Minutes of the EASA Media Anthropology Network's 1st meeting, 10th September 2004, Vienna

Taken by Paul Strauss

- In attendance:

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- Apologies:

Elisenda Ardevol, Cora Bender, Mihai Coman, Ian Dent, Jordi Grau, Gordon Gray, Jens Kjærulff, Ivan Kwek, Rico Lie, Thais Machado, Daniel Miller, Brian Moeran, Peter Pels, Sarah Pink, Nicole Wolf

- Agenda

1. Brief introductions
2. Media Anthropology Summer School, Sept 2005
3. Workshop "New Media – Administration, Policy and Ethnic Identity", Sept 2005
4. New mailing list and discussion group (mediaanthro@abyznet.net)
5. An electronic working papers series on media anthropology topics? (similar to media@lse electronic working papers?)
6. Other initiatives?
7. Organising the network
8. Next steps, and who will take them

1.1 Proceedings began with John Postill acting as chair. Attendees briefly introduced themselves and their research interests.

2.1 Oliver Hinkelbein was invited to announce the current situation of a proposed media anthropology summer school scheduled for Bremen in September 2005. It was tentatively being titled 'New media and the politics of Culture and Religion'. A short paper was circulated detailing the proposal for the summer school, as well as a workshop 'New media – Administration, Policy and Ethnic Identity" to run immediately before the summer school (8th-11th Sept.) The format for the summer school would draw heavily on a previous media anthropology summer school held in Hamburg in 1999. There, a group of students and young scholars participated in a two week series of workshops – each run by a leading invited media anthropologist

2.2 A question was raised as to what the criteria would be for summer school attendance. John Postill answered that it was envisaged that the teacher/student distinction from Hamburg (ie. pre/post PhD) would be retained.

3.1 Monika Rulfs spoke further on the proposed summer school and workshop. Members of the *"netcultures and the politics of ethnic identity"* project (Bremen) were thus far taking the lead with organisation of both events, although further input was welcomed. Funding was currently being sought from DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) and ESF (European Science Foundation) respectively.

3.2 A series of questions about and objections to the proposed titles were raised. These centred on what conceptualisations and theorisations of 'new-ness' were being deployed. Several members expressed discomfort about the distinction between 'old' and 'new' media, and sought clarification as to what exactly was meant by 'new' media anyway (ie. Digital media? ICTs?). It was suggested, to general agreement, that these debates should become fundamental themes of the summer school and workshop themselves. In the interests of first establishing a practical foundation for the network it was proposed to bracket off these arguments for the moment.

4.1 John Postill announced that himself and Jens Kjærulff were in the process of setting up a media anthropology mailing list that would form the backbone of the network's communication and activity (medianthro@abyznet.net)

4.2 Some reservations about this idea were expressed, centred on the question of whether it was desirable to have open webspace onto which network members could upload material, or whether an email list would suffice.

4.3 Tom Wormald took up this point, introducing himself as the EASA webmaster and drawing attention to the fact that the media network already has its own webpage on the main EASA site maintained by himself (www.easaonline.org/networksbios.htm). So far approximately 50 network members had posted short biographies. Tom posed the question as to whether members felt that this page should be retained as the media network's primary web presence, or whether an entirely separated website should be developed. Fundamentally, what would members like from a network homepage? Little response and no consensus was achieved on this point

5.1 John Postill introduced the idea of publishing online a series of working papers on media anthropology topics, the example model being Media@LSE Electronic

Working Papers. He expressed his concern, however, that the model be sufficiently adapted so that papers are genuinely 'working' and hence the editorial and redrafting process be kept to a minimum.

5.2 Philipp Budka and Pille Runnel (?) offered organisational and editorial assistance with this endeavour.

5.3 Reservations about the working papers series were expressed, and clarification of their purpose sought. Should they be geared towards a common theme, perhaps that of a future conference? Or indeed towards the summer school and workshop?

6.1 Members were invited to reflect on what the aims and objectives of the network might be, and what activities might be initiated to further these ends. Monika Rulfs suggested that initially it would probably suffice as a networking resource and for sharing information, with a view to network meetings and exchanged programs in the future. The point was raised that, taking away issues about funding and how to utilise web-based interaction, the network might best take shape as a forum for discussing current methodological and theoretical questions in media anthropology, posed by individual members.

7.1 Oliver Hinkelbein suggested that although the network was to be non-hierarchical and would mostly operate in an ad hoc fashion, it would nonetheless need a coordinator. He proposed John Postill for this role, and this was seconded by Monika Rulfs and Tom Wormald. No objections were raised and Postill agreed to undertake this role.

7.2 A question about how decision making processes would be managed was left unresolved

8.1 It was agreed to start the network running with the mailing list and move on from there. The importance of developing a protocol for use of the list was emphasised, namely appropriate use of the subject line

8.2 The funding for the summer school (DAAD) was approaching at the end of October and Monika Rulfs would take primary responsibility for submitting the proposal. Any assistance or information about possible alternative funding sources would be welcome.

8.3 A final point was raised that it might be of use to consider staggering the two events, rather than running them back-to-back, the benefits of which possibly including a less demanding organisational schedule and the ability to appeal to a wider audience.

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