research, I probably would have first searched for the aspects of temporality and space in media work, ways of (re)defining space and aligning time regimes through communicative strategies in the contemporary restrictive setting of the rise of right-wing populism and data capitalism. For that I got much inspiration from the dialogues with media practitioners and scholars working in and for communities like those of transnational Zapotec and Ayuujk peoples which I acknowledge. They are unfortunately still underrepresented in handbooks and in mainstream academic publishing on the whole. An example of a work in Spanish I consider seminal is Dante Cerano's (a Purhépecha filmmaker) master thesis. Furthermore, many ideas transmitted by the diasporic films and media content themselves sharpened my awareness of the dimensions of illegalized migrants' digital making of transborder community. And I also acknowledge the 2019 "Handbook of Diasporas, Media and Culture".

I would suspect to find these themes in the current volume's sections on "Identities and Social Change" and "Political Conservatism", right-wing movements making their own innovative uses of media to blame the "migrant" category for social disorder ranging from Trump's "Twitter demagogy" (Fuchs 2018) to "Online Populism" (Schroeder 2018). But perhaps in this instance again, ongoing research expanding our subdiscipline is best turned into a further volume: the great workshop that took place last week at the University of Copenhagen on the emerging subject of "Theorising Media and Time" evokes that vision.

Best, Ingrid

References:

Cerano, Dante. 2009. Purhépechas vistos a través del video: Comunicación y nostalgia en ambos lados de la frontera. El Colegio de Michoacán, Zamora: master thesis.

Fuchs, Christian. 2018. Digital Demagogue: Authoritarian Capitalism in the Age of Trump and Twitter. London: Pluto Press.

Kummels, Ingrid. 2023. Indigeneity in Real Time. The Digital Making of Oaxacalifornia. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press. https://www.rutgersuniversitypress.org/indigeneity-in-real-time/9781978834781

Retis, Jessica & Tsagarousianou, Roza (eds). 2019. The Handbook of Diasporas, Media, and Culture. Wiley Blackwell.

Schein, Louisa. 2002. "Mapping Hmong Media in Diasporic Space", In: Faye Ginsburg, Lila Abu-Lughod y Brian Larkin (eds.), Media Worlds: Anthropology on New Te¬rrain, Berkeley, University of California Press, pp. 229-244.

Schroeder, Ralph. 2018. Social Theory after the Internet: Media, Technology, and Globalization. London: UCL Press.

Elisabetta Costa   **(elisabetta.costa@uantwerpen.be)**   **16 November 2023**

Dear John, Patricia, and Ingrid,

Thank you very much for starting the conversation!

Patricia, thanks for your reply. I would like to add a reflection that answers John's question on how the PRIME (I like the acronym, thanks!) schema came into being. The reflection emerges from my personal experience and trajectory.

I have been quite mobile in the last 15 years, working across different departments and subfields. As a PhD student, I extensively used the edited volumes cited in the introduction, i.e. Media Worlds (Ginsburg, Abu-Lughod, and Larkin 2002), Anthropology of Media: A

Reader (Askew and Wilk 2002), Anthropology and Mass Communication: Media and Myth in the New Millennium (Peterson 2003), and Media Anthropology (Rothenbulher and Coman 2005). I worked on journalism and process of news construction in and about Lebanon, and issues of representation and imagination at the core of North American media anthropology were central in my research too. I later engaged and worked within the (British) field of digital anthropology that builds on material cultural studies. I then landed in a Media Studies Department in continental Europe, which was very much interested in mediatization processes and media/digital platform logics. What struck me the most was the way in which "bubbles" of reading and citing communities" (Ingrid Kummels) didn't communicate with each other, with only a few exceptions. I felt the need to map out this rich, messy, and fragmented field that we call 'media anthropology'. And these four approaches (practices, representations, infrastructure, and materiality) could help us identifying the main differences and similarities within the field. The PRIME schema is also call for more dialogue and conversation between the bubbles. And it can definitely work on a single case study too! I hope it is a helpful framework for new your scholars as well.

John, I really liked your addition – the effect of media. Is it a once-taboo idea? What about the notion of performative and performativity that has dominated cultural and visual studies?

Best,

Elisabetta Costa

Phillip Budka   **(ph.budka@philbu.net)**   **20 November 2023**

Dear John and all,

Thank you and the editors of this important volume for organizing this e-seminar.

I agree that edited collections are particularly well suited to show the diversity of media anthropological work, projects, perspectives and approaches. Despite the dominance of English publications, we - also as a "small subfield", which is still growing constantly - should not forget that media anthropology is not only on interdisciplinary, but also an international project with different national traditions and research foci.

Examples of early media anthropological work in German-speaking countries include not only the seminal chapter on media ethnology by Dorle Dracklé (1999), the article on cyber anthropology by Manfred Kremser (1999), or the monograph on virtual ethnicity by Nils Zurawski (2000), but also the edited volume Moderne Oralität (modern orality) by Ingo Schröder and Stéphane Voell (2002).

In addition, there are also more recent publications in the German-speaking world that - for whatever reason - decide not to use English to discuss media and related phenomena from an anthropological perspective, as for instance the edited volume Ritualisierung - Mediatisierung - Performance (Luger, Graf & Budka, 2019).

