

**EASA Media Anthropology Network
e-Seminar Series**

<http://www.philbu.net/media-anthropology/workingpapers.htm>

**E-Seminar on Sarah Pink's and Ana Martinez Perez's working paper
"A fitting 'social model': culturally locating telemadres.com"**

(22 February – 1 March 2005)

John Postill (University of Bremen)

jpostill@usa.net

Dear network

The third EASA Media Anthropology Network e-seminar opens now and will end in a week's time (Tuesday 1 March at noon Central European Time). We'll be discussing over email a paper on Spanish 'telemothers' by Sarah Pink and Ana Martinez. I shall be chairing the seminar. To participate all you need to do is email your comments or questions directly to medianthro@abyznet.net (i.e. not to me) after we've heard from the discussant. You can download the paper from

<http://www.philbu.net/media-anthropology/workingpapers.htm>

The rules of the e-seminar are:

- 1. The discussion starts when the discussant emails his or her comments on the working paper to the list.**
- 2. The author(s) then replies to those comments.**
- 3. The rest of list members can then add their comments, questions to the author, points of information, etc. These will be addressed by the author(s) at their own convenience throughout the week.**
- 4. Full bibliographic references are not required, but they are always welcome.**
- 5. All contributions should be emailed directly to the list (medianthro@abyznet.net) not to the chair.**
- 6. Contributions should have a clear, concise subject. Please avoid uninformative (e.g. Re: your comments) and empty subject lines (NB abyznet rejects empty subject fields!).**
- 7. Contributions should be kept as brief and focussed as possible.**
- 8. Contributions should be sent in the body of the email, not in an attachment.**
- 9. The usual offline seminar norms of courtesy and constructive criticism apply.**

Once the seminar is over, we'll be saving it and uploading it onto the website in PDF format, as we think these discussions can be a useful resource for future research and teaching.

Now it's over to our discussant, Pille Runnel!

Best wishes

John

ps If you're still unsure about how the e-seminar works, you can download transcripts from the previous two e-seminar from our website.

A fitting 'social model': culturally locating telemadres.com

Comments from **Pille Runnel** (Estonian National Museum/University of Tartu)

Following the already established pattern to present the responses to the discussed paper rather in the form of impressions and comments than coherently organised "assessment", I'll try to fit in and present for the opening of the seminar, with a few remarks and impressions. I'm intentionally leaving out several significant topics and outline some issues concerning the media/new media part only, hoping that we will come across several of the other topics, including the social model, during the week as well.

From my perspective, the paper's main strength is that the authors have picked up several topics, mainstream media studies are not approaching, or have failed them to see as relevant (though they should, I believe), therefore the text provides us in a way an introduction to some central paradigms within the anthropological approach to media/media technologies. It is said for not to legitimate the research object of the paper, but rather to try to identify some of those.

ICTs and daily practices

Media anthropology has been identified by Nick Couldry as a discipline, approaching media by going beyond a narrow focus on audience practices and treating the practices connected to it rather open-endedly, moving the research area therefore away from texts and production structures. Though there are various other ways to explain, what media anthropology is, I'd like to depart from that description, to point to the first connection with media and ICT studies.

Within this framework, the phenomenon of *telemadres* addresses one of the surprisingly "easy", but still central research question: how are media/ICTS involved in people's daily practices both directly and indirectly? Although for anthropology it might be taken for granted that in respect of ICTs, people are more than 'end users' with no role in the technological process beyond adopting ready-made technological artefacts, the technological determinism is still prevailing in the public approaches to ICTs and in much of social sciences.

For example, when looking the working paper slightly from the point of view of social studies in general, namely the discussions upon digital divide, *telemadres*, labelled as a „neat anthropological curiosity” by the Sarah Pink and Ana Martinez Perez, appears to be a significant example, showing how new media can „work” also for those people, who are directly not linked to the ICTs (here I'm also referring to the in a way marginal part of the telemadres web site in the whole interaction).

In information society and digital divide studies, also the authors briefly refer to at page 14, the housewives would quite likely belong to the socio-demographic group among whose „non-users” or minor users of ICTs would prevail, in this way contributing to make them a socially disadvantaged group. Housewives would need special attention to make them more active ICT users and agents in the information society and the whole situation would definitely be “treated” through policies and various actions, as the ways people use the technologies, is based on individual's ‚reading’ or making sense of technology. Obviously their Internet use cannot be described as “rich”, as they apparently used that web site just for establishing the connection with *telehijos* and neglected the page later on.

For me, the paper therefore refers to the fact that we need, either in digital divide debates or in information society and ICT research in general to identify these much more varied and richer ways the (media) technologies have “fitted in” or “work for” the personal lives of individuals, than studies of the direct ‘uses’ are able to provide us. This is, what anthropology might do. And I believe that yet in initial stages study upon Telemadres hopefully helps to approach the seemingly marginal, yet, as the study shows, actually central, but indirect use of ICT primarily in terms of understanding the needs of the individual rather than the perceived needs of society. Or even instead of needs, a concept rather belonging to rational choice paradigm, we should rather talk about understanding situations, conditions and events, where media technologies appear to be relevant for individuals. From what moment we in fact can tell, that the person is “on the other side of the digital divide” (p 14)? And to finish up this topic, the latter question also leads to another, I’d rather leave without answer at the moment myself: how relevant it is for these cultural practice-oriented media and ICT studies, the Telemadres paper represents in my mind, to contribute to the general problem-solving-oriented digital divide studies and if it is to some extent, how to make the voice heard?

Media and new media: identifying relationships

A second major topic, obviously still to be developed, as yet briefly outlined in the initial paper, is the question about the convergence of various medias, firstly through real practices of the people, and secondly, through creating continuous representations of each other. I’ll come back to the latter later on.

Again, what user–studies or audience studies often have found too difficult to deal with, is how the uses of different medias are mixed and not only overlapping, but interdependent from each other in daily lives of the people. As the authors show, rather than the web page, phones are crucial in setting up the ‘model’ from the telemadres point of view and finally the ‘official medias’ almost disappear, move to the background, until they are needed again and are replaced by food and taxis as a communication “medium”. The whole situation is created by the means of web, phones, other medias, but the whole interaction is not depending it in every phase. Therefore, while obviously being, besides the virtual relationship, as well an mediated relationship, we can imagine, how the medias are sometimes switched on and sometimes off.

