WORKING SESSION 4

“Samoa Hardly Ever Changes...”: Ethnographic Film and Change – An Etic and an Emic View

In 1996 the ethnographic film “Destination Samoa – New Zealand Samoans Between Two Cultures” was shot in New Zealand and Samoa. Its main protagonist was Tyrone Laurenson, then a police officer in Auckland with a strong identity as a Kiwi with a Samoan background. Until the publication of the film in 1998, and since, a great number of items portrayed in the film have changed, often dramatically, the main transformation having been the career of T. Laurenson himself, who by now has become the registrar of the University of Samoa and has given up his New Zealand identity.

A comparative look at the people, events and ideas represented in the 1996 film with the contemporary situation reveals, on a methodological level, the limits and dangers as well as the advantages of film as a medium which “freezes reality”. While this is dealt with, from an etic point of view, by the filmmaker Rolf Husmann, his presentation is supplemented by the emic view of film protagonist Tyrone Laurenson who describes how his life and identity has changed over the past six years, and how much the filmmaking has influenced this development.

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