

# Moving Images. Visual Anthropology at the Institute for Scientific Film in Germany

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## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Institute for Scientific Film —Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen Film (IWF)— was established in Göttingen in 1956 as a service institution for scientists. Its main object was to give support to scientists from a variety of academic disciplines by assisting them in their research in all aspects of an (audio)visually nature. From the beginning, ethnographic filmmaking has become one of the institute's main fields of activities. German anthropologists have used the possibility of IWF assistance and produced a number of ethnographic films thus over the years creating an impressive ethnographic film archive. In addition, the international collection of the Encyclopaedia Cinematographica (EC) was founded as early as 1952, in which, apart from other scientific films, ethnographic films from all over the world were systematically collected. The EC exclusively concentrated on films with monothematic topics. Its main aim was to enable the systematic anthropological evaluation of visual material cross-culturally.

Today the ethnographic film collection of IWF consists of some 2.000 published films and videos. Most of them can be rented and are sold worldwide. In addition, IWF has a film archive where footage material, intermediate film versions, and the originals of published films are stored.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Visual Anthropology and especially ethnographic filmmaking are under constant theoretical and methodological discussion. In its earlier history, there have been provocators like Jean Rouch, and restless ethnographic photographers and filmmakers in search of new methods such as John Collier Jr. or David MacDougall. In the 70s and 80's there has been a whole movement looking for new insights, struggling for new ways of

seeing, communicating, collaborating. Postmodern reflections have made it clear that there is not «the ethnographic film». Instead, there are many ways of doing things. Boundaries are blurred, boundaries between ethnographic film and documentary film, between the other and the self, between producer and protagonist, between anthropologist and subject. Perspectives are mingled, polyphony makes deeper insights possible<sup>1</sup>. The world of images becomes «poly» too. Today, developments of communication technology are changing the whole world quicker than ever and especially so the world of (visual) communication.

IWF has reacted to these new developments in various ways. It has been reorganized completely. The Department of Culture and Society<sup>2</sup> with Visual Anthropology as main subject has been officially established in 1998.

Visual Anthropology has to be constantly discussed, theories, methods, and new fields of research have to be developed and new ways of media production have to be evaluated. IWF supports and carries out projects in all these fields. It collaborates with scientists and universities worldwide. In doing so, IWF is on its way of becoming one of the backbones of an international network of Visual Anthropology.

Accordingly, in the area of Visual Anthropology IWF is engaged in five fields: research, media production, media documentation, archiving, distribution; teaching and consulting, international networking.

#### RESEARCH

Visual Anthropology as an anthropological subject is relatively new. The term created by John Collier Jr. was used from the seventies onwards to describe the various aspects of visuality in anthropology. In the beginning, focussing on ethnographic photography and ethnographic filmmaking it became soon clear that there was much more to include. The analysis of visual expressions, gestures, paintings, buildings, space, of symbols, photography, film etc. became part of Visual Anthropology. In a way, Visual Anthropology is a field of such scope and relevance that every anthropologist should know about it. But in a text-oriented culture as science and academia it seems difficult to successfully introduce the full dimen-

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<sup>1</sup> Nichols 1994; Banks and Morhpy 1997.

<sup>2</sup> In the Department of Culture and Society Beate Engelbrecht (anthropologist, film director and webmaster), Rolf Husmann (anthropologist and film director), Manfred Krüger (cameraman, editor and media developer) and Ulrich Roters (anthropologist and film director) are working together. They all participated in writing this article.

sion of visual expression and perception, analysis and communication. Only few universities in the world are offering Visual Anthropology courses<sup>3</sup>, and certainly Visual Anthropology plays hardly any role in the basic courses in anthropology. It is difficult therefore to find research centres dealing with this field. IWF —itself concentrating on methodological research— supports theoretical research projects in various ways and is involved in international networking about these issues.

#### METHODS IN ETHNOGRAPHIC FILMMAKING

As a practice-oriented institution, IWF specializes in the production of ethnographic film. Methods are continuously developed, tested, revised, and specially adjusted to the cultural surroundings. IWF-cameraman Manfred Krüger<sup>4</sup> has worked in a number of different cultures worldwide making similar experiences as David MacDougall<sup>5</sup>. In filming and editing there are many different methods which can be applied. Every film project, every culture, every topic makes the development of a specific method necessary. People are different, topics are different, audiences are different, audiovisual perceptions are different, the *Zeitgeist* is different —ethnographic filmmaking asks for continuous development and re-interpretation of its methods. Problems of subjectivity, representation, reflexivity, authorship constantly have to be discussed.