And there are similar examples of non-English work in media anthropology all over the world. It might be an interesting publication project to collect examples of these different traditions and academic histories in yet another media anthropology volume.

Looking forward to a lively e-seminar.

Philipp

References:

Dracklé, D. (1999). Medienethnologie: Eine Option auf die Zukunft. In W. Kokot & D. Dracklé (Eds.), Wozu Ethnologie? Reimer.

Kremser, M. (1999) CyberAnthropology und die neuen Räume des Wissens. Mitteilungen der Anthropologischen Gesellschaft in Wien, 129, 275–290.

Luger, M., Graf, F., & Budka, P. (Eds.). (2019). Ritualisierung - Mediatisierung - Performance. V&R Unipress/Vienna University Press. https://doi.org/10.14220/9783737005142

Schroeder, I., & Voell, S. (eds). (2002). Moderne Oralitaet. Ethnologische Perspektiven auf die plurimediale Gegenwart. Curupira.

Zurawski, N. (2000) Virtuelle Ethnizität. Studien zu Identität, Kultur und Internet. Peter Lang.

Giulia Battaglia　　　**(giu_bat@hotmail.com)**　　　**20 November 2023**

Hello everyone,

I am taking a bit of time to respond in more details (as I am with two small kids at home at the moment and time is an issue!!)

In the meantime, just following from Philipp's comments, we organised a couple of years ago a workshop about 'media anthropology in europe' and the idea was to collect examples from different 'histories' and get them dialogue together. Our project (with precisely Philip and Elisabetta) did not go that far...but perhaps it was the wrong time and format...it would be great to come back to it now perhaps through this list...

One small extra thing, the idea of 'messiness' reminds me of Stuart Hall and hi wish of creating a non-discipline with the 'original' British cultural studies

More soon

Giulia

Patricia Lange   (plange@cca.edu)   21 November 2023

Reading Ingrid's post reminded me in some ways of the 1980s turn to more dialogical forms of anthropology. What would the field look like if the goal was not so much to produce theory or ethnographies but to engage in more dialogues and foreground representation of a more diverse set of voices in academic and policy conversations? When I was going through and getting my PhD, there was increasing pressure to avoid representing the voices of others or selecting field sites in which it was not ideal for the anthropologist to speak as an outsider.

At the same time, trying to study my own group (whatever that means) was not always rewarded as it was considered by the old guard to be more authentic anthropology to continue to study remote societies. Therein lies a bit of a conundrum. If we wish to pivot the discipline more towards mediated dialogues, it would seem to open a host of questions such as why are you (anthropologist) leading this dialogue? What are the benefits and politics of dialogues as opposed to organic representation of scholarly expression?

All of this makes me wonder what direction new volumes would / should take if the focus was on dialogue, representation, and policy in media anthropology. How would such volumes look and be created? Should we be pivoting toward more of a scientific sharing model in which the latest findings are posted online, to maintain a more live essence of information exchange? Having started an academic STS blog (Platypus: The CASTAC Blog), I have heard appreciation many times that it is a great place to hear ideas and research in progress in a short and
digestable form. The subsequent editors of that blog have worked very hard to increase representation and include posts from scholars of different countries in a variety of languages. The academic blog format becomes a bit more fluid and accessible for dialogue and exchange.

Or is something lost by relying too much on ephemeral conversations? Should such conversations continue to be paired with volumes that help outline the contours of a changing field?

Patricia Lange

Patricia Lange   (plange@cca.edu)   **21 November 2023**

I wonder what is meant specifically by "institutionalization" of media anthropology? Does this mean avoiding departments and job positions with specific titles, or are we talking more about journals and edited volumes?

I certainly support interdisciplinary work. How could I not? My own work lies at the intersection of media anthropology, science & technology studies, and communication. But I continue to find it frustrating when disciplines do not seem to know about each other. I was reading a review of a book the other day in which the author declares that we have now come to almost 20 years of internet studies. I thought: 20 years?! It's been a lot longer than that if you go outside the discipline being discussed. Why don't different disciplines know more about each other's work? Would it not be helpful to have some type of consolidated sets of knowledge that take into account what has happened from different approaches? If that has happened, what form is it in? If this has not happened, what form should it be in?

Sometimes things get too messy and knowledge organization might be in order. But of course, it depends on what is meant by messy and what that achieves.

Patricia Lange

Nell Haynes   (nell.haynes@gmail.com)   **21 November 2023**

Hello all,

First, thanks for the lively discussion on this volume which I had the privilege to work on.

I just want to pick up here on a small point that Patricia included in her last message, at risk of getting us a little off-track.

"…there was increasing pressure to avoid representing the voices of others or selecting field sites in which it was not ideal for the anthropologist to speak as an outsider. At the same time, trying to study my own group (whatever that means) was not always rewarded as it was considered by the old guard to be more authentic anthropology to continue to study remote societies. Therein lies a bit of a conundrum. If we wish to pivot the discipline more towards mediated dialogues, it would seem to open a host of questions such as why are you (anthropologist) leading this dialogue?"

Perhaps it is just wishful thinking, but I would like to put forth the idea that perhaps studying media (whatever that means to you) is one way to find a more respectful way for highly educated, class- and language-privileged folks from the Global North to think beyond the Global North in ways that do not speak for those in other places.