Here I’m briefly leaving the main track in order to mention one more fascinating topic in the paper – namely, how new media has helped us take the ‘voice, both heard or read, out of communication’ and learn to study these phenomenon. The paper reminded me my own experience of studying as a student an online music community, whose main medium of communication was music with no ongoing conversation to accompany it, and me as an ethnologist trained in interviewing people, trying to rely on peoples musical profiles (and changes in it) only - although the participants were persons with their own music-based identity, the usual, significant factors of identity were in fact hidden (age, sex, fields of activity). It showed me, how despite the “channel” of communication, whether it is voice, visual image or food, the ways to communicate trust, taste, behaviours and various forms of knowledge to each other are instantly developed through the means of media. With telemadres, a situation is in a way similar, as the web page itself, representing the ‘model’ is not quite information-rich in a sense that it rather reminds a statement or advertising than a business environment, but yet it participates in creating all these complex relationships, described in the paper. It is a task for the researches to imagine and learn to study the whole world opening up through this interface.

Still, when looking upon the page, I discovered that I had expected to learn more about the producers of the site: though we can see, that the site has been established as a medium for economic transactions primarily, its authors remain invisible yet (though links and other media texts should be studied for that, I assume). Their identity is also not revealed in the working paper. I believe that although media anthropology in some cases tries to reject following the production structures as being approached in the traditional way, here the owners/producers of the page are part of this established network and deserve further attention in the study.

But from here I'd like to return to the other relationship between different medias, mentioned earlier. Namely, the authors mention that telemadre.com has been the subject of various media reports both in national Spanish and international press and on television. We also learned that several Telemadres told the press, they had found about the site from earlier stories in the media. Referring again to the mainstream media studies and their preferences, it can be said, that they have largely overlooked this topic. It is hard to find any coherent studies, where it has been analysed, how traditional media represent, construct and reflect new media/Internet. In the case of telemadres we have a even more interesting situation, a media studies person can dream of, as also the audience of traditional media is present and even more, has been obviously testing this connection of medias in real life situation, by picking up the offered service and making their own everyday realities out of this image, created by media.

Pille

Elisenda Ardèvol (University of Barcelona)

Dear all,

First, I want to congratulate Sarah and Ana for that interesting paper. What I liked most of its reading is the capacity to combine different fields and issues in anthropology (anthropology of media, visual anthropology, kinship studies) to make sense of a concrete "curious" Internet phenomenon. So, it is an article about contemporary Spain, about kinship, about gender, about technology, about senses, about emotional capital. All that subjects made an exquisite cocktail, but all are well explained and exposed, without losing their own flavour. Another methaphor is that of Valencian Paella, different ingredients that make a genuine dish. A good example of Cultural Studies, no doubt.

I also found that Woolgar thesis have been very well used to construct the theoretical frame of interpretation, that justifies the detour through demography tendencies, labour women trends and Spanish appreciation of mother/child relationship. Personally, I am interested in sensorial representations and how Internet connects sensory worlds, especially in the case of refugees and people through exile. So, I found very interesting ideas for dealing with that subject.

May be the only question I have to pose related with the article is the assumption that this web is a successful enterprise and very well-known in Spain. At the begining of my reading, I was astonished with the case because I am from Spain and didn't hear about that web and that new "social model". I wonder if the fact that the founders are from Madrid has something to do

with my ignorance about that initiative . I live in Barcelona and I didn't read about it before (no Catalan press no television program as far as I know have make a point of that "social innovation"). I did a Google search and all the pages about "Telemadre" were written in English, for example). I have surfing "Telemadre" forum and I have seen that there is no service for Barcelona, only one message says that if you want a telemadre in Barcelona, you can contact through an email. The web seems to follow the "global" aesthetics of Internet: no signs of "location", no references of geographical identity or territory.

I have to go back to my tedious e-learning coordinator work, today is the beginning of semester and a lot of duties are waiting to be finished before I can go home, so. nothing more for the moment.

welcome to the article and let the discussion flow!

Elisenda

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Philipp Budka (University of Vienna)

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Dear Sarah, Ana, Pille and MediaAnthro List,

First of all I would like to congratulate Sarah and Ana for their excellent paper. For me it was fascinating to read how new media such as the WWW are initialising social relationships between Spanish "telemothers" and their "telechildren". Due to the fact that I am not familiar with Spanish popular culture and kinship systems I will, like Pille, concentrate my comments on the media aspects of the paper.

I think, at least in media anthropology, one should be careful with using the word "medium". McLuhan's broad definition of media, which is used in the paper, reminds me of Watzlawick's (1996) broad definition of communication. According to the latter it is impossible not to communicate, consequently everything in human's social life is communication, which leads to a kind "schizophrenic dilemma" (Burkart 1998: 22). In order to study media and communication it is necessary to limit the definitions. Hence I don't agree with the authors that money, Tupperware, food, and taxis are media whether these things connect "tele- mothers and children".

By taking up Pille's concern of housewives that switch to "old" media like the telephone instead of using the WWW and in doing so deepening the digital divide, I just would like to add the factor "age". Even though I can't name any current studies, I am convinced that age is one of the key factors in the debate about information society "eExcluded" and "eIncluded".

The paper clearly shows that new media such as the internet or WWW are not replacing “old” media such as newspapers and radio, instead they are together forming a new kind of media landscape (or mediascape as Appadurai 1996 puts it). Concerning studies on the reflection of new media in old ones, I came across an edited volume, unfortunately in German, by Roessler and Wirth (1999) which contains two papers on the credibility of online resources. In short: 1. internet and WWW are behind news papers and television concerning credibility. 2. the reliance in online media and their content depends on the experiences recipients have made with “old” media.

Looking forward to a lively discussion.

Best,

Philipp

Jens Kjaerulff (Aarhus and Copenhagen)

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Dear Authors,

In this email-saturated day and age, 'brief is beautiful', I have been told.

So, in brief: Fabulous reading! THIS, to my mind, is the kind of contextualized approach to media that should characterize "media *ANTHROPOLOGY*", as distinct from so many other approaches.

Extending from my enthusiasm here, you clearly state that the paper is preliminary to further research, and so does not focus on 'experienced reality' (cf. conclusion). I see the dimension of 'experienced reality' as central in what distinguishes anthropology however, and so I am keen to read more. But that dimension is also hard to pursue methodologically, no less so in the context of 'media' (perhaps a reason it is so rarely pursued with much success, at least in the subfield of 'media-anthropology' centered on computers and internet that I am best familiar with).

So a brief question that you could perhaps expand on: How are you envisioning to concretely do this?

Are you planning to become 'telemadres' yourself, or move in with one or several? And similiarly with the telehijos? And how do you envision to engage this wider contextualization with the theoretical perspectives you launch in the paper, which predominantly are centered in more 'macro' terms and on 'discursive' representations, as it were? These were key difficulties in my own work, where I centered on 'telework', and pursued the 'experiential' dimension by moving into a village in Denmark for 16 months, and as much as possible also pursued being 'fly-on-the-wall-ish' with my informants who worked from home there, thought I sought to follow them everywhere...

