Discussion on the definition of media anthropology
(March 16th – 24th)

Media Anthropology Network mailing list **medianthro@abyznet.net**

Philipp Budka philipp.budka@lai.at

Dear List,

I would like to take the momentum - even if it's two weeks ago - of the lively discussion in the third e-seminar about the definition or non-definition of media and media anthropology to find in consensus a short text for the intruducing page of our website which explains what media anthropology actually is (www.media-anthropology.net). I think this could give an additional glimpse of what the network is about.

An other idea is to cooperately create an entry on media anthropology in the Wikipedia, a resource for many web users with more than 490 000 articles in English (http://wikipedia.org).
Best,

Philipp

Sarah Pink S.Pink@lboro.ac.uk

Dear Philipp and All

I think this will be a tricky, but possibly necessary task. In my initial assessment there seem to be three existing approaches - the idea that media anthropology is the ETHNOGRAPHIC study of media practices (eg see Askew's intro to Askew and Wilk), the idea that the ANTHROPOLOGICAL study of media practices might in addition serve as a critical voice in wider theory building across the social sciences because anthropology provides a more fine graied form of analysis that reveals cultural difference (I think Ginsburg et al's intor to Media Worlds is an example of this approach) and finally the approach from some academics from media studies, rather than anthropology, that borrows anthropological theory to understand aspects of mass media practice.

Maybe a media anthropology can or should be all of these? Although I am hoping that the rather general categories that I have suggested are developing above will actually inspire some reactions from people which will help get the debate going.

The other issue that comes to mind is the question that came up during the telemadres e-seminar: is this a mass media anthropology or is it an anthropology of anything that mediates (which could taking it to its conclusion mean an anthropology of anything...), or rather any sorts of practices that involve 'media'.

Just some thoughts I wanted to raise briefly while the baby is asleep, but will end there as she is waking up
I'll really look forward to seeing how this debate develops

Sarah

Elisenda Ardevol Piera eardevol@uoc.edu

Hello,

I think it's a good idea, Phillip! Also the lines proposed by Sarah, but I would add at the end of the paragraph "that borrows anthropological theory -and methodology- to understand aspects of mass media practice -s-.

I also doubt about the expression "mass media" may be we can talk about "popular" media practices? -I thnik that we are talking now about media convergenge, digital media, and also we may include in our study other practices that cannot be considered "mass media" as mobile communication or videogames, for example-.

going on,
Elisenda

Daniel Taghioff danieltaghioff@yahoo.com

Hello.

I like the heterodox approach to defining Media Anthroplogy, althought the problem solver me wants to try and neaten things...

I think there is a possible solution to the problem of defining the Anthropology of Media in terms of 'mediation' and that spilling over into all forms of practice.

All forms of practice imply some mediation, inasmuchas they are socially meaningful. However, not all forms of practice do this explicitly. Thus we have a subset of practices that contain reference more explicitly to their own, and other practices', mediated aspects.

The Anthropology of Media could be sited in the study of the relationships between these more explicitly identified mediated practices, and the implicit mediated aspects of other practices. This has the advantage of siting the discipline ethnographically in the practices of those involved, rather than founding it on apriori notions of media and mediation.

What counts as 'explicit' is of course a matter both of degree and of contention, but at least it might give us something more specific and less idealised to talk about and look into, so is perhaps some progress.

Regards

Daniel

Philipp Budka ph.budka@philbu.net

Dear List,

I have tried to add Sarah's, Elinda's, and Daniel's thoughts on the definition of media anthropology into one - quite long - sentence:

Media Anthropology is the ethnographic study of (popular) (mass) media practices, which allows, due to a fine-grained analysis of cultural difference, a (cross-disciplinary) critical theory building that uses anthropological theory and methodology to understand the relationships between Œexplicitly¹ mediated practices and the Œimplicit¹ mediated aspects of other practices.

Hope this makes some sense. What are you thinking?