One of the things that I think is important about anthropology is that it allows for a range of

perspectives on phenomena precisely because it is not always researchers looking at their own societies. I believe we actually gain quite a bit through an outsider perspective. But, of course, we do not live in a perfect world where this is value and power free. Colonialism, neoimperialism, global inequalities in economics, education, and access all have led us to a place where looking at the "Other" is at best, a sticky situation, at worst, offensive. On the other hand, if people in the Global North were to only study and subsequently theorize based on the Global North, that reproduces these global inequalities in equally harmful ways.

One of ways I've attempted to reconcile some of this in my own work, which is often focused on indigeneity in Bolivia and Chile (and I being a US-born person with ancestry primarily in Central and Eastern Europe), is through looking at constructions of concepts and how they unfold through media representations.

I would never dare to say that I "study Indigenous peoples of Bolivia" or even study their beliefs, worldviews, etc. However, it feels far more legitimate to me to explore the ways indigeneity gets defined in these contexts through trying to understand their construction in pop culture media. This entails having a deep understanding of the social history and politics of the country, but avoids pitfalls associated with claiming to be an expert on another group's worldview. Perhaps, as time ticks on, this too will eventually be considered offensive or sticky, but for now, it seems to be one of the real advantages of media anthropology. It offers one possible lens that keeps anthropology from being limited to individuals only reflecting on their own groups. Of course, there is much that can be learned by Europeans studying Europeans, US folks studying what happens in the US, Ivoirians studying Ivoirians, and Aymara folks studying Aymara culture. But I believe the field is richer with the inclusion of cross-cultural studies as well. Media is certainly not the only mode through which we can mitigate the pitfalls presented in this scenario by unequal global power relations, but it seems like an important contribution to it.

To relate this all back to the volume, briefly: There are a few sections that tackle this conundrum in important ways (at least in my obviously biased opinion). Taylor's chapter on "Cloudwork," Sinanan's "#Everest," Geismar and Müller's "Postcolonial Digital Collections," Ford's "Ethnographies of the Digitally Dispossessed," and Bocast's "Being Known and Becoming Famous in Kampala, Uganda" (among others) are some examples of the ways that "outsider" ethnographers have used focus on media to not only discuss a culture/place different from their own, but also weave in critique of the unequal power relations that exist between their "home" cultures and the ones they study, as manifest in media.

Nell

Erkan Saka   (sakaerka@gmail.com)   **22 November 2023**

To continue the conversation; I was thinking about edited volumes. How they once played a role in my intellectual development. These three well-prepared books prepared me for the doctoral thesis covering the "Turkey" part:

Finkel, A., & Sirman, N. (1990). Turkish State. "Turkish Society, New York".

Kandiyoti, D., & Saktanber, A. (Eds.). (2002). "Fragments of culture: The everyday of modern Turkey". Rutgers University Press.

Bozdoğan, S., & Kasaba, R. (Eds.). (1997). "Rethinking modernity and national identity in Turkey" (Vol. 7). University of Washington Press.

Well, on the other hand, there is the Writing Culture tradition that I caught in the last years at Rice Anthropology.

Clifford, J., & Marcus, G. E. (Eds.). (2023). "Writing culture: The poetics and politics of ethnography". University of California Press.

I have devoured all the volumes John mentioned.

Now, edited volumes do not look as formative as they used to. But is it because I am older and already intellectually "developed" to some extent, or is it because there is now a flood of edited volume publishing, and thus it is harder to create a social life out of an edited volume? John's email and years of experience in academic politics also trigger a retrospective look. Who was not involved, and what topics and subjects were ignored, or downplayed? There could be different orientations.

In any case, beyond the pressure to publish, edited volumes have the potential to trigger good academic collaboration. As an artifact of its own, an edited volume may signify a new orientation, as the Companion here implies.

Erkan

Ingrid Kummels   (kummels@zedat.fu-berlin.de)   **22 November 2023**

Hi again,

I am looking very much forward to reading the contributions of the new volume. In the meantime, I briefly comment, that I find it very stimulating how media anthropology is mapped out in the posts – in space and time – both as a "rich, messy, and fragmented field that we call 'media anthropology'" as Elisabetta mentioned, and also as a field pervaded by global inequalities as highlighted by Nell. In particular, the feedback and suggestions of how to bridge existing "bubbles" – or connect multiverses, depending on the case – is

encouraging. My experience too is that many people do want to communicate with each other when they identify with a common cause like critiquing and overcoming unequal power relations concerning media (within and between societies). This often requires bridging a gap in communication that exists with regard to texts and other media formats to get to know and discuss media theories of diverse (although in many cases enmeshed) genealogies due to missing translation (among other things).

Yet that, has pitfalls too, as Ayuujk and Zapotec mediamakers explained to me. They often felt or feel compelled to use Spanish, even when recording in their own communities to embrace a larger audience, to the detriment of the use and dissemination of their vernacular languages. To counteract that, many have intensified work and publication in their mother tongues. I think we need both, something which is also suggested by the examples Philipp and Giulia gave concerning the varied histories of media anthropology and the recent theorizing in different European countries and languages.