Brilliant paper - Thank you for passing it our way!

// Jens

John Postill (University of Bremen)

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I'm also very grateful to the authors for their paper, not least because as an exiled Spaniard in Northern climes (a reluctant Spaniard, but Spaniard all the same) I often miss the food, and who wouldn't.

Elisenda's point about her not having heard about telemadre.com reminds me of my reaction when I first read the working paper a few weeks ago. I wondered whether this initiative might indeed be little more than an 'anthropological curiosity' (the authors' term, picked up by Pille). But having read the paper again, I'm coming round to the authors' view that even if it turns out to be a small niche endeavour, telemadre.com appears to connect disparate sectors of Spanish society in complex ways and resonate with a number of recurrent 'themes' in contemporary Spanish culture (although here I found the authors' use of term such as 'strands' and 'themes' rather vague). I understand this case study is only the beginning of a broader investigation into the transmission (or not) of domestic knowledge, so I would guess it will gain a great deal when contrasted with other case studies on mediated forms of fictive kinship, emotional labour, etc, in Spain? Besides, the uneven diffusion of telemadre.com across the country could be indicative of regional contrasts in domestic arrangements, kinship idioms, etc?

One element that I found missing from the analysis was the notion of 'maruja'. Since the early 1990s (?) or thereabouts, the word 'maruja' has spread widely and become endemic across Spain. It's used jocosely in colloquial language to refer to middle-aged housewives low in cultural capital who are fond of neighbourhood gossip and media celebrities. In the popular imagination, marujas seem to stand for 'traditional' Spanish mentality and form of domesticity. Do the authors expect that this dimension of motherhood will be part of the telemadre universe, or am I barking up the wrong tree? The portrayals coming out of the website, media reports, and so on, seem largely humourless.

Another point that Pille brings up is telemadre.com as an example of media 'convergence'. Here I think we should exercise caution as the term 'convergence' is, of course, being used very differently in public discourse about trends in the ICT sector. The kind of 'convergence' described here is a unique admixture of media and non-media artefacts, old and new. It is, at any rate, an excellent example of the increasingly complex technological 'mixes' that people in locales around the world are mobilising for specific social and economic purposes.

With Philipp, I am dubious about the usefulness of turning every artefact (from food to money to taxis) into a 'medium', a la McLuhan. Since it was Philipp who brought up the need for precise definitions, perhaps he could propose a parsimonious, working definition of 'medium' we could all adopt. We are, after all, a media anthropology network, and sooner or later we ought to find a way of agreeing on what we mean by 'medium'. No opting-out clause on this one.

Sarah Pink (Loughborough University)

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Many thanks to everyone who has responded so far, the comments are really useful and interesting and I really am enjoying the e-seminar - many thanks to John for coordinating it.

Ana has covered some of the questions in her response which will be circulated about 5 minutes after I send this out, so here I'm going to focus mainly on Jen's question about methodology. First though I take the point made by Philip and John about the use of the term media and what it might refer to. I think that food, tupperware etc definitely are part of a process of communication between a producer and a recipient and that this involves a degree of creativity, interpretation etc and that it is crucial to study what is going on there. This communication process has parallels with how we might understand processes of communication through written notes, television etc, however there might also be some important differences (maybe this will be evident from our research - i.e. it might be something to study empirically as much as theoretically). I'm writing this reply quickly so I don't have the intellectual or temporal space to think about it in depth now, but I would really like it if our e-seminar discussion moved on to look at some of these issues related to the nature of media and what it is that distinguishes what Philip calls media from other things we might, under McLuhan's approach refer to as media.

On to the question of methodology. 'Traditional' anthropologists will probably raise their eyebrows when I say that we were not thinking of doing long-term participant observation. I know for some this is the defining feature of an anthropological approach, however, as I have argued elsewhere (see my 2004 book HOME TRUTHS) I do not believe that a project has to be a p-o based study to be anthropology, rather that its anthropologicalness is based in the approach that it takes to its subject and its ability to both draw from and contribute to anthropological debates. Our telemadres project does this, I think, because it is deeply rooted in anthropology and in existing ethnographic studies of Spain. There is also a more practical limitation to our work in that unless we are able to either get study leave ourselves (not pending for us in the next few years) or employ a research fellow to do the work for us we simply don't have access to that length of continuous time to spend in the field. So, excuses over. we are proposing to use methods developed mainly in visual anthropology and in the anthropology of the home (see Miller 2001), using photography and video as well as diaries and other methods to find a way into understanding our informants' everyday lives, moralities, knowledge and experiences. I should note here that Ana and I have both specialised in visual anthropology for over 10 years so this does form a key part of our approach. This is however not a naïve form of visual anthropology that isolates the visual from other media and other senses, but that recognises that if we are work with visual media and the idea of vision we need to conceptualise the visual as being inextricably related to other senses and visual media as part of a wider complex of media that includes radio, writing etc. The methods we are planning to use would include a form of participant observation in that we would spend time with telemadres and telehijos but this would have to be more like 'day in the life' type studies than continuous time spent living with them. Also due to the multi-sited nature of the work we would effectively be moving between different informants and different contexts, recognising that most of our informants would not be sharing these contexts with each other. We would want to use, extend and adapt some of the video methods I have developed in my previous work on the sensory home (e.g. the video tour - see Pink 2003). The sorts of things I have had in mind are, for example, accompanying a telemadre with a video camera while she

shops and cooks to explore (collaboratively with her) the sorts of sensory knowledge and experience that form part of this work (this type of method has worked well in my previous studies of housework and laundry in the home). These are reflexive and collaborative methods that ask informants to comment on, show aspects of and reflect on their everyday sensory experiences and practices on video, and give us the opportunity to represent vision, sound touch and smell audio-visually. There are some interesting discussions about how video or film might represent non-visual sensory experiences (e.g. Marks 2000, MacDougall 1998). While I am not convinced that video can communicate these sensory experiences cross-culturally in the form of ethnographic documentary without the support of written words, I do think that as reflexive research materials they comprise evocative documents that can help us to understand other people's sensory embodied experiences and at the same time serve as memory aides when it comes to the researchers reliving her/his own embodied sensory experience of fieldwork. Actually, with a colleague at Loughborough (Graham Murdock- who is on the mediaanthro list) I am writing an article at the moment about the possible use of these methods in media studies research. So, in short we would plan to access our informants' own representations of their experiences through the use of video and photography in some form of 'repeat visit' participant observation and interviewing. We might well also participate as *telehijos* ourselves, it would be really enjoyable and buying into the *telemadre* discourse it would be lovely to 'eat well' in that way for a while - given the amount of time I have for cooking at the moment if there were *telemadres* in England I would definitely be doing that now.