Best,

Philipp

Narmala Halstead halsteadn@Cardiff.ac.uk

Dear All,

Some thoughts and reflection on earlier points:

Anthropology of media examines the relationships between people and media. This emphasis on people is demonstrated through the ethnographic approach. This allows for knowledge construction that is discipline specific, and which moves across disciplines. The connections are located in the grounded approaches to knowing about people and where media in all its various forms are inextricably part of today's social settings.

The implications for anthropologising 'media studies' relate to the issue of knowledge construction and how methodological and paradigmatic approaches have been applied as also issues of the integrity of these applications. This has led to debate and controversy in media studies where media/cultural studies scholars have challenged the slipshod application of ethnography in the so-called ethnographic turn of the 1980s and where they make distinctions between 'ethnography' and 'proper ethnography.' This suggests particular emphasis on the anthropological as a set of knowledge practices that will yield acceptable results in studying people and media and where this approach becomes important through the focus on people.

In these categories of media and anthropology, there are different concerns across disciplines. While some media scholars are concerned that the application of these knowledge practices produce 'proper ethnography,' and in this sense privilege anthropology proper, there is a concern within the discipline (of anthropology) of possible loss of integrity in the add-on to 'anthropology' or to other disciplines (see for instance, the theme of the current AES

conference for intra-disciplinary knowledge debates and see debates around visual anthropology). What unites these concerns is the emphasis on particular forms of knowledge and what makes them anthropological.

We know about people and how they inhabit media through a specific set of knowledge conventions pored over and mediated by scholars from different ends of the 'field' and which produce an anthropology of media

Best,

Narmala

Mihai Coman mcoman53@yahoo.com

Dear Phillip

Your demand fit my recent work on the varius definitions of MA - in the context of the relase in May at Sage of the reader Eric Rothenbuhler and myself we have edited ("Media anthropology") and the promise I made to John to offer in May for our E-seminar a paper on the definition(s) of MA However, for the present discussion I belive we have to distinguish between:

1. the various definition of MA offered by Spitulnik, Susan Allen, Askew and Wilk, Guinsburg et alii, Osorio, Coman and Rothenbuhler; basically all these definition presents MA as the anthropological (the science = theory, methods, concepts) study (= the activity) of media system (=the field). because this is obvious this descriptive definition do not help us to better understand what MA is (= the specific difference between MA and other approaches). Even so a syntheseis of them could be use to a standard definition of MA

2. the different "objects" from the large "field of mass media system " that interested anthropologists; here the anthropological study of mass media targets various types of societies, institutions, situations, contents (fictional or informative) and processes. One refers to the use of media techniques and media systems by anthropologists in order to (a) better record, "save" and disseminate the social practices of the insiders, (b) promote their field or (c) improve the content of the journalistic practices. Another refers to the investigation of the ways in which different "indigenous" groups use media in order to disseminate their culture and to affirm a specific identity. Another perspective looks to mass media as a specific "content", employing cultural anthropological methods and concepts in order to interpret the "media culture". Within this field I would include (a) the study of the influence of channels (oral, scriptural, audiovisual or Internet) on media content or media consumption, (b) the studies of the processes through which these cultural products are institutionally created and distributed by specialists in the mass media industry, (c) the investigation of processes by which these products are consumed and invested with meanings by different types of audience and (d) the analysis of media contents. I take the risk of being scholastic - I prefer to distinguish a anthropology of media (interest for the use of media as channels and for the processes of mediation) and an anthropology of mass media (interest in content and meanings and in content and meanings production/consumption)

3. the focus of the MA - all these phenomena could be adressed at a local, national, transnational or "global" level and in relationship with various social agencies