Ingrid

Raul Castro   **(raulcastro69@yahoo.es)**   **27 November 2023**

Hello John, Elisabetta, Patricia, Nell, Jolynna, and all colleagues:

Many thanks to John, and to the editors of the volume, for opening this rich space for the exchange of ideas, not only about our (sub)disciplinary field of media anthro, but also, above all, for shining the spotlights on what would be considered sociologically or culturally relevant right now. As Nell Haynes rightly points out before, it is quite rich also because reveals intra- and inter-cultural power relations frequently taken as obvious. Congratulations then to the editors of this extraordinary volume, as well as for making all this possible.

For me, a highlight in the conversation would be the call to delve deeper into one of the main purposes of the book: to have a comparative panorama in which the different social realities on scrutiny can express themselves –and can be appreciated– in their own terms. Enunciating not only in their own languages and seeing the world in their own gaze, but also making them feel clearly from their own speaking positions. I think the call is right with it. A group of colleagues and I just echoed this in a forthcoming article on the anthropology of the media in Latin America (Castro, Moya and Osorio 2024), for a volume about visual anthropologies in the region what is being prepare at the master's program in visual anthropology in the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru. In the article we ask ourselves, in coincidence: Can there be a Latin American media anthropology in their own terms? i.e, an anthropology of the media written by Latin Americans, oriented to Latin Americans and developed theoretically and practically in Latin American academia?

The answer for us, after exposing a state-of-the-art summary of existing research, is yes and no, if you allow me a vague summary. It is yes, in the way that we find lines of conceptual and thematic work that are continuous, but intermittent, and frequently isolated one from each other. This takes us to the "no": to have intermittent and disperse thematic lines makes evident that there is no sustained epistemic production of its own. For example, what at some

point was established as an interpretative proposal for popular culture based on the Latin American experience, such as the concept of mediation of Martín-Barbero, or the other of hybrid cultures of García Canclini, did not have continuity in its own epistemic development, with some notable exception such as that of Huerta-Mercado (2022) for the Peruvian case and the popular culture of humour. We fall back once again at this point to the asymmetries of power that Nell indicates so clearly.

In line with this reflection, what could happen from now on, as we point out with in the mentioned article, is a future work agenda that is jealousy of developing alternative and sustainable epistemologies that transcend mere data extraction –a kind of scenario that Couldry and Mejias could consider, perhaps, in their work on Data Colonialism (Couldry and Mejias 2018). That may include, for instance, hyperlinks to materials and voices in their own local forms and languages, but also necessary academic partnerships for the long term with local schools, transparent about their power relations contests.

A final reflection can be made on the appropriate PRIME formula of approaches proposed before, and a cross condition I believe we must have in permanent consideration: media as culture always sustaining practice, representation, infrastructure, materiality, and effects. I turn here to the way in which authors such as James Carey (2008) collect inheritances from Geertz, for example, and establish that everyday life experience installs people in a system of symbols that is necessarily relational –generative to use a current fashion– with the ecosystem they inhabit. In this I am not original, as Peterson points out in his foundational work of Anthropology and Mass Media (2004). My experience trying to approach this could be consulted in the article that the editors generously published in the volume we are discussing: media as culture could be observed when the revisiting of social videos becomes a pedagogical ritual for ordinary citizens performing conservatism in their everyday life (Castro-Perez 2022). "AI" environments today are also promoting symbol systems creating and scaling self-generating milieus, perhaps rhizomatically, in massively shared public cultures today, when social media actors occupy digital environments such as Tiktok with expressions of toxic masculinity related to e-sports, for instance. Or that for the NPC –no playable character– videos of TikTok, again, which people like the so-called Pinky Doll interacting with their users, as cultural phenomena of statements, forms and practices that mirror algorithmic processes of women-object patterns consume.

A lot to talk and discuss, and a pleasure to share this event in a kind of generative collective experience. Thank you very much again for all this.
Raúl

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John Postill	(jrpostill@gmail.com)	28 November 2023

Hi again

As it's a busy time of the year and many haven't had time to post yet, we've decided to extend the e-seminar on the media anthropology Companion another week, till Tuesday 5 December.

Make sure you grab this bargain before it ends - three weeks of seminar for the price of two!

A couple of tips if you're thinking of posting:

1. Short posts are absolutely fine. They can be as short as 2-3 lines. We've even had one-liners in the past, e.g. a brief question to the author(s).

2. Formatting can be an issue if you copy and paste onto your email, e.g. from Word. It's better to write your post directly as an email to medianthro@lists.easaonline.org

John Postill

John Postill	(jrpostill@gmail.com)	28 November 2023

Another way of reading a hefty reference book like the media anthropology Companion is, I'd suggest, as a source of keywords (aka conceptual tools). In this spirit, I browsed through the Companion's index and found numerous leads for future ethnographic readings across cultural contexts, including terms like algorithm, content, Covid-19, indigenous media, mediation, power, privacy, smartphone, and sociality.

Content is an interesting one, and it appears in the editors' definition of media in the Introduction (p. 2), together with connections and mediation. They write (asterisks mine):

"[...] we felt the urgency to compile a Companion that explores prior and emerging developments, and that deems media anthropology as an inclusive research field encompassing a variety of analytical perspectives and different media technologies. Our conceptualization of media includes technologies that produce and shape *content*, and that provide *connections* between people, and between people and technologies. Our definition is intentionally broad to facilitate wide-ranging explorations of how forms of *mediation* influence communication, social relationships, cultural practices, participation, and social change, as well as production and access to information and knowledge."

