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Mediating Anthropological Knowledge Discussing Tradition, Trends and Technology

Anthropologists try to understand and comment upon what it means to be human. As such anthropological knowledge is quite fundamental for the cultural process. However, these days it has only rarely a direct impact on cultural memory.

As with any cultural production, the knowledge that anthropologists produce needs to be mediated. Why is it so important to look at these mediating processes? Because every medium comes with its own prerequisites or, as Marshall McLuhan pointed out fifty years ago, holds its own message. In other words: form and content interact.

Until now anthropologists have a clear preference for the written word. However, today one needs to realize that new combinations of audiovisual media, text and hypertext and their dissemination over the internet have become a more privileged place for the construction of social and cultural reality than any other medium.

This mere fact has – and will more so henceforth – a deep effect on the knowledge that anthropologists produce, how they produce it and for whom. The lecture asks some fundamental questions and tries to develop a scenario for a future epistemology of “mediating anthropological knowledge”.