At the moment, one of the methodological key concepts deals with the close collaboration of film team and protagonists. They collaborate in the conception of the film and protagonists are invited to participate in the editing of the film<sup>6</sup>. In many films the protagonists give their own commentary. For example, in the Mexico project<sup>7</sup> we discussed the film ideas intensively with the protagonists and I went back several times to discuss the rough cuts with them, to interview them and, to integrate their point of view. During this process each film took its own direction, some were changed completely, others, especially the ones on ritual, were ac-

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<sup>3</sup> E.g. University of Southern California Los Angeles, University of Colorado Boulder, New York University, Manchester University (Granada Centre of Visual Anthropology), Goldsmith College London, University of Tromsø, Nanterre University Paris, University of Göttingen.

<sup>4</sup> Krüger and Waz 1995.

<sup>5</sup> MacDougall 1992a: 92-93.

<sup>6</sup> Husmann 1998.

<sup>7</sup> See filmography Engelbrecht 1992, 1993, 1994, 1995, 1997; Engelbrecht and Keyser 1991.

cepted spontaneously. In the context of postmodern discussion this collaboration made me think about the problem of authority in ethnographic films. As a film director, it is me who makes the final decisions. The film can look very participatory, but finally one person decides and this is the film director —not the anthropologist (in those cases where film director and anthropologist are not the same person). Making decisions means to question one's own concepts, to be open to new concepts, to research while filming, and to film while doing research, to listen and to look, to live with contradictions, and at the end to create a comprehensible story.

The problem of translation is another issue of constant discussion. There I am speaking here of the translation of verbal languages. We are filming in different cultures with different languages. We are using not only interviews and statements to mediate context but also small talk. Translations can be done with voice-over or with subtitles. At the moment we prefer subtitles as we value the intonation, the way of speaking of the native speakers. But subtitles are a very visible and a very formative element in films. We like to speak of the dramaturgy of subtitles<sup>8</sup>. Everyone has seen films, where the subtitles are too short, there is no time to read them or to understand them properly. In subtitling there are various aspects to be taken into account. First of all the translation itself. It is very difficult to get an exact translation of all that is said in the film. Most translations merely summarize the spoken word. Once having an exact translation sentence by sentence, one then has to reduce the text to the length of a subtitle. Content and style of the subtitle have to be adjusted in order to make them readable. The time needed to read a subtitle depends on the length and the complexity of the subtitle itself. Subtitling, like editing in general, has a crucial influence on the rhythm of ethnographic films.

Last but not least, ethnographic filmmaking can be seen as a research tool itself. Filming as well as editing always leads to new insights. If both is done in close collaboration with the protagonists, the insights can result in completely new directions of interpretation, film construction, film evaluation. The feedback method, the showing of the film while and after editing is an important research element of ethnographic filmmaking. It gives way to another research tool: the film analysis.

#### FILM ANALYSIS

Film analysis starts the moment we start making films. It is carried out by the anthropologist and filmmaker themselves. It is done during filming,

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<sup>8</sup> See also MacDougall 1995.

during editing, during showing the film to the protagonists, fellow anthropologists, and many other people. Film analysis carried out by the anthropologist/filmmaker himself is quite different from film analysis done by scientists not involved in the filmmaking process. The anthropologists/filmmakers are conditioned in two ways: 1. they have written the concept of the film, decided on the story and therefore are certainly biased, 2. they know a lot about the culture and the people, they have no problems of identifying certain persons, interpreting certain interactions, and contextualizing automatically. Film analysis done by a third person is quite different, as he/she looks on the finished film from an outside perspective.

IWF supports film analysis in a number of ways. Research projects are carried out in close collaboration with associated scientists doing the research. The methods used, theories developed, and topics chosen depend on the researchers' interests. The results are published in bookform, but also as films/videos. The following examples may provide an insight into the variety of IWF-linked research projects.