This got me thinking about how our understanding of content has changed in the past few decades, e.g. via new corporate coinages like 'content creator' and 'user-generated content'. So I searched for this word in the earlier mentioned media anthropology reader by Ginsburg et al (2002) Media Worlds assuming it wouldn't appear too often. I was wrong. Obviously, there was no mention of social media content but there were numerous takes on what to do with this notion, if anything, as media ethnographers. Incidentally, there's a very interesting chapter in the Companion by Christoph Bareither on the idea of content-as-practice.

So I was wondering if the editors, chapter authors and others had any thoughts on the Companion's potential as a media ethnographic lexicon, alongside earlier collections like Media Worlds? Widely used keywords like content, mediation, algorithms, etc, seem to me to be ripe for further critical and collaborative work. For instance, while as a folk term content seems unavoidable these days, its ontological status remains a bit of a mystery (see Bareither's chapter or, in the Media Worlds reader, Hobart's pre-social media take). There are rumours it may not even exist.

John

Mark Peterson   **(petersm2@miamioh.edu)**   **28 November 2023**

My take on the conversation so far:

Several years ago a colleague of mine bemoaned the fact that the number of panels on the Anthropology of Media at the AAA was quite low.

"Yes," I concurred, "but almost every panel, regardless of its topic, has someone talking about media."

That's only become more true over time. Everybody does media anthropology because media is ubiquitous. Throughout the world the ways humans make our livings, distribute resources, communicate, learn from one another, find mates and spouses, raise children, organize families, track descent groups, form and maintain friendships, socialities, associations, groups, and institutions, organize politically, fight wars, share information, participate in religious and spiritual practices, play, and occupy our leisure are all mediated through technologies, increasingly digital technologies.

The purpose of organizations like the EASA Media Anthropology network, online seminars like this one (and the live ones I keep missing), and edited volumes like the one we're discussing is, it seems to me, to curate sources of up-to-date concepts, keywords, approaches, theories, and arguments from which anthropologists can draw while pursuing their own work, when it engages with media.

When I wrote "Connected in Cairo" (2011) I did not see it as a work of "media anthropology" although I was writing about personal computers, Pokemon, children's magazines, television, advertising, and movies. I saw myself as writing about class, consumption, globalization, modernity, and identity in the Middle East...and that's how IUP marketed it. But I sure drew on my own and others' work in media anthropology to conceptualize and articulate my arguments *about* personal computers, Pokemon, children's magazines, television, advertising, and movies as they arose in my ethnography.

On the other hand, I certainly see myself as acting as a media anthropologist when a medical anthropologist colleague comes to me because iPhone apps keep popping up as a theme in a project she is working on involving housing for recovering addicts, I can say, "Oh hey, there's a book that was recently featured on Ilana Gershon's CaMP Blog that might give you some insights. There are also a couple of chapters in the "Routledge Companion to Media Anthropology" that offer some ways of approaching this kind of thing, and I think we did an EASA seminar on something like this, but in Brazil, a couple of years ago. Let me share those with you."

Also useful for teaching...several chapters of this book will show up in my "Global media Ethnography" class next semester, and some will also show up in my course "Play, Game. and Design" the following semester.

Cheers,

Mark

Kerstin Andersson   (tinni.anderson@gmail.com)   28 November 2023

Dear all,

There is several different headings, but I turn back to the original one, since my comment is on the Routledge Companion. Thanks for this very interesting e-seminar. For me this became an opportunity to check out the Routledge companion properly. And I think that it is a good timing to present an attempt to synthezise and consolidate the research field, the medianthro network will turn 20 years in 2024. I found the introduction very interesting and I was happy to see the concepts of "mediation" and "re-mediation" integrated in the discussions. As for myself, while I find the concept "re-mediation" useful, I'm more into the concept "mediatization" (Couldry, Hepp 2013). I'm impressed by the diversity of approaches and themes reflected in the volume. I certainly will check out some of the contributions further,

for example the section on emerging technologies that constitute the main riddle for me at the moment.

I have some methodological question on the production of the volume. You state that you aim to outline key themes, debates, and emerging directions in the field and the volume is structured into the sections History, Approaches and Thematic Considerations. I would like to know more about methods used to delimit categories and contributions. For example in the section thematic considerations, the delimiting of the included categories given is rather vague, "topics that are fundamental to understanding societies of the early 21st century". I would like to know how you selected and delimited the topics. How did you validate the claim that these topics are the "fundamental ones" among a number of topics of importance. Another example, you state that the contributions included in the volume covers global south and global north, young and senior scholars. But how did you delimit which contributions to include, what was the rationale for inclusion and exclusion of the individual contributions? According to my way of seeing things, this kind of methodological clarifications would add to the volume.

Another point, I noticed that you use the concepts of "new media" and "old media" and thought that I should find out if the concept "new media" is still valid and used. I have myself been critiqued on the use and told that this is old fashioned!