That's all for now, I look forward to hearing more from people on this

Sarah

Ana Martinez Perez (University Rey Juan Carlos)
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Dear network

Ana Martinez has asked me to translate her response to the comments so far (it was a quick job, though, sorry for any inaccuracies!). I've left the original Spanish version below.

Hello John, and hello to all e-seminar participants.

My apologies for not using English but I prefer to give in to the betrayal of translation than to create nonsensical readings.

Many thanks for all the contributions that I've read over the past two days. There are so many suggestions that I've had to find the time to produce a reasonably elaborate reply.

First, I'd like to mention how useful this e-seminar is as part of an initial stage of triangulation with which we're starting fieldwork. We are in fact developing some analytical lines of inquiry that we'll then take to our informants (the founders of *telemadres* know that this e-seminar is taking place). The fact that I myself am an anthropologist working in Spain makes

me a privileged informant in my own culture, to use Marc Augé's terms. I cannot and will not, therefore, gloss over the details of our contributions from a 'native viewpoint'. The telemadres project was not chosen as an object of study on account of its representativeness but rather because of its significance. Working on media anthropology in Spain entails an awareness of a huge digital divide or 'brecha digital' (in Spanish this is no mere 'divide' as the word 'brecha' connotes fracture or rupture) and access to ICTs is lower in Spain than in neighbouring EU countries. We know that Telemadres reaches a small proportion of the total population, even among that segment of the population with ADSL broadband at home. It is also true that Telemadres is bigger in Madrid where it originates; the four friends who created it as a contact platform via email are indeed from Madrid. It is not a company; although they set up the project and run it alongside other activities, they're not involved in the relationships between telemothers and telechildren.

Having said that, the telemadres project captures very nicely the social change that is taking place within Spanish society with regards to gender and age/generation, and in turn kinship, consumption, etc. 'Maruja' (as pointed out by John, who is in some sense a privileged informant on our culture) is the pejorative/jocose term used for housewives who do not work outside the home and look after their families and homes. The Spanish civil war and post-war determined the inequality faced by (us) women today: lower educational attainment, more restricted access to the corridors of power, few chances of entering the job market and a 30% lower average salary than men for same form of activity. Matters get more complicated if we factor in the average life expectancy (85 for women) but also a low quality of life (health problems derived from malnourishment or poor healthcare). If we had to single out one aspect of the 'maruja' identity as a social group, it would probably have to be their motherhood (childcare), which is something we discovered when working with them (Documentary: *Mujeres invisibles*, 2000 or *En torno al Deseo y la Mujer en la Identidad del Sur de Europa*, 2000). These women's role in society is utterly invisible, to the extent that they carry out unpaid work and receive no pension when they retire. This means they have to supplement their incomes with small jobs. Telemadres allows them to earn some extra income for doing what they have done all their life for free. They know this kind of work very well and have no need to work outside their homes.

To reply to Pille Runnel and Philipp Budka, I should point out that with Telemadres (as with other analyses of ICT uses) it is possible to articulate connections depending on each situation and user. That is, those telemadres with higher technical skills are finding large numbers of telehijos (telechildren), but less skilled telemothers may well use the telephone to contact their telehijos and their mobile phones to call a taxi, and others still may ask their own children to email their telehijos. For this reason I agree with Roessler and Wirth's thesis (mentioned by Philipp), namely that internet usage is linked to other sources and reception depends on that usage, for the 'medium' has an instrumental sense as a transmitter, support, and necessary mediation to achieve an end. When we choose a given medium over its alternatives, we are choosing a concrete form of mediation.

I hope all these ideas contribute to our ongoing reflection. Thank you for the 'mediation' and close reading.

Ana

----- Forwarded message from Ana Martínez Pérez <amartinez@cct.urjc.es> -----

Date: Thu, 24 Feb 2005 14:28:22 +0100

From: Ana Martínez Pérez <amartinez@cct.urjc.es>
Reply-To: Ana Martínez Pérez <amartinez@cct.urjc.es>
Subject: RV: telemadres visión nativa
To: jpostill@zfn.uni-bremen.de

-----Mensaje original-----

De: Ana Martínez Pérez [mailto:amartinez@cct.urjc.es]
Enviado el: jueves 24 de febrero de 2005 14:22
Para: jpostill@usa.net
Asunto: telemadres visión nativa

Hola John, hola a todos los participantes en el e-seminar.

Pido disculpas por no dirigirme en inglés pero es preferible caer en la traición de la traducción que en la lectura aberrante.

Gracias por las aportaciones que he leído a lo largo de estos dos últimos días, son tantas las sugerencias que tenía que encontrar el momento para una respuesta mínimamente elaborada.

La primera idea que quiero comentar tiene que ver con la utilidad del seminario electrónico como parte de una fase de triangulación con la que iniciamos el trabajo de campo. Esto es, proponemos unas líneas de análisis para el debate que luego serán trasladadas a los informantes en el trabajo de campo (los creadores de telemadres saben que este e-seminar está teniendo lugar ahora mismo). Por otro lado, el hecho de ser yo misma una antropóloga trabajando en España me hace ser informante privilegiada de mi propia cultura, en terminología de Marc Augé. Y no puedo, ni quiero, evitar comentar los pormenores de vuestras aportaciones desde la "visión nativa".

El proyecto Telemadres no ha sido elegido como objeto de estudio por su importancia en términos de representatividad sino más bien por su significación. Trabajar antropología de los medios en España supone saber que existe una gran brecha digital (que en español no es una mera división, la palabra "brecha" tiene un matiz de fractura o ruptura que no es desdeñable) y que además el acceso a las tecnologías de la información y de la comunicación (TIC) es menor en España que en otros países de nuestro entorno (Unión Europea). Por tanto, ya sabemos que la incidencia/repercusión del proyecto Telemadres en el total de la población, más aún, en el total de la población con ADSL en el hogar es pequeño. También es cierto que es mayor en Madrid porque aquí se creó y de aquí son los cuatro amigos que lo idearon como plataforma de contactos via mail. La red que inicia Telemadres es una traslación de las relaciones sociales de este grupo de amigos que tienen la idea de generar un nuevo modo de contacto. No es una empresa, ellos pusieron en marcha el proyecto y lo siguen como una parte más de su actividad pero no intervienen en las relaciones entre las telemadres y sus telehijos.