Barbara Fink<sup>9</sup> did her M.A. thesis on the reconstruction of film material which IWF obtained from the Ethnographic Museum of Dresden after German reunification. It was produced by Richard N. Wegener in 1926/27 in Argentina, Chile, Peru, Bolivia, Ecuador, Mexico, and includes among other valuable images, probably the first film records on the Siriono, Mojos, and Chimane. The material was shot on 35mm explosive nitrate film material and copied on 35mm safety film. Over the years, the film had shrunk and consequently had to be transferred to video for analysis and editing. It was possible to reconstruct most of the material, to locate and date it using photographs made by Wegener as well as his written publications. In addition, the itinerary of the film expedition, conditions it met and also the scientific context could be reconstructed. On the basis of the analysis the film material was reorganized according to the itinerary of the journey.

Another example: IWF's «Chinese Historical Ethnographic Film Series»<sup>10</sup> (1957-1966). It consists of 14 films shot in China before the Cultural Revolution. They were never shown outside China and unavailable in a non-Chinese version. With Karsten Krüger as an associated researcher IWF managed to obtain the right to publish these films in English language versions. From the beginning it was obvious that this valuable film material can serve as the basis for a thorough analysis of film production conditions in the People's Republic of China prior to the Cultural Revolution. The thorough analysis of two films, as well as of the Chinese publi-

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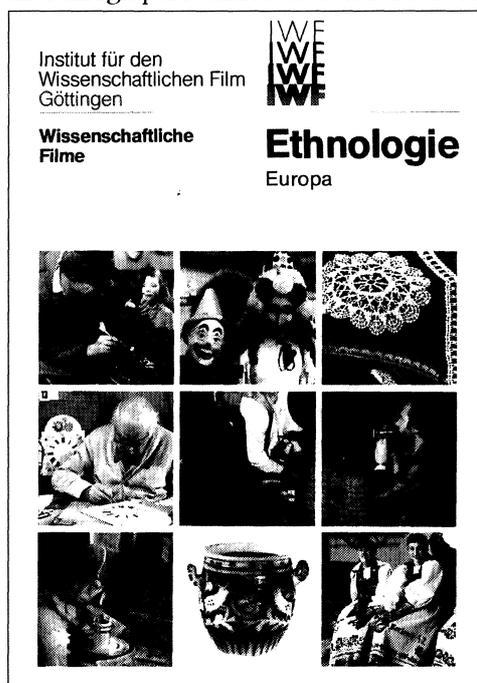
<sup>9</sup> Fink 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Filmography Krüger 1997.

cations on the film project, the unpublished protocols of discussions of the controlling institutions and of recent interviews with the responsible ethnographic filmmakers now for the first time provides a deep insight in the history of ethnographic filmmaking in China <sup>11</sup>.

Even earlier than the Chinese films dates back the Soviet film production of the 1920's and 30's. It was a milestone in the development of documentary filmmaking. Dziga Vertov and Sergej Eisenstein influenced not only the Soviet film production, but were important for developments in the West too. However, of the Soviet ethnographic film production of that time not very much is known. Therefore, a research project was established in 1994 with the financial support of INTAS (Brussels), in which German, Finish and Russian scientists collaborated in searching Russian archives. In the end more than 150 films with an ethnographic character could be documented. It is now planned to publish the 14 most interesting ones in a series similar to the one on early Chinese films.

Yet another example of a visual research project is «100 Years of Greenland in Film» <sup>12</sup>. Here the history of filmmaking on Greenland was analysed and documented. In his analysis Werner Sperschneider (University of Aarhus) evaluated different methods of film analysis and analysed a large number of films on Greenland from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century to the present day. He identified 5 periods, and discusses the shift in narration, discourse and representation in the films. He published his findings also as video «100 Years of Greenland in Film» <sup>13</sup>.



<sup>11</sup> Karsten Krüger (1999) has written his PhD-thesis on this topic, which will be published by IWF next year.

<sup>12</sup> Werner Sperschneider (1999) has written his PhD-thesis on this topic, which will be published by IWF next year. He has also published a video (filmography Sperschneider 1998).

<sup>13</sup> Filmography Werner Sperschneider 1998.

## VISUAL REPRESENTATION

On a more theoretical level the topic of visual representation in various cultures is studied by visual anthropologists<sup>14</sup>. Differences of visual expressions in different cultures are explored and, most important the theoretical concepts of visual representations of the different cultures are studied. Tobias Wendl (Munich) has done an intensive research on photography and image art in Ghana. He published his findings in books and articles, but also as a very successful and award-winning film:

'Future Remembrance'<sup>15</sup> portrays a vibrant range of contemporary and historical images by artists and photographers in Ghana —thusfar almost as little shown outside of Africa as they are widely known and popular there. While glancing through the history of black & white photography in Ghana, the film focuses on present-day social practices of studio photographers and the impact of their work on contemporary image arts.