Finally, Patricia, thanks for taking up the problematics with cross-disciplinary communication. I'm at the moment in the middle of this kind of situation. I'm into the very messy field of migration and digital/new media. I have a background in Medianthro and the CIEFO group Sthlm uni (migration studies) and has been into the field since beginning of 2000. I have a 2019 publication where I outline and analyse the research field since the initiation up to 2017. During the European refugee crisis 2015-16, a group of European media and communication scholars realized that the refugees had cell phones and started researching it. This is of course very good, the turbulent period during the crisis needed to be documented and researched. However, this group of scholars consider this to be the initiation of the research field and claims to be the "first ones" doing this kind of research. They completely neglect previous research in the field and research conducted in other academic fields. They are very happy to "discover" various aspects in the field, neglecting research made 15 years back on the topic. And they are of course very upset with me, having been into it for a long period of time. In a Twitter discussion on this topic, one scholar stated that this way of acting is common and that some people even consciously build their carriers in this way.

All the best

Kerstin

Dear Kerstin,

To pick up on one of your concerns, I raise the question of "new media" (and "digital media") in my chapter of the Routledge book, as one of several key issues in the anthropology of media.

I don't think the real issue is whether or not the term is old-fashioned or not (although it is), the question is whether it ever had any real utility as an analytical frame in the first place.

As far as I can determine, the term "new media" emerged in media studies in the 1970s (Enzenberger 1970) to refer to videotapes, fax machines, and cassette tapes. The idea was that "old media" referred to technologies in which a small body of senders controlled the means of production of messages directed to a mass audience (so, the stuff I studied in India and Egypt). Emancipatory "new media" allowed owners of the means of consumption to also be producers and distributors. While I think this distinction remains important (altho maybe not as emancipatory as poor Enzenberger hoped) I prefer terms like Boyer's "radial" versus "lateral" (altho I'm looking for a better term than lateral).

"New" is also used frequently as a synonym for "digital media." But digital is also not new. My father was working with digital technologies at a print newspaper in 1974 (49 years ago!), using 20 or so refrigerator sized computers all wired together. In 1992 all the Indian newspapers I studied had been using digital technologies to write, lay out and manage distribution for their print newspapers long before I got there. "Digital media" is itself a problematic term because when people use it they usually don't mean the stuff my dad was doing, nor even the work my journalist hosts were doing in India. They mean the media technologies and practices made possible by the emergence of the Internet. But even that is 30 years old!

"New" is, IMHO, a terrible technical term for us to use as media anthropologists. As Walter Armbrust and Ilana Gershon have also pointed out, its meaning shifts with context. It is, therefore, a term we should be analyzing as ethnographers when it is used by our host communities, not using as a conceptual or methodological term.

My two cents. Back to course prep

Cheers,

Mark Allen Peterson

Jo Helge Helle-Valle   (valle@oslomet.no)   30 November 2023

Hi all

A short comment on 'content': I certainly agree that content is important but I think the debates surrounding content contains two, analytically speaking, very different issues.

One is, cf. Miller and many others, the empirically founded point that it does matter what kind of content various media practices includes. The other one is an epistemological one, namely about how to understand and analyse media. There is a long tradition of analysing media as texts in a more or less semiological fashion - constructing a type of analysis that considers the content as signs and hence in some way (semi-)independent of specific, concrete reality or context. (Of which in my opinion for instance Rothenbuhler's chapter on 'Ground Zero' in the Media Anthropology anthology is an example.) As opposed to this there are perspectives that can be coined 'non-representational' (e.g. Nigel Thrift, Shaun Moores), i.e. not concerned with representing some kind of meaning system (in reality structuralist or poststructuralist takes) but looking at content (as well as materiality) as practice - always anchored in specific situations and hence not necessarily constituting a coherent 'meaning system'.

In other words; content as representational is basically a Saussurean approach, implying explicitly or implicitly a vertical ontology (langue vs. parole) while content as non-representational is a necessary and integral aspect of a practice perspective. Again in other words: much media content is re-presentations but that does not mean that it should be analysed as representational. (And I believe that this is more or less in line with what Bareither argues in his chapter.)

Jo

Christoph Bareither   (christoph.bareither@uni-tuebingen.de)   30 November 2023

Dear all,

Thanks to John and Jo for bringing up the concept of content. What I wrote about content in the chapter you mentioned was an attempt to pragmatically solve a problem that I think many media anthropologists (at least those interested in the P in PRIME) face in ethnographic research: we know that "content" exists; we see it, we analyze it, we can even download or print it to materialize it; but we are still not sure of its ontological and epistemological status. John writes: "There are rumours that it may not even exist." I absolutely agree! And I think that the affordances and infrastructures of digital media in particular contribute to such ontological and epistemological uncertainties. Anyway, the idea was to solve the problem by thinking about the relationship between two concepts, rather than using each concept

individually as an analytical lens. This was very much inspired by Elisabetta's take on "affordances-as-practices" (which was also discussed here on the media.anthro list some time ago).

And this brings me back to John's question about the potential of the volume as a "media ethnographic lexicon". My answer: Yes, I think it has that potential. But for me, the important thing is not only the individual keywords we juggle, but the relationships and potential synergies between them. Especially when it comes to "emerging technologies" (e.g. artificial intelligence and machine learning) this is worth considering. A technology like ChatGPT, for example, evades many of our classical distinctions; it is material yet elusive; it is an infrastructure with certain affordances but also clearly enacts practices; it creates representations but at the same time has no way of intending to represent anything or assigning meaning to it; users create content with it but the system itself has a lot of agency in this process (I would probably call this "hybrid content-as-practice"). What I am trying to say is that I think media anthropology could gain a lot from thinking about the connections and relationships between different concepts when it comes to understanding such complex digital assemblages. And this is where a "lexicon" like the one provided in this and other media/digital anthropology volumes is very helpful to me.