NO obstante, el proyecto Telemadres condensa muy bien, por cuanto significa, la situación de cambio social que está teniendo lugar en la sociedad española con respecto a las variables de género y edad/generación, y desde ellas aspectos relacionados con el parentesco, el consumo y otros. Maruja, como bien apunta John que algo tiene de informante privilegiado de nuestra cultura, es el término con el que se califica entre humorística y despectivamente a las mujeres amas de casa que no trabajan fuera de ella, dedicadas a su familia y a las tareas domésticas. La guerra civil española y la postguerra determinaron la situación de desigualdad en la que

ahora se encuentran/nos encontramos las mujeres: un menor nivel de estudios, de acceso a las estructuras de poder, escasas posibilidades de incorporación al mercado laboral y una diferencia de un 30% de salario frente a los varones ante una igual cualificación y puesto. Si a esto unimos factores que tienen que ver con la esperanza media de vida (85 años para las mujeres) pero también con la escasa calidad de vida (problemas de salud por mala nutrición o cuidados deficientes) la situación se complejiza. Realmente, si tuvieramos que asociar a las "marujas" como grupo social con una faceta de su identidad, seguramente la maternidad (el cuidado de los hijos) sería el rasgo más destacable como tenemos ocasión de comprobar cuando trabajamos con ellas (Documental: Mujeres invisibles, 2000 o En torno al Deseo y la Mujer en la Identidad del Sur de Europa, 2000). El papel que desempeñan estas amas de casa en nuestra sociedad está totalmente invisibilizado hasta el punto de que realizan una tarea no remunerada por la que no reciben ni siquiera una pensión cuando se jubilan, necesitan completar sus ingresos con pequeños trabajos. Telemadres les ofrece la posibilidad de ganar un dinero extra por hacer lo que llevan haciendo toda la vida de manera gratuita, conocen bien el modo de hacer este trabajo y no tienen que salir de casa.

Me parece fundamental, en respuesta a Pille Runnel y a Philipp Budka, destacar que en Telemadres se da, como en otros análisis de usos de las TIC, la posibilidad de articular las vías de conexión según cada situación y usuario. Esto es, las Telemadres con mayor nivel de competencia técnica están logrando un mayor número de telehijos, lo cual no significa que otras menos competentes utilicen el teléfono para contactar con sus telehijos y el móvil para llamar al taxista, o bien que una telemadre pida a su hijo natural que le ponga en contacto con su telehijo via mail. Por eso estoy de acuerdo con la tesis de Roessler y Wirth que aporta Philipp, el uso de la red está asociado a otras fuentes y la recepción depende de ese uso; porque el "medium" tiene un sentido instrumental, como transmisor, soporte, mediación necesaria para conseguir un fin. Al utilizar un medio y no otro estamos optando por una forma de mediación concreta.

Espero que todas estas ideas sirvan para seguir reflexionando, gracias por la "mediación" y la lectura atenta.

Ana

----- End forwarded message -----

Philipp Budka (University of Vienna)
ph.budka@philbu.net

Dear List,

Referring to John's and Sarah's suggestion of discussing the definition of "medium" respectively "media", I have some very short comments.

First I am convinced that food or money have a mediative function and therefore can be described as media. But, and that was my original concern, media anthropology as a subdiscipline of social/cultural anthropology has to identify clearly its research fields/objects. Most anthropologists working within this subdiscipline are dealing with what is called "mass media", such as television, printing press, internet or radio. All these objects/artefacts have in

common that they are constructed/produced by humans with the purpose of providing kinds of channels through which structured information is communicated to recipients/consumers. All these media differ in the ways information is produced, structured and distributed. The internet, for instance, allows a relatively easy diffusion of content in a very interactive/reflexive way.

Media at least are, and that's why it is important for anthropologists to enter and stay in these fields, a "hot topic". Everybody - from politicians to housewives - has made very personal experiences with diverse kinds of media and is joining the multiple discourses about media. Anthropologists with their methodological and theoretical background should look into detail at the diverse aspects of media and how they influence human's socio-cultural life, such as Sarah and Ana started to do in their paper.

OK, that are some of my thoughts about the definition of medium/media. I am sure I have neglected and forgotten a lot of important aspects, so let's start the discussion.

Best,

Philipp

Mark Hobart (SOAS)

Dear All

Forgive my silence recently. Simply the chores of being Head of Department.

A very brief contribution: Given a suitable context, presumably almost anything whether concrete or even abstract can reasonably be considered as a medium. Throwing a brick at someone, if they are preoccupied, is arguably a medium for attracting attention. I suspect that you will tend to get trapped in an endless exercise in essentialism if you try to define media.

A point of anthropological approaches to media is the stress on practice in a serious constitutive sense that most other disciplines can only dream of. So it may be more interesting to consider what is involved in mediating, specifically practices of mediating.

Evidently a switch to treating mediating as an object of study raises an interesting problem. It seems that almost every human activity involves mediating. So, if mediating is everywhere, does the idea become trivial?

If anyone is bothered, I can suggest an answer to the last question.

Sorry. This is a side issue to the main topic of what is a lively discussion of a stimulating paper, but it just popped into mind.

Best wishes

Mark

Jens Kjaerulff (Aarhus and Copenhagen)

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I'm hesitant to leep to the keyboard again, before more subscribers have joined in on the seminar. I think a breadth and variety of contributions is important if we want to create a quality forum together. This paper is certainly worth a glance and reflection, so I hope more will 'speak out' during the weekend.

That said, I feel provoked to post my 5 cents worth on Philipp's and John's call for a clear definition/limitation on what we understand as 'media', and so consider worthy to be 'media anthropology'.

I would say that the 'problem' they see is rooted in the idea that 'media anthropology' should constitute a self-evident subfield within anthropology. For my part, I am hesitant to conceive of what I do as 'media-anthropology', certainly in any rigorous sense of the term. I think the paper presently under consideration could perfectly well fit under quite different labellings, although the issue of 'media' clearly figures in it. In my view, that is precisely the strength of the paper, and I was pleased that Sarah picked up on this in her second reply, in response to Philipp and John.

I guess I can say that a favourite book of mine on 'media' is Fredrik Barth's "Cosmologies in the Making", where he looks at the partial reproduction of ritual knowledge among the Ok in inner New Guinea, drawing in part on Obeyesekere's study of personal menings of symbols ("Medusa's Hair"). Anthropology has a strong record of studying 'people making sense', aided by of all sorts of 'means'. By limiting our understanding of 'media' in a more conventional 'electronic' or 'discursive' sense or whatever, we leave out not only very interesting comparative potentials across 'fields' in anthropology, but also dimensions of perception, experience and 'making sense' as it were, that 'media' in a more restricted sense don't so readily invite for studying - and which, critically, indeed remain part and parcel of modern everyday human navigation, modern 'media' (in a narrow sense) notwithstanding. (e.g., I freely speculate that with the internet-mediated 'social model' currently under consideration, the internet as a 'medium' is in fact relatively insignificant, by contrast to the smells, tastes, looks and connotations of 'madre' cooked food mediated otherwise. Why else whould the 'hijos' not just munch any other more readily available food...?)