Ghanaian photographs are often surrealist and hyperrealist at the same time. They do not try to explore reality, but rather to create what Susan Sontag has called 'realities of a second degree' —puzzling appearances that conceal as much as they reveal. Photography —'the mirror with a memory', also termed 'a silent talker'— is deeply rooted in a rhetorical culture that favors allusions and ambiguities. *Kasambranyi*, literally 'talking upside down', also applies to picture-taking. It allows social roles to be transcended and provides spaces for staging vernacular visions of the modern self. Embodied proverbs, textile subtexts, hand props and fantastic backdrops that blend with the subject are all part of this allegorical game. Ghanaian photography celebrates both the reality of illusions and the illusions of reality. It strangely 'worries' the observers. And in a culture where people remember events by clothes and clothes by photographs, is it surprising that many photographers started out as tailors? (Wendl 1998: Information Brochure of the film).

## INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

To be aware of the differences of visual representations in different cultures is essential in a world of intercultural communication. We have to accept that in a foreign culture first of all we are blind. Very often we do see nothing. And when we see something we still do not know what it means. As long as we do not know the cultural context, intercultural communication will be difficult. The same is true for verbal communication. Many people suggest that the common and widespread language of

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<sup>14</sup> E.g. Barbara Keifenheim, Werner Petermann and Tobias Wendl worked in a three years research project on «Visuelle Anthropologie».

<sup>15</sup> Filmography Wendl and du Plessis 1998.

the world will be English. For me this is not an acceptable solution. It limits me as a non-English writer (I would prefer just now to write in German) in my expressions. Moreover, it is based on the idea that everybody speaks, writes and reads the same English.

Intercultural understanding is the key problem. In ethnographic filmmaking this is obvious. We work on both levels, visual and audible. Whereas the protagonists of many of our films have no problem to understand them, the European audience does have problems. There are so many visual and verbal signs in a film not known to a European audience that highly sophisticated and emic construction, as it were are missed by the foreign audience. As long as our films were made for a very small scientific/anthropological community with an intensive knowledge of other cultures these films were readable. The concept of polyphony<sup>16</sup> and high-context communication<sup>17</sup>, e.g. of people speaking for themselves and of films having no explanatory commentaries, seem to be an interesting solution for many problems of representation in ethnographic films. But polyphony and the abandonment of commentary make understanding generally difficult, especially when the audience is low-context in relation to the film.

Intercultural communication is a term often used in the context of globalisation. But it seems not to include the idea of intercultural understanding to any noticeable degree. I suppose that most of the people are interested to learn about intercultural communication in order to get along well with the other. But it seems they are not really interested in getting involved with the other, in understanding and accepting the other. More research has to be done in this field, and Visual Anthropology can contribute a lot to this discussion.

#### NEW MEDIA - NEW THEORIES - NEW METHODS

It took quite a long time but suddenly there it is: the Internet. World-wide communication is possible and will be even better so: global communication with text, sound, stills, moving images. Multimedia is developing

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<sup>16</sup> Strecker 1995.

<sup>17</sup> «Therefore, what the receiver actually perceives is important in understanding the nature of context. ... Any translation can be characterized as high-, low-, or middle-context. HC transactions gesture preprogrammed information that is in the receiver and in the setting, with only minimal information in the transmitted message. LC transactions are the reverse. More of the information must be in the transmitted message in order to make up for what is missing in the context (both internal and external)». (Hall 1989: 100-101).

rapidly, and this development (on a technical level) is strongly supported by governments. These new possibilities create an atmosphere like a rapture. Many go Internet, use the new media, create whatever. There are two great advantages: the combination of different sources of information is easily done and the communication system is free of rules. The whole process is changing our society worldwide —here we are in the global village.