Best,

Christoph

Nell Haynes   **(nell.haynes@gmail.com)**   **30 November 2023**

Thanks for your comments Jo,

I come from a linguistic anthropology background and have always been interested in how these issues play out differently, depending on one's academic formation. I'm not sure I always *entirely* understand the tensions between text (semiotics) and practice. In linguistic anth, I feel there are a lot of notions that kind of bridge these two: communities of practice, language ideologies, the idea that language is a co-production of producer and interpretant, and just the foundational idea itself of language as a social communicative practice that is always contextualized and indexical. To me, all of these are really helpful in looking at media--textual, visual, audio, video, signed, emoji-fied...all of it!

Anyway, I'm always surprised there's not more overlap of linguistic anthropology with media anthropology, but perhaps it is because of different sub-field idioms. There are plenty of linguistic anthropologists who analyze media, but don't necessarily position themselves as media anthropologists. And plenty of media anthropologists use lots of language in analysis, but don't enter into the conversations most prevalent in linguistic anth circles. I wonder how that will all continue to play out into the future!

Best,

Nell

John Postill   **(jrpostill@gmail.com)**   **1 December 2023**

I like Mark Peterson's anecdote about almost every panel at an AAA (American Anthropological Association) conference having someone discussing media. Yes, other anthropologists come to us for the media, while media and communication scholars, one could add, come for the ethnography.

I wonder how people would read this same volume if it was titled The Routledge Companion to Media and Communication Studies: Anthropological Perspectives (or a similar subtitle). Because to me this book is, in some ways, an introduction to media and communication studies (written by anthropologists). It's not a marginal book: it goes to the heart of the broad church we call media and communication studies. If I were to teach an introduction to this field, I would certainly use it as one of the core texts.

On the question of media keywords, Christoph wrote that, for him, 'the important thing is not only the individual keywords we juggle, but the relationships and potential synergies between them'.

This makes me think of the difference between analysing our ethnographic materials through a pre-existing conceptual framework vs. a post-hoc set of concepts. Ethnographers don't usually like ready-made frameworks. We prefer post-fieldwork sets of concepts that will work well together as well as with the empirical evidence gathered. And for that we need to be able to draw from a rich vocabulary like the one found in this collection. From that vast vocabulary, only a handful of terms will turn out to be essential to the analysis of any given case study, and it's impossible to predict which ones.

What can we say about ChatGPT at this point? Not much, as there hasn't been enough time to do long-term research on it. We can nonetheless read some of the early technical and philosophical literature, as long as we don't expect the resulting conceptual framework to be of much use in the real world. To use another religious analogy, what we *can* say is that it's probably not a good idea to put ChatGPT at the centre of a media ethnographic study, as that would mean committing the cardinal sin of technocentrism. As always, you'd want to look at this 'emerging technology' out of the corner of your AI.

John Postill

Dear all,

Thanks for the interesting discussion which is taking several directions and is raising relevant points. In this email, I would like to answer Kerstin's methodological question on the production of the volume. She asked what methods we used to delimit categories and contributions… Patricia, Nell, Jolynna and I had a brief email exchange and we identified three main 'methods' especially for the 'thematic considerations' section: first, we selected topics that we thought being the prevailing current themes in media anthropology. Relevance was the most important criteria. Second, the choice was influenced by our background and interests. For example, Nell wanted to have a good representation of topics like race, gender, and inequality. I have always been interested in the mediation of personal relationships and intimacy, and I wanted to include a section on this. But, the third criteria was more 'inductive', in the sense that we formulated categories on the basis of the chapters' topics. For example, the section on political conservatism was not defined in advance, but the chapters on politics ended up being about media and the reproduction of one power or another, rather than about social movements, resistances, or public sphere and democracy. And I then realized that this outcome was not anecdotal, but rather representative of a current trend in the field. To some extent, the formulation of categories in the 'thematic considerations' section was similar to a qualitative research cycle, i.e. the combination of deductive and inductive reasoning.

The selection of contributions was based on the criteria mentioned above. It mostly followed the themes that we wanted to include because were representative of the current state-of-the-art. But we also put a lot of thought into inviting people based on wide representation of race, gender, and global location, as well as people writing about different global locations. We also tried to include scholars with different levels of seniority. Then, we put quite a lot of effort in finding contributors that were based in institutions in the 'global south' and whose writing could conform to 'Western modes of academic discourse'. It was not easy. Then, we made the choice of inviting authors whose work we already knew. As a result, the selection was in some way or another influenced by our network. We initially thought of opening a call for paper, but a volume with 41 chapters was already ambitious enough. Screening, shortlisting and selecting among hundreds of abstracts would have added extra work. I might have forgotten other criteria and methods, but I think that the ones mentioned above are the most important!

Thanks all for your insightful questions and comments.

Best,

Elisabetta Costa

Hi all,

I just wanted to respond to a couple of things quickly that have come to mind from these discussions.