In my view, the beauty of *ANTHROPOLOGY* is its capacity to encompass this, since it is (or should be) in the first instance about PEOPLE trying to make sense (with all their senses) and cope with their complex surroundings, rather than about 'media' per se. 'Media' in a narrow sense is just one 'means' among so many others in practical living, and this rather simple but important point seems largely lost on so many analysts in other subfields bent on studying 'media', not to mention people variously engaged with the 'world of media' at large, outside of academia.

I would strongly resist a 'narrow' definition of media, at least in 'media anthropology' - it is a cop-out in my view. I suggest instead that we accept 'media' in a very wide sense, as part and parcel of human practical living, and attempt to research HUMANS as they may engage also 'media' from there.

That said, Philipp managed to get me going. The point he raises certainly ought to spark off some discussion.

over // Jens

Daniel Taghioff (SOAS)

Just to add a comment to what Mark said, he's my supervisor, and we've been discussing this issue quite a bit.

Part of the problem is that how "communication" is defined is part of how we constitute what a medium is *in practice*. So an apriori definition of 'communication' or 'media' presupposes some of the discursive-practices constitutive of 'mediation' that we would need to take as our objects of study.

To use Hall's metaphors for a moment, the "encoder" will have some sense of the "decoder" that will include ideas about what they will see as being 'mediation' or 'communication.' This will also be an issue for the 'decoder' in relation to the 'encoder' although the two sets of ideas need not match up. The issue of how 'communication' or 'mediation' is imagined is therefore a part of how it is made possible / impossible, or in other words, part of (mis)communication's conditions of possibility. Thus, as Mark rightly points out, the idea is ubiquitous but decidedly non-trivial.

This is particularly pressing where those communicating may have differing ideas about what communication is e.g. in cross-cultural communication. Mark has written a lot of stuff on "indigenous metaphysics" tackling these sorts of issues. It goes back to the Anthropological perspective that those we study have their own ideas, and that these ideas should not be concreted over with our own presuppositions.

Regards,

Daniel Taghioff

Erkan Saka (Rice University)

Just some quick notes:

The recent discussion on media/medium reminds me Bruno Latour's idea of agents and Deleuze and Guattari's 'incorporeals' as again agents in social action. I could not clear yet if these authors benefitted from each other. As far as I could see they don't refer to each other but i felt like they came close in attributing agency to things that were not traditionally accepted as 'agents'. Our authors seem to have a similar tendency and i think this would be a really exciting exploration. However, i am not sure if we should try to expand the meaning of media in media anthropology to that extent. Though definitions might differ, what I think we study is mass media that is pre-defined in one way or another and provides some sort of

boundaries to start with. If media anthropology will mean study of any 'media' than, what is the difference between anthropology in general and anthropology of media?

Mark's and Daniel's emphasis on mediation can be incorporated to some previous demands in comments to focus on the website itself... While i was reading, I felt like the whole experience of telemadres.com is suffocated in 'Macro' analyses. It is too much embedded in non-mass mediatic flows of kinship or ideological structures. I don't think the authors intend this and as they say this is just a beginning: I just want to point out that telemadres.com sometimes looks like just a reflection but not having an agency of its own...

Cordially,
Erkan

--

Erkan Saka
Ph.D. Candidate
Department of Anthropology
Rice University
Houston, TX 77005

Field diary:
<http://frazer.rice.edu/~erkan/blog/>

Daniel Taghioff (SOAS)

Responding to Erkans's comment:

>If media anthropology will mean study of any 'media' than, what is the difference
> between anthropology in general and anthropology of media?

This is a really good point and problematic. I'd say it is to do with having a more specific focus. This might mean thinking in terms of how people define "communication" or "mediation" etc .. in their practices, and how people are also turn defined by these practices (which relates to Erkan's point about agency.)

This is a more specific focus than Anthropology at the more 'face-to-face' scale. But it is an approach that allows exploration of non face-to-face "mediation" etc. within its terms of reference, in a way that Anthropology does not seem to do very much. And it is distinct from Media Studies in that it would take "communication models" as objects of study rather than as unquestioned starting points for analysis.

This is how I'm trying to define my approach anyway, it's not been easy.

Daniel Taghioff

Pille Runnel (University of Tartu)

Dear authors, dear list,

This seminar has aroused a load of significant questions.

Due to the time-table, I'll be able to add a few references, Sarah asked in her initial response, and a few comments, though these topics have moved to more marginal areas of our discussion already.

Nick Couldry's discussion on media anthropology is available online as an article at

http://www.lse.ac.uk/collections/media@lse/pdf/Couldry_TheorisingMediaasPractice.pdf

has been helpful for me, as I'm in constant need to explain to my colleagues in the media department, how anthropological approach to media "fits in" not in the wider context of anthropology (guessi it was John's concern over here), but the wider context of media studies. The article offers a discussion upon the concept(s), raised later on also by Mark and Daniel as part of our discussions about the definitions of media, saying that the subject of media anthropology are practices relating to media.

My own study upon online music community, mentioned in the beginning of the discussion, was carried out as a student, therefore not available in English, except briefly in the article published at Nord Nytt, Scandinavian journal for young ethnologists/folklorists: Runnel, P. (2002). Anthropology, Media and Communication studies. Nord Nytt No 85, pp 53-68.

* Agreeing with John, and his point about my misuse of the term 'convergence', what I used for referring to how phones, Internet and traditional media are involved in becoming and being a telemadre, still leaves me with a question, is there a need for an umbrella term about the ways people in their everyday uses "converge" technologies and different media or would this search be simplifying the issue. Referring it to as "mixing" technologies, as John did, is less misleading, but too vague as well.

* Answering to Philipp and his comments upon digital divide, I assume, the digital divide question is included to the current telemadre's paper, but not from the point of identifying the 'digitally divided' through the research. I agree that according to several studies, age is one of the key factors of being "on the other side of the divide", but the picture is socio-demographically rather colourful accross different countries. My point initially, when introducing the topic was, not how does digital divide look like, according to the prevalent understanding and definitions provided by policy makers, (to generalize it, the definitions are limiting the question of divide to having access to ICTs or having not access). I rather wanted to point out that these kinds of studies like the one we are discussing right now, could perhaps help to obtain a richer understanding of the definition itself. For example, not defining digital divide narrowly through access to one technology, but seeing it as being connected or not connected a complex "landscape" of technologies and media, and one's position in it. What anthropology has hopefully to offer here through these kinds of studies, is a deeper look into that landscape. Anthropology could add important points to the understandings of DD through studying the 'sense-making', what Jens nicely referred to in his most recent comment.

best,
Pille

John Postill (University of Bremen)

jpostill@usa.net

Dear participants

Many thanks for the last few contributions, including from our discussant. Since we're nearing the end of the session (Tuesday noon CET) the time is ripe for all who wish so to share some final thoughts on the paper and the issues it has raised. New (inter)faces are always welcome!