On a general level the Internet etc. will have to be subject of studies also in anthropology. Here is not the place of developing a respective research programme. It might be sufficient to mention that not only the global information system is changing the global village, but the global village starts to function on its own rules. A very recent case is the problem of pornography of children in the Internet which makes the need for rules obvious. But seen in its intercultural context, whose rules should be followed? In the case of child pornography, to solve this problem might be quite easy. But in less obvious cases, how can decisions be made, how can the rights and the needs of technically less equipped countries, of minorities etc. be respected? Therefore, research on issues of the representations of the other, on the possibilities of intercultural communication and understanding will be of great interest for contemporary and future society.

For decades Visual Anthropology has analysed and discussed the various possibilities of ethnographic filmmaking and photography. It has developed methods and theories. In the face of the new media these theories and methods have to be revised and the new media have to be studied in the same way. I am astonished how easily all the discussions of context in ethnographic film are forgotten when it comes to multimedia. I am especially troubled by the reduction of images to the obviously visible. Film clips are used as testimonies for written text. I feel like being transferred back into the time of the birth of ethnographic film when documentation of the obviously visible was the only aim. This complete absence of methodological reflection especially on the basis of the findings of Visual Anthropology might be explained by looking on who the authors of multimedia products are. Mostly they come from writing culture, never ever having heard anything about Visual Anthropology. In the face of new media, of the combination of texts, sounds, and images in the same publication the long needed exchange of mainstream anthropology and Visual Anthropology has finally come into existence.

#### MEDIA PRODUCTION

Since its establishment IWF has specialized in ethnographic filmmaking. On the basis of the research and development of the methods in

ethnographic filmmaking IWF produces films, videos and in the future, also multimedia products in collaboration with anthropologists and other social scientists<sup>18</sup>. There are many ways to collaborate: the anthropologist might be at the same time the film director and cameraman or he may act as an advisor, while film directing, shooting and editing are IWF tasks. It all depends on the purpose of the film project and the capabilities of the anthropologist himself. Not every ethnographer/anthropologist can be or has to be a film director. Such collaborations between IWF and outside anthropologists are possible worldwide. Because of practical reasons, however, most projects have also been carried out together with German anthropologists. Recently more and more European collaborations are started. On the background of the research programmes of the European Community the chance of finding financial support for ethnographic media production, analysis etc. rises.

The interest in producing ethnographic film/video is great. Everybody knows that video is seen by many more people than a scientific book read. Therefore, IWF decided on a programme for the next years. Its media production as well as the research will be focused on the relation of «Globalization and Regionalization» worldwide. In the context of protection of cultural heritage it will continue the publication of research documents, of historical documents, and of portraits of important anthropologists.

#### FOCUS ON GLOBAL DEVELOPMENTS AND REGIONAL CONSEQUENCES

As a focus of the department's activities, projects relating to the topic of «globalization and regionalization» are given special attention. Contemporary social, economic and political processes are influenced by global developments to a marked degree. Supernational political structures evolve, multinational economic systems become larger and larger, social movements take on worldwide dimensions. All these developments are, however, complemented by regional processes aiming at counteracting against instabilities and insecurities, risks and dangers of today's global structures. Part of these are phenomena like migration and loss of identity on the one hand, revitalization of religious and traditional activities on the other.

<sup>18</sup> When it comes to filmmaking in social sciences it seems that serious theoretical and methodological research has been made in the context of ethnographic film only: «Film- sowie wissenschaftstheoretische Fragen, die sich im Zusammenhang mit dem ethnographischen Film stellen, sind für die Sozialwissenschaften verallgemeinbar». (Schädlinger 1998: 55).

The department has focussed on these topics in a number of projects. In 1998 the 16 mm production «Destination Samoa —New Zealand-Samoans Between Two Cultures»<sup>19</sup> was released in which the split identity of two protagonists is described. Living a western-style life in New Zealand, their Samoan origin and up-bringing leads them back on a trip to Samoa. Their situation is characteristic for many Pacific Islanders and indeed many others all over the world, who move to urban centres for economic success, better education and many attractions of Western life-style, but who are in danger of losing their own cultural background and thus their ethnic and cultural identity.

The film «Wanderer Between Two Worlds»<sup>20</sup> tells the story of Mixtec people from the state of Oaxaca, Mexico, living in Baja California and California (USA). They are constantly travelling back and forth. Everywhere they are organizing themselves in small groups, sometimes being able to entertain a transnational network supporting each other. The Mixtec in Oaxaca organize money for schools in Baja California. The Mixtecs in the US collect money for maintenance work in their home village. Many come back home once in a while for a fiesta, for building a house, thus reinforcing the ties. But few plan to come back for ever. The inner struggle of the migrants is obvious. There are no general conclusions. The video is more a statement to be discussed and to be related to other stories of other people.