First, just a quick response to a previous mention of migrational studies and the role of my chapter. I just wanted to note that my chapter in the volume on Media Migration focuses only on media migration, which is defined as moments when people move from participating in a very central social media site locus to another because they are unable to remain on a particular site for a variety of reasons including moral, physical, economic, ethical, practical, and so on. This is different from polymedia. It is also different from more casual forms of switching between or using multiple sites at once. My chapter is about those moments when someone's major locus of online participation is scuttled or closed and they must go to another site to retrieve interaction to their community *cough Musk takeover of Twitter cough*. In response to the observation that it is important to understand scholarly histories, I share this concern. I provide a section in my chapter in which I talk about prior instances in past media studies that focus on the idea of leaving one site for another, although prior scholars called it different things.

It occurs to me that given how hard many of us have worked to challenge the online/offline binary, I look forward to future projects in migration studies that focus on the interthreaded aspect of on the ground migration and how changes in usage of social media connects to / disrupts / or interthreads with multiple types of online and offline migrational acts. In the conversations about terms and what a volume can bring, my "psychic friends" tell me that there is a lot to be mined with regard to relations between different types of mediated and on the ground migration studies.

Second, I have never really understood the split that is often made in academia between semiotic and material approaches. I believe that it is not really possible to talk about signs or representations in media without understanding the material and mediated aspects of those signs in terms of how they are created, viewed, and interacted with in terms of content, practice, and materiality. I think Nell's chapter in the volume on Inking Identity does a great job bridging these relational ideas of symbols, materiality, identity, and larger social themes. I also think the idea in general that Christoph proposed about valuing relationships between concepts is a really productive one for analyzing media, and the volume provides touchstones to think about the relationships between concepts and how they may productively help analyze complicated behavioral patterns.

One type of relationship of this kind might be semiotics / representation and materiality / practice. I look forward to exploring many others.

Patricia G. Lange

John Postill   (jrpostill@gmail.com)   **4 December 2023**

Dear all

The e-seminar on the Routledge Companion to Media Anthropology ends in 36 hours, namely tomorrow Tuesday at 23:00 Central European Time.

This is your last chance to post a brief comment or follow-up remark on this key media anthropology reference book.

Let's have a wave of posts to finish off the session!

John

Jolynna Sinanan   (jolynna.sinanan@manchester.ac.uk)   **5 December 2023**

Thank you all for such fantastic discussion on a project we're so proud of, having had the opportunity to work with chapter authors who are doing amazing work.

Just adding some last-minute responses to two aspects of the conversation so far, 'old' and 'new' media and our efforts and challenges around being as inclusive with regional representation as we could with the volume.

When deciding on sections and where chapters might be located in the volume, it is very obvious that chapters overlap sections, materiality speaks to infrastructure, which speaks to representation etc. One of the sections I worked closely on, 'Emerging Technologies', introduced me to ways of thinking about my own (emerging) research that has since become inseparable from it. Media and digital media infrastructures are inextricable from Everest's scientific, exploration and commercial imperial histories. They shape how Everest is represented and commodified. Emerging technologies (perhaps we will think of this term with the ambivalence with which we think of 'old' and 'new' media) emphasises how the current moment in Everest's history is very shaped by the powers of state, institutional and corporate actors, in ways that are indistinguishable from one another.

This leads me to the second point, the efforts to include authors that are representative of various regions that are under recognised. Discussions of inclusion and decolonisation in the social sciences are often geographically oriented, when there are strong historical legacies to contend with. It is an issue I am facing in another collaboration on digital anthropology. Both sub-disciplines, sub-fields (whatever) are relatively young. Given the rapid changes in educational institutional contexts, it might not be surprising that there is less diversity in regional representation of scholars when many contributors in the volume (myself included) may be affiliated to Western, European or Global North or 'centre'-universities, but are the first generation to attend university, let alone enter into academia. The small number of potential PhD candidates from Nepal I have spoken with are interested in doing a PhD in digital anthropology (yes, I'm using digital as an add on to media anthropology here) do

return to Nepal and work in community advocacy, rather than become academics abroad (I noticed a similar aspiration with international PhD candidates in development studies from my University of Melbourne days).

The chapters in this section exemplifies the ways in which media histories, where present and emerging media and technologies contend with past legacies in a similar way that the emerging and established scholars from diverse regional contexts contend with temporal legacies as well as geographical ones.

I hope that's clear.

It's probably not.

Jolynna

John Postill   **(jrpostill@gmail.com)**   **5 December 2023**

Dear all

The 73rd EASA Media Anthropology Network e-seminar is now closed.

Many thanks to the Companion co-editors, Elisabetta Costa, Patricia G. Lange, Nell Haynes and Jolynna Sinanan, for discussing their work with us and to everyone who participated in the conversation.

As usual, there'll be a transcript of the session up on the network's website as soon as it is ready – we will let you know.

For more information on past e-seminars, see
https://easaonline.org/networks/media/eseminars

If you'd like to present a working paper, please contact the e-seminar chair Nina Grønlykke Mollerup. Contact details on the website.

Cheers

John

Nina Grønlykke Mollerup   **(ninagm@hum.ku.dk)**   **6 December 2023**

I would like to also add a thanks to John for adeptly guest chairing the e-seminar. It has been very interesting to follow from the sideline.

We are looking forward to new e-seminars in 2024 and until then wish you all a good end of the year.

On behalf of the organising group,

Nina