On Mark's point about essentialism, for me having a working definition of key terms used in a given research problem or research area is not necessarily a recipe for an endless regress. It's just a working agreement on what we're collectively investigating, it does not send us hurtling down a bottomless abyss. For instance, some time ago I had to do some homework on defining terms such as 'nation', 'nation-state', 'state', etc, and it was a really useful (and demanding) exercise that allowed me to clarify my own thoughts on this semantic minefield, thoughts which I then shared with others through publication.

But in our networks of scholarly practice we hardly ever get a chance to try to *agree* on even basic understandings on our common usage of terminology that is our stock in trade. In this respect, I found it very useful to hear from Jens, Mark and Daniel about their understandings of the notion of mediation. That said, if we put all our analytical eggs in a basket of mediation practice(s), what happens, for example, to the artefactual side of media? In our research we are not dealing only with practices of mediation, we are also dealing with artefacts which were designed and built with certain constraints that users cannot easily overcome (should they want to do so). For instance, radio listeners in Afghanistan (Skuse 1999, see medianthro bibliography) have to ration their listening very carefully as the cost of batteries is to them prohibitive. The technical nature of most radio sets, including their reliance on mass-produced batteries where there is no electricity, makes them expensive to run in many places (that's why wind-up radios have become so popular in many parts of Africa). In sum, the artefactual features of each medium shape the universe of its possible mediations.

Some off-the-cuff thoughts in between deadlines. Now I think we should try to return to the telemadres paper!!

John

Fausto Barlocco (Loughborough University)

Hello to all the group,

it is the first time I actively participate to the e-seminars so I would like first of all to thank Sarah and Ana for the paper, which provoked a very interesting debate going, in a stimulating

way, beyond the original scope of their essay, and also I would like to apologise in advance in case my contribution will prove not as focused as those of the others.

For what concerns 'media anthropology', a subfield to which I arrived relatively recently from the 'mother-discipline' of social anthropology, we all know what we are talking about: a brief look at the profiles of the contributors would confirm that we are all interested in some way in those understood to be 'mass media'. On the other hand, the debate about the definition of medium/media is interesting and provoking and, as rightly pointed out by John, essential to a group called 'media anthropology network'.

I definitely agree with Mark and Daniel's point that what we should be interested in is actual practices rather than reified categories and that various practices of mediation are ubiquitous but nevertheless in some way attributable to a category.

On the other hand, while trying not to impose our assumptions on conceptualisations and practices belonging to different cultures, we find out that often it is useful to use appropriately glossed folk categories.

Could we qualify a narrower definition of media, including all those practices relating to 'mass media', as our folk category, shared by all those contributing to this network? Is it possible to compare this 'western folk category' with those of other people? And if so, what will be the result of such a comparison? Will it be illuminating?

My personal conclusion is that media anthropology could, but need not, be defined as 'doing anthropology' in relation to practices that have to do with mass media (which might very well be informed by completely different theorisation of what mediation and communication are). I would narrow the field to those technologies elaborated for the primary purpose of conveying messages to 'the masses' on the basis of a necessary individuation of our field, which needs to be neither too broad nor too limited, and of the face-value of a sort of 'folk category' shared by those contributing to the debate around it.

Although I would not talk of them as 'media', I find the discussion about other forms of mediation, contact or communication, such as those described in the article (taxi, mobile phone, tupperware, notes) very interesting and worth pursuing, once it has been made clear where we think these objects and practices belong for those who use them in their everyday life and for us researchers.

Fausto Barlocco

PhD Candidate
Loughborough University
United Kingdom

Adam Drazin (Trinity College Dublin)

Dear All,

Apologies for my lateness in joining the discussion – I have been abroad since Thursday, and so have only just got around to catching up.

I was intrigued by the topic of Telemadres when I read the paper. The discussion on future methods excited me further, and gave me the impression that the authors are partly looking for questions to ask when that contextual research is conducted. It raised a lot of questions for me, which I can try and formulate, and I hope Sara and Ana will forgive my presumption in raising some more abstract issues which they may or may not consider relevant in the Spanish context.

- Kinship.

A lot of my attitudes would be framed in terms of kinship. It seemed as though the representation of ‘telemadre’ is an unusually Spanish one. The discussion of a connection between people, initially internet-based, in terms of substances and sensations which are typical of motherhood in its traditional and fundamental sense in Spanish, was intriguing; and the mention of motherhood as a ‘social model’ was rather dismissive. My feeling, and I may be wrong, was that the ‘madre’ denotation was more than just a word or brand name, but might perhaps suggest quite distinctive ways of relating in Spain.

- Madres & Telemadres.

Much of the paper is laid out in terms of building similarities between parenting and telemadre. Ironically, however, looking at ‘likeness’ does not help us escape from the ‘internal’ logic, and obtain an objective view on the uniqueness of the telemadre representations or actual telemadre ‘relationships’. The addition of the ‘tele’ appears to deliberately connote ‘not’-madre. In my own research, in Romania, a prefix ‘Cica’ is used to denote inauthenticity, playing on ‘likeness’, such that Romanians in Communism talked about ‘Cica-Cola’ for the local fizzy orange imitation of Coca-Cola, and can talk now about ‘Cica-Democracy’ or ‘Cica-friends’; so it says a great deal about situating phenomena within the Romanian context. The significance and popularity ‘tele’ designation seems very important here, but what does it imply apart from ‘not’ mother, is it distance, lack of shared substance, speed, commercialism? I am sure it says a lot about what media is in Spain.

- Material aspects.

The mention of Tupperware I found very interesting, employed as it was a connecting sensory aspect of being a mother or telemother. I found it reminiscent of work on pottery among women traders in West Africa – using pots in trade, but also acquiring many more than is necessary; and situating female gendering within a fundamentally commercialised domain.

- National spaces for kinship.

Janet Carsten discusses in her book last year ‘after kinship’ the importance of reformulating kinship in terms of national spaces and ideas of privacy. (likewise work from central and eastern Europe). Is the media important as a creator of a space of national discourse here (as here in Ireland)? The ‘telemadre’ denotation could be interpreted as a designator not of ‘what women are like’, expanding motherhood; but rather as a mapping of the national space into certain terms. The designation ‘madre’ is an exceptionally embodied designation for a woman who is cooking; it draws a great deal of attention to her physicality and physical experience, mapping the media on to the woman as much as the inverse, which relates to previous discussions about ‘what is media’ in this instance.