Pilgrimages form a very special kind of «temporary» migration. For almost 1000 years Santiago de Compostela in the northwesternmost part of Spain has been, like Rome and Jerusalem, the destination for Catholic mankind. Nevertheless the interest in this special place has decreased in the last centuries due to political religious and infrastructural reasons since the secularization in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Beginning with the end of the Franco era in the 70s and the opening up to the rest of Europe a renaissance of the way to Santiago has occurred attracting more and more people from all over the world.

The film<sup>21</sup> focusses on the infrastructural changes along the way through Northern Spain which made this renaissance happen. It shows which measures had to be taken by political and ecclesiastical authorities and other institutions and individuals to improve the infrastructure along the way, e.g. build new hotels, signpost the way etc. A European network of St. James Societies has been established trying to regulate this

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<sup>19</sup> Filmography Husmann and Mesenhöller 1998.

<sup>20</sup> Filmography Engelbrecht and Kopp (forthcoming 1999).

<sup>21</sup> Roters and Pöhl (forthcoming 1999).

still increasing stream of pilgrims inside and outside of Spain, because the better the infrastructure is organized the more people will come to Santiago for different reasons. Insofar, the film also shows how a somewhat regional phenomenon may develop into something new when it is supported in a suitable way.

Globalization has had a profound influence on the regional development of Eastern Germany after the reunification. This has been the main issue of several films<sup>22</sup> made by IWF which show the effects of socio-economic change in agriculture and industry caused by the clash of cultures and how people in the five new federal states handle these problems and how they see their future. Yet another film focuses on the ethnic minority of the Sorbs in the southeasternmost part of the country which had been strongly supported ideologically as well as financially by the former GDR government. The decline of this Slav culture within the next decades seems to be inevitable.

One of the ways to counteract dangers of losing traditional values and cultural identity is emphasizing aspects of one's own traditional culture. In many societies, sporting activities can be a healthy element in such processes. On the Canary Islands belonging to Spain, a particular Canarian identity can be found, and it shows particularly in wrestling: *Lucha Canaria*, once a traditional sport dating back to the Guanches, has now been transformed into a modern sport without giving up the inherent traditional value system. The IWF-film «*Lucha Canaria. Sport and identity in the Canary Islands*» describes the contemporary importance of this sport for the Canarian population<sup>23</sup>.

When globalization gains such importance, so does international collaboration. Certainly, the research on regional development in the face of globalization will be of utmost importance. In the video «*Village Voices —40 Years of Rural Transformations in South India*»<sup>24</sup> the development of two Indian villages is portrayed. Scarlett Epstein did her first study of the consequences for two Indian villages resulting from the construction of a dam in the 1920s forty years ago. In 1970 and in 1996 she re-studied the villages, in both instances arriving at different evaluations. In between, the villagers themselves, especially two change agents, developed their own ideas on the history and especially on the future development of their respective villages. They struggled hard to find their way. In taking over an important role in the construction of the video they want to con-

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<sup>22</sup> Filmography Libert 1997; Ballhaus 1991; Ballhaus 1994; Ballhaus 1996.

<sup>23</sup> Husmann and Engelhardt (forthcoming 1999).

<sup>24</sup> Engelbrecht and Epstein (forthcoming 1998).

tribute to the worldwide discussion on developmental problems. Therefore, the video «Village Voices» can also be seen in the context of indigenous filmmaking<sup>25</sup>. And although it is quite impossible for IWF to make «indigenous films», IWF in producing this video nevertheless aimed at integrating the villagers' perspectives as much as possible and of comparing them with the interpretation of the scientist.

In a very recent project IWF continues its engagement in supporting indigenous filmmaking. Margaret Dickenson (Maker's London) proposed together with Steve Jinks (Sheffield), with Lalit Surjan (Raipur, India), and IWF an EU-project on «Images on Social Change» building up a «Community Video Production in India». The area of Bilay has been turned into a steel producing centre with around 55'000 workers. The rapid changes and the cultural developments should be documented and supported through film/video. The idea of the Indian collaborators is to have a film centre for regional documentation and archiving audiovisual material.