4. the actors and the paradigms - these studies were promoted by two families of scholars and as a consequesce were rooted in two different logics: an anthroplogical one - more interest for the: a) ethnography of media consumtion/production in small scale societies (in this approch intersects if it is not the "bastard" of visual anthropology, even if one should ask how "visual" is visual anthropology?) and for: b) an explanatory paradigm more close to social anthropology. The second family of paradigms and actors came from media studies: the paradigm is a "would be" anthropological one - more speculative, more focused on the symbolic processes, using concept such as ritual, liminality, social drama, magic, sacred, myh, archetype and so on sometime metaphorically to explain media production/consumption in large scale societies: their paradigm is more close to anthropology of religion, but it is "colored" by all the ingredient specific to cultural studies (heterogenity of paradigms and methods, interest for power and hegemony, etc). In fact the paradox of MA is conected to this ambiguity of actors and paradigms - anthropologists/anthropology seem reluctant to accept the existence of a new social domain (media would be an object of study in its own rights, such as kinship, politics, economy, language, legal systems, religion etc); on the other side media scholars have no concern of scientific delineation and use anthropology as a "tool-box" in order to get out from a to sociological rooted paradigm and create a new perspective on mass media. So one important question is WHO represent/promote media anthropology? And my feeling is that the difficulties in promoting this field are largerly conceted to the imcompatibility of the actors

Mihai Coman

Daniel Taghioff danieltaghioff@yahoo.com

Dear Phillip,

I quite like it, it reads a bit like an international treaty, grand sounding without specifying too much.

I'd definately avoid the mass bit, and wonder about popular (what about Muslim or Christian fundamentalist websites, is this popular or unpopular?) But that's mainly about problematising to try to avoid prejudging the object of study.

In a more pragmatic, communicating to the world at large, kind of mode, I'd personally say I prefer popular to mass. I like the cross-disciplinary bit, especially when we are dealing with Media Studies and Social Anthropology, already hybridised beasts, which are hopefully not breeding a mule (I mean a dead end due to overdefinition, Media Anthro feels like quite a creative project to me.)

Daniel

Yazan Doughan yazan@soas.ac.uk

Dear Philip, All,

I know this is rather late in the day, but here's a quick thought: do we have

to define anthropology of media in terms of 'mass' or 'popular' media? For example, is a visual presentation prepared for an audience of 10 'mass media'? Is it 'popular media'? I think this example fits neither category, but it is certainly a form of mediation.

To avoid the over-definition Daniel mentions, I would prefer the term 'practices of mediation'. Even better, we could use the term 'media-related practices' since this would not only include media practices, but also those practices performed in reference to media practices (for example, by the recipients of the mediated message).

Yazan

Debra Spitulnik dspitul@emory.edu

Dear Listers:

I've been following this discussion with great interest!! I wonder if members would be interested in working up a collection of concise definitions or some kind of multi-layered definition (perhaps with Q&A format), to be put on the Media Anthropology Network website, in addition to trying to aim for one short definition, which was Philipp's first suggestion.   e.g. Q&A might be good for answering things like "What does Anthropology bring to the study of media? "What are and are not media?"

The three key terms/phrases that have been discussed are: Media Anthropology, Mediation, Media. Under the last, perhaps types of media could be itemized, e.g. New Media, Mass Media, Small Media, Indigenous Media, etc.

Are there any published definitions that are good? It seems like many responses here have been individually offered definitions, which is fine, but then again if some good definitions have already been worked out in publications, let's use them as well.

There are some definitional attempts in Ginsburg et al., Wilk & Askew, and Allen's early edited work Media Anthropology. Mazzarella's new article in the Annual Review of Anthropology (2004) has an interesting definition of mediation. In my 1993 article on "Anthropology and Mass Media" I implicitly defined media anthropology as encompassing anything that anthropologists do 'with', 'in', 'on' or 'about' media. But that may be too general.

I've grappled with these definitional issues in a couple of more recent publications and I'd be happy to share them if there's interest. If there's a way to put pdf files on the website I could do that. In working out the definitions I find it helpful to think about defining characteristics in terms of the 5 dimensions of ownership, production, distribution, circulation, and reception as well as distinctions in scale, types of social actors, types of technology, and types of genres.