- Lacking and Celebrating Motherhood.

The discussion of 'maruja' as stereotype is fascinating; and raised for me some issues of formulating telemadres in terms of 'lack'ing. Lacking the internet, lacking children, lacking emotional appreciation, younger women lacking sensory appreciation of household work, professional workers likewise lacking; this paper has a thousand ways of talking about loneliness in mind and body. The home for all concerned appears to risk becoming a prison of loneliness.

- I was wondering about formulations of sociality in Spain in this respect; in which 'group' socialisation is predominant both at home and in public spaces, while in other countries representations of domestic spaces may be sociable, and public spaces individualised, or vice-versa.

- ICT use.

A further question I would wish to ask is the motivational aspect of ICT use itself. In many studies of media, it becomes apparent that an initial expectation that technological practices are motivated by independent sociality is found to be untrue, and that technophilia goes way beyond what might be expected either through necessity of socialising (eg food) or sociality (eg communication). A quick look at the Telemadre site does not appear to be very interactive, but rather more elevated ("un modelo social de intercambio" when it could be simply "intercambio"); the internet thus appears to pose itself in this case as an intermediary, not both means and ends. Do people want to be a 'madre' or do they want to be a 'tele'?

My apologies if some of these comments appear too speculative; but the paper did leave me with many questions, and I am looking forward very much to hearing about how the research develops in future. My thanks to the authors.

Adam Drazin

Trinity College Dublin

Daniel Taghioff (SOAS)

In response to Fausto Barlocco's contribution

> I would narrow the field to those technologies elaborated for the primary purpose of
>conveying messages to 'the masses' on the basis of a necessary individuation of our field,
>which needs to be neither too broad nor too limited, and of the face-value of a sort of 'folk
>category' shared by those contributing to the debate around it.

The problem with defining media in relation to "masses" is that of defining masses. This might have been easier a while ago, although things like political pamphleting problematised the notion of "mass" then (as a numerical term.)

Nowadays new technologies make a definition in terms of mass more tricky: Are 'we' the masses? Is this list a form of 'mass mediation'? How many people would need to be involved for it to be so? Viral marketing, public relations, spin doctors, advocacy groups, political

lobbying, there are so many modes of more or less mass mediation, and the middle scales of this seem to becoming more, or at least not less, significant.

We might empty folk categories like "mass media" or whatever more discriminately for our own discussions. As for defining the field, perhaps we should give it a bit of time.

Daniel Taghioff

Sarah Pink (Loughborough University)

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Many thanks to all for your contributions to the discussion and particular thanks to Adam for coming back to our paper with some late but very thought provoking comments and thorough today. First I'll say a bit about media anthropology and then respond to one of the points Adam made. Just to one not because the others were not relevant, as indeed they are all things I will follow up, but because it is late and I don't have much time.

Media anthropology. I think the question of what media is to an anthropologist studying media practices is important. I don't want to restrict this to a 'mass media anthropology' although there is clearly a distinction to be made between mass and other media. I don't want to dwell on this here as I don't think its time to start a new discussion, but wanted to suggest that a future seminar might focus on the very question of what is media anthropology. Some questions that come to mind are: what is its role in theory building in anthropology? Does it have a critical role as a corrective to other disciplinary approaches to media? What sort of interdisciplinary borrowings are going on? - particularly, does media anthropology mean the same thing to anthropologists of media on the one hand and on the other to media studies scholars who are interested in using anthropological theory or method to support their own academic agendas? (I clearly think it does not).

TELEmadre: I thought Adam's point about the 'tele' emphasising the inauthenticity of the 'madre' was really insightful. It certainly makes sense in terms of our analysis and does I think denote the commercial aspect of the relationship. In terms of the origin of the name it occurred to me that it might be a play on the brand 'tele-pizza' which I think was one of the first home delivery services - see <http://www.telepizza.es/home/home2.htm> (that's just a hunch and maybe a Spanish person on this list will tell me I'm wrong about this though). This is something we should check out in the interview with the authors of telemadre.com.

So, again many thanks to everyone who has commented on the paper, it has really helped me to think about how to take this work forward in a range of different ways. If anyone has any further comments then please do send them on to me at s.pink@lboro.ac.uk

I also have one final request: I read in one media report that similar web sites have been set up in Russia and either Switzerland or Sweden (can't remember which), but have no more info on these and don't have the relevant languages in which to search for them, has anyone else heard of any such projects or know anything about them?

Sarah

Marjorie Murray

Dear network

I am delighted to have joined the list and the telemadres discussion in particular which has provided many interesting points for my own PhD research project on computer use in Spain (of potential telehijos, in this context). I thank very much the authors for such a challenging piece of work.

My very brief comment goes back to the methodological aspects Sarah mentioned a while ago. The authors have emphasized that the telemadre phenomenon is not interesting because of its magnitude, but because of its significance. However, I believe it would be helpful to have an idea of the magnitude of the phenomenon in a preliminary stage as well as an idea of how it is spread in the country in order to get some general information of the diffusion process involved. This can be done in this particular case by doing research in the website: check the members database, the amounts of postings per day and their content, etc. as well as interviewing the owners.

It seems to me that in this case the "medium" itself provides rich material and that it should be considered if only as a very starting point. For instance, if one visits the forum, one finds that a considerable amount of what is been posted in the telemadres site is "dating" and porn material (and there are a few comments of telemadres complaining for it!). Of course this point is not a main concern in the telemadres phenomenon as a whole, but if we are speaking of a new 'social model' I think it is worth at least considering it.

I look forward to see how the authors research develops.

best

Marjorie

John Postill (University of Bremen)

jpostill@usa.net

Dear network

Our third e-seminar has now come to an end. Warm thanks to Sarah and Ana for their thought-provoking paper, to Pille for being our discussant and to all of you regulars and newcomers who've contributed to a lively and productive discussion.

The seminar transcript will soon be available on our website for future reference. In this respect, could I ask all participants to send me full bibliographic references of publications they have referred to as we'd like to have a consolidated list of references at the end of the

transcript. You may also wish to add a note on each reference so we can add them to our annotated bibliography (see website).

I look forward to receiving your working papers for our next seminar, scheduled for April or May. If you have any suggestions or ideas for other activities do drop me a line (NB shortly we'll be circulating an update from Bremen on our struggles to get funding for the proposed Media Anthropology Summer School).

Best wishes

John

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