#### RESEARCH DOCUMENTS

Audiovisual documentation has always been an important research instrument for anthropology. With today's so much improved technology it will be used even more in future. Some of the documents will be and remain important for the analysis and evaluation of the research itself and therefore will have to be published in specific ways. IWF is specialized on doing this kind of work. Many of the projects are supported by the German Foundation of Science (Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft).

On the basis of the intensive studies of Annemarie Fiedermutz-Laun IWF has produced two films on architecture in Burkina Faso. In the films «Our Ancestors' Earth —In a Mossi Village in Burkina Faso»<sup>26</sup> and «Building Season in Tiébelé —Changes in the Royal Compound, Kassena Burkina Faso»<sup>27</sup> the building traditions of the villages are related to their history as well as to the social and religious context. Together with the book written by Annemarie Fiedermutz comparative studies will now be possible.

Sri Kuhnt-Saptodewo and Hanno Kampffmeyer did intensive research on secondary burial in Kalimantan. Their findings were published mainly

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<sup>25</sup> Indigenous filmmaking is an important contribution to the process of intercultural communication. The importance is pointed out by various visual anthropologists: Aufderheide 1995; Ginsburg 1992; Prins 1997; Turner 1995 etc.

<sup>26</sup> Filmography Engelbrecht and Fiedermutz 1998.

<sup>27</sup> Filmography Engelbrecht and Fiedermutz 1999.

in form of a detailed film documentation<sup>28</sup>. They managed to explain the different levels of ritual organization and the spiritual context in a way so that also a general audience understands the complexity and depth of the religious belief system. Scientists have a valuable audiovisual source for further studies.

Field research methods are the basis of ethnographic research and therefore anthropological work in general. In teaching anthropology examples of field research methods are asked for. But, very few films focus on field research methods. Therefore, IWF tries to support projects in this field. The film «Ntaaling, ntaaling»<sup>29</sup> shows the German linguist Katrin Pfeiffer organizing her field studies of Mandinka tales in Gambia on styles of oral traditions.

#### TESTIMONIES OF ANTHROPOLOGISTS

In order to provide visual material on the history of anthropology, also to be used in teaching, IWF has started some years ago a film series portraying important anthropologists.

The first of these films is a portrait of one of the last surviving anthropologists who were students of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown in 1920s and 30s: Sir Raymond Firth. The film «Firth on Firth»<sup>30</sup> wants «to give the viewer a chance to meet» Firth, as interviewer Peter Loizos from the London School of Economics says.

This attempt at a personal encounter with an anthropologist has also been the concept for the film on Fredrik Barth<sup>31</sup>, the eminent Norwegian fieldworker and anthropologist. And so far the third and last in line is the project on Isaac Schapera who lives in London, aged over 90, and talks about his fieldwork and the situation of anthropology in Botswana and South Africa in the 1930s and 40s.

#### HISTORICAL CONSERVATION

As already mentioned in the chapter on film analysis, several IWF projects center around historical film material (see above). In order to

<sup>28</sup> Filmography Kampfmeier and Kuhnt-Saptodewo 1996.

<sup>29</sup> Filmography Fels 1998.

<sup>30</sup> Filmography Husmann, Loizos and Sperschneider 1993.

<sup>31</sup> Filmography Sperschneider and Loizos (forthcoming 1999).

provide access to those films from early Soviet or Chinese film production, and to carry out analytical research on them, those films have to be edited and published, preferably in an English text version (apart from the original language version). In the case of the «Chinese Historical Ethnographic Film Series»<sup>32</sup>, although the film images were kept in their original form, the commentary was translated into English and, with a narrator's voice with a Chinese accent, laid over the Chinese track. The films are further enriched by the publication of written material accompanying these films.

Other films published and distributed by IWF include many very old films from the early decades of the 20th century. Among them are films by Rudolf Pöch<sup>33</sup> shot in South Africa and New Guinea, a long film from 1916 by Hans Schomburgk<sup>34</sup> on West Africa or the early film shots from South America by Theodor Koch-Grünberg<sup>35</sup>. Recently the earliest film material from New Ireland shot during the «Planet Expedition» in 1908/09 to the Pacific, led by Augustin Krämer, was rediscovered and is now being preserved and worked in to a film for publication by IWF.