One publication (2002) focuses on developing framework for the study of small media and the other (1999) is a short piece that focuses the relevance of language in the analysis of media. A short quote from the 2002 piece:
"Technically, the conventional definition of mass media has been formulated in contrast with the conventional definition of interpersonal media. Originally, the idea was that the media of

mass communication differed dramatically from interpersonal modes of communication in terms of the scale and scope of production, distribution, and consumption (or reception). For mass communication media, we assume these have three principle characteristics: a. communication is produced for mass publics; b. communication is distributed for mass publics; c. communication is consumed by mass publics. For interpersonal media on the other hand, we also assume three key opposing characteristics: a. communication is produced for interpersonal or individual consumption; b. communication is distributed in limited interpersonal channels; c. communication is consumed by limited publics, usually on interpersonal basis. There is a range of communication media, however, that fall outside the confines of traditional mass mediated or interpersonally mediated communication. Examples include: the use of political graffiti, leaflets, cartoons, underground cassettes, Web pages, Internet listserves, jokes, and other verbal genres of critique and commentary. In general, these discursive genres of communication are identified as small media, personal media, popular media, and community media."

Spitulnik, D. 2002 "Alternative Small Media and Communicative Spaces." In Media and Democracy in Africa. G. Hyden, M. Leslie, and F. F. Ogundimu, eds. Pp. 177-205. New Brunswick (NJ) and London: Transaction. [Published simultaneously with Uppsala, Sweden: Nordic Africa Institute.]

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I agree this is an interesting discussion chain. I wonder, though, if it is really the right moment to offer a definition of media anthropology. We can describe what is done under that heading and the other work that could be so labeled, but it is so various that any definition of media anthropology would exclude much of it.

Take the issue of ethnography, for example. The definition offered a few turns ago, "Media anthropology is the ethnographic study of . . ." is either an inaccurate description or a contentious prescription.

One of the interesting things about "media anthropology" is the sudden currency of the term. The label was little used until recently and suddenly it seems very right for very many purposes. Retrospectively it seems a good label for a variety of tendencies in a variety of fields. Pink, for example, in the email that started this chain pointed to three approaches to media anthropology, rather than three definitions.

It may be useful to see "media anthropology" as, at the moment, a phenomenon of intellectual history. It is a coming to terms, a moment of recognition of realities that had been waiting to be seen. My own experience the last few years is that everyone likes the term, most respond

as if it helps them recognize something, like yeah, I see that. Only a few later ask for a definition.

Cultural approaches to media studies have been borrowing concepts from anthropology for decades--not just since the 1980s but right back to the studies of newspapers, movies, radio, and communities in the 1920s and 1930s. Maybe now is the moment when we come to terms with the fact that the phenomena of the media are not just usefully analyzed with cultural concepts, but they most fundamentally ARE cultural systems--that living with the media is living within a certain kind of cultural system.

Not being a trained anthropologist I shouldn't say--but I do see signs of a coming to terms on that side of media anthropology as well--that more than just the object of study has been altered by international flows and systems of media, communication, and culture.

Maybe what media anthropology is, in the definition of a field sense, will not yet be developed for a few more years. Maybe right now, it is more like a moment of discovery, the spreading of an enthusiasm, and the launching of new conversations.

Cheers,

Eric

Mark Hobart Markhobart@aol.com

Dear All

Might I pick up on the interesting points made by Eric and Yazan?

I think there are significant problems in declaring an 'anthropology of…' or an 'ethnography of…' Instead of being a convenient label for arguments about how to approach a range of issues of interest, it suggests a degree of professional agreement, indeed a claim to appropriation. Do we really need yet another sub-field of anthropology, and to argue over its essence?

Even were such agreement possible, instead of focusing on the arguments, the result is likely to turn into claims to authority, proper methods, inclusion, exclusion etc. – all the techniques of power and ownership that anthropologists worry about. Stuart Hall's point about cultural studies is that it was exciting and something happened intellectually until it came to be defined and institutionalized. Anyhow on those occasions when scholars agree, it usually means the issue is dead or singularly uninteresting.

So I find myself in sympathy with Yazan's suggestion. The stress on practices is pleasantly theoretically open-ended. It allows for contingency: you do not know until you engage in detailed research quite what practices may turn out to be media related. This fits a broad trend in anthropological theorizing, namely the stress on context, which you cannot anticipate. What precisely is to be gained by defining anthropology of media anyway? It runs the risk, I think, of becoming an exercise in substantialism.

A stress on practice also has the advantage that it includes the activities of the researchers along with those of the researched. So doing avoids the danger of assuming that scholars somehow stand above and beyond what they know, which falls into old traps about the transparency of the media and mediated thought. It would be sad to see anthropological interest in media hoist on a theoretical petard its practitioners had failed to spot.

Best wishes

Mark

John Postill jpostill@usa.net

On Eric's point about Philipp's definition, namely:

> Take the issue of ethnography, for example. The definition offered a few turns ago, "Media anthropography is the ethnographic study of . . ." > is either an inaccurate description or a contentious prescription.

I, too, was worried about the conflation of description and prescription while thinking about this matter earlier today.

As a description, I'd say it's only slightly inaccurate in that most social and cultural anthropologists who've worked on media to date (at least in the English-speaking world; by the way, what's happening elsewhere???) have indeed relied heavily on ethnographic research. Ample evidence for this can be found in the two readers published so far, namely Askew and Wilk, and Ginsburg et al.

As a prescription, I agree it is contentious (and if it's not, we'll have to make sure that it is!). In my view, if we are going to call this research area 'media anthropology' (and not 'media ethnography') we'll be needing a historical turn sooner rather than later. I'm not suggesting we abandon ethnography, God forbid, only that some of us branch out to historical and even archaeological studies.

John

Philipp Budka ph.budka@philbu.net

Dear List,

I agree with Eric that the attempt to define something is always at risk to exclude some aspects. Nevertheless I do think that we should try to agree on some basic aspects of what media annthropology is or does. Therefore I appreciate Debra's suggestion of "working up a collection of concise definitions or some kind of multi-layered definition". (The Wikipedia and it's underlying technology would be an ideal platform for doing so: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Overview_FAQ.)

My, relatively short, experience with academia and university, which are in many cases paying the bills, thaught me that it is absolutely necessary to define and describe in which kind of (sub)field one is doing research. In Austria, for instance, the issue of communication media is relatively new to anthropology, and I guess that's one reason why I am concentrating on definitions.

As the lively discussion indicates, there is no risk of an overall agreement and the consequential "death of the issue" as Mark put it. By the way Philippe Descola has had a very interesting article in the February issue of Social Anthropology in which he is thinking about anthropology and it's future as an academic discipline, which seem to fit nicely into our context. He concludes that anthropology cannot "be characterised by a clearly circumscribed domain of inquiry [...] or by a type of method [...] . It should, rather, be seen as a certain style of knowledge- [...] ."

Best,

Philipp

Anna Horolets labusia_xl@wp.pl

Dear List,

I would like to support Phillip's proposition to still try to agree on a definition. If the anthropologists themselves might prefer to not have it, it is needed "for the outer world". I'm comparing my experience of being in academic institutions in Poland and in Sussex. In the latter I think I could afford thinking in non-definitionist terms - because most of the time everyone understands (as one of you said - yeah, I see it) what one means when one says "anthropology" or even "media anthropology'.

But where I am staying here - in Warsaw - anthropology is something quite different - also with much less "rights" as an academic disciplin - and I would really love to refer my colleagues to some definitions of "media anthroplogy" too, even if it's a starting point of a discussion. In a way what is not names doesn't exist.

Best,

Anna Horolets

Daniel Taghioff danieltaghioff@yahoo.com

Following up on Eric-Yazan-Mark-Phillip thread.

We perhaps need to be clear who we are defining media anthropology for and why.
 We also might want to think about methodology (a nod towards Mark Hobart in this.)
Ethnography has been criticised for a metaphysics of presence in relying on
face to face communication and"experience" for it's truth claims. It is precisely the issue of
mediation as a practice implying the possibility of miscommunication, or non-presence of

meaning/intention even when fact to face, that problematizes this. Also, mediation can make other agents 'present' to a degree, although with similar caveats.

So a stress on practices of mediation disrupts the metaphysics of presence of ethnography on at least two counts. This makes 'ethnography' a slightly shifting category, when articualted with mediation. So this brings the focus back to mediated practices as an object of study, partly because it allows such an exploration of methodological issues.

Maybe Wikipedia is a good way to go on with this discussion. If so, who is going to do all the cutting and pasting? And how are we to present such a discussion to universities, funders etc... And what are the implications of this in terms of power and knowledge. It seems our own conditions of possibilty as researchers have implications for how we are defining ourselves, are we happy about this? Are we willing to conduct such a discussion about the compromises we need to make as academics, in public? And will anyone else undertand what we're talking about if we do?

There are many advantages to including our own practices of mediation in our discussion, and in our defining. One issue is which bits of history do we choose to actively contextualise our objects of study with. Are these the same contextualisations and historcisations that those involved in the practices in question would bring? How does this historicisation
form part of the conditions of possibility for (mis) communication - it might well be integral to the practices we are supposed to be studying. Mark's warning about petards and hoisting, is actually quite a practical one.

Daniel

Catherine Greenhalgh c.greenhalgh@lcp.linst.ac.uk

Dear All

This contesting over definitions is very interesting. I tend towards the idea of practices below, but I wonder how many of the contributors to this list would. It may have been a small gathering, but I was at the meeting at EASA,Vienna when the group founded this site and most present were researching media effects on particular audiences or users of media such as the internet, rather than actual practices or practitioners (makers). So clearly any definition needs to be wide enough to be workable. For example, I had not considered, nor do I now define my research as media anthroplogy (or as visual anthropology). I teach practical cinematography and theory in a film department within a media school. I am doing ethnographic research on feature film cinematographers, though not an anthropologist as such .. I may be missing something, but I am curious as as to why the idea of 'medium' is not included in any of the definitions I have read, since it is so fundamental within practical media studies and underpins specific working practices?

Cathy

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In response to Catherine,

I think this is a good point:

>I may be missing something, but I am curious as as to why the idea of 'medium' is not
>included in any of the definitions I have read, since it is so fundamental within practical
>media studies and underpins specific working practices?

I think it is interesting that we don't talk the language of practitioners when acting as analysts.
I think this is necessary, to prevent confusing the terms of analysis with the terms being
analysed (a matter of style if you like) but also problematic, in as much as we need to work
meaningfully with 'media' practitioners.

What is being missed, I believe, in Catherine's point, is that 'medium' is a contingent set of
practices.

Unless you subscribe to the idea of a transcendental, or materially determined 'global
vernacular' of film, newspaper, tv etc... then it is important to see 'medium' as another set of
contingent, but also materialised, practices. This is not to say that there are not immanent
constraints on practice for practitioners, that render their objects of action very concrete for
them, but it is to say that this is contingent on wider sets of practices that define these limits in
specific ways.

The point being that a 'medium,' taking theatre as an example with broad scope, may not be
the same in all times and all places, accross all cultures.

If we define medium in advance we are making an assumption about what specific practices
are likely to be, without actually going and having a look. Having said that, the specific
contraints that practitioners encounter and work with, and the ways in which these are
articulated are crucial to practice, and need to be taken account of very carefully in analysis.
This is perhaps a counter weight to the suspicion felt towards the 'ideology' of professional
practices extant within some academic circles.

Partly I think this is to do with a Foucauldian suspicion of discourse as overdetermining,
which makes sense for academics steeped in 'knowledge' and buerocracy. But for someone
trying to come in from outside an overdetermined, but enabling, set of social practices, it is
undetermination, or lack of access to practices and discourses, that may be key. Students
perhaps understand this more easily than more established academics. Practitioners also
probably have a keener sense of this.

But I feel that this cannot be prejudged in advance, it is contingent on the practices in
question, and the various ways in which they are contextualised.

The irony of all this is that all this talk about getting messages accross, is often, in itself, about

as clear as mud. But I don't think this is only due to academic self-indulgence. I think the issues of practice, and the ideas people have in those practices, are crucial.

In short 'medium' seems to me to be refering to a set of historically contingent practices that needs unpacking, as it may well be an open signifier covering up a lot of different, and varying, practices.

Daniel

Anna Horolets labusia@neostrada.pl

Dear List,

My comment overlaps with what's been said today anyway. Yet even at the risk of repetition I would like to support Phillip's proposition to still try to agree on a definition. If the anthropologists themselves might prefer to not have it, it is needed "for the outer world".
It is largely the question of knowledge, power and institutionalisation (as Daniel mentioned).
It is especially true for the institutional contexts where anthropologists - social anthropologists - still do not have a stable position. (Poland seems to me one of such "contexts".)
Therefore institutionalisation is a shape of a definition is a gesture outside, which shows: 1. we exist; 2. are here is (more or less) what we are. Even if its content is a starting point of a discussion. In a way what is not named doesn't exist. At the same time in order for this definition not to become a sort of cage the "inner" activities can carry on: the suggestions of the Colleagues are very interesting and I think that this whole discussion needs to be stored as our "resource" on the page somewhere.

Best,
Anna Horolets

Fausto Barlocco fbarlocco@yahoo.it

Dear list,
the discussion is getting very interesting but, it seems to me, quite sterile at the same time.
People seem to take either of two irreconciliable positions: those genuinely trying to come out with a working definition, like Philip and Anna Horolets, and those who do not see the task as necessary, like Eric Rothenbuler and various others.
Personally, I agree with Eric Rothenbuler in seeing media anthropology as a process which brought together people from various disciplines and various walks of life to deal with similar sets of phenomena with vaguely similar methodologies (mostly broadly 'ethnographic'). This network is an example of this convergence of experiences and expertise.. What is also important is, another fact stressed by Eric, that this convergence involved and involves a deal of debate about the scope, methodology and views that belongs to this theoretical/academic phenomenon. This is what is taking place here with all the different views and 'metaphisics', as well as personal and academic circumstances, expressed.
As far as I am concerned, for example, I come from a strict anthropological perspective, I am very suspicious of cultural and media studies and think that the ethnographic method they

advocate is often not'ethnographic enough', but these are only my personal misgivings.. others have theirs...

I would put myself in the group of those who do not see a definition as really necessary, although for very different reasons than those of Daniel Taghioff and Mark Hobart, and actually seriously doubt that we will never get to one, considering the different premises from which we come and the fact that some seem to concentrate their efforts on making a definition impossible rather than easier..

This said, as a definition seems useful to some, and for sure it is at a bureaucratic and institutional level (which we cannot pretend it doesn't exist), we could concentrate our constructive efforts on a minimal working definition,

I would personally agree Philipp's definition, but leaving aside the qualification of media as mass- and even worse as popular (what is popular? who are the people? Isn't everybody part of the people? Doesn't it make the word tautologic?)and, with Yazan Doughan, would put the stress on the study of media-related practices.

Bye to all,

Fausto Barlocco
Loughborough Unversity, UK