#### DOCUMENTATION, ARCHIVING, DISTRIBUTION

Due to its strong commitment to scientific research and university teaching IWF is also engaged in the documentation, archiving and distribution of audiovisual material. The anthropology mediotheque today comprises about 1,300 films/videos. The archive itself stocks film negatives, rushes, security copies etc. Written documents related to the film productions are stored too. The published films are documented in a media catalogue which will soon be on the Internet (to begin with, however, in German). IWF is starting with the documentation of the published films by sequence. New incoming footage material is now documented by scenes. The amount of recorded audiovisual material in a video project is much higher than in a (16mm) film project. Therefore, detailed and thorough documentation from the beginning is necessary. In future this will gain even further importance when the digital non-linear storage of films and videos will be possible and the retrieval of content has to be efficient. As films and videos are audiovisual and not written text, an automatic text search as used

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<sup>32</sup> Filmography Krüger 1997.

<sup>33</sup> Filmography Pöch 1987.

<sup>34</sup> E.g. Filmography Schomburgk 1977.

<sup>35</sup> Filmography Koch-Grünberg and Schmidt 1962.

with books etc. cannot be used for retrieval purposes. Consequently, written documentation has always to accompany the filming. For these purposes, a special thesaurus will be developed which serves the various needs.

#### TEACHING AND CONSULTANCY

Consultancy work is one of the main tasks of IWF. When a research, a film, or a video project is planned, IWF gives advice to scientists on technical, methodological and content matters. The advice is given on the background of the latest theoretical and methodological findings in Visual Anthropology as well as the most up-to-date technical developments. As many anthropologists plan to do by themselves possibly the camerawork or at least the directing, very often IWF consulting goes beyond mere advice and shifts into a teaching and training situation. This is not surprising when one knows how difficult it is in Germany, but also elsewhere, to get practical training in Visual Anthropology at the university level.

#### VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY IN GERMANY

In Germany, the interest for ethnographic filmmaking dates back a long time. Besides the various early documents archived by IWF there has been a continuous film (and later: video) production since the fifties. The advantages of filmic documentation during long fieldwork periods were soon discovered and recognized. On the other hand, films are also used in teaching anthropology. However, these activities are rarely related to Visual Anthropology itself. In contrast to the developments in other countries, especially in USA but also in Great Britain and France, Germans have failed to participate in the international discussion on Visual Anthropology for a long time. This has change over the past 15 years. Besides the activities of IWF and its current anthropological staff members in this field, it was first Martin Taureg, then mainly Ivo Strecker who contributed to the international debate. In Germany there are some anthropologists specialized on Visual Anthropology<sup>36</sup> but very few universities have Visual

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<sup>36</sup> E.g. Heike Behrend (Köln), Frank Heidemann (München), Barbara Keifenheim (Berlin), Birgit Maier (Frankfurt/Oder), Werner Petermann (München), Ivo Strecker (Mainz), Kurt Tauchmann (Köln), Tobias Wendl (München).

Anthropology in their regular teaching programme<sup>37</sup>. Especially the combination of theory and practice is rarely offered.

#### SUMMER SCHOOLS

The need for teaching Visual Anthropology and especially the practice in ethnographic filmmaking has led to the development of so-called film courses at IWF already in the late 1960s. Since then IWF regularly offers summer schools in ethnographic filmmaking. As it is organized now, 12 German-speaking participants from different universities gather for a 3 weeks course at IWF. During this course they produce a short 16mm film. Very often being familiar with video, the students are here confronted with a Bolex camera which stops after 23 seconds and has to be rewound by hand after each shot. The sound is recorded on a separate tape recorder. This technique forces the students to think about their film script very carefully before filming. Just to «go hunting and gathering» is impossible with this kind of equipment. The aim of the course is to combine anthropological research and documentary filmmaking on the base of Visual Anthropology.

IWF now also plans to add a new course: Multimedia will be the publication form of the future. Being a combination of text, sound, and images the construction of multimedia has a lot to do with the construction of films and videos, but in a non-linear way. Again two disciplines have to be combined: anthropology and media design. And again Visual Anthropology with its theoretical and methodological reflections provides the basis. In combination with the research and the new publication planned by IWF a course in ethnographic multimedia production is being developed.

#### VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND MULTIMEDIA

Multimedia, first on CD-Roms, now more and more as online internet presentation, is developing rapidly. It has been developed by computer scientists. It is used by artists, designers, illustrators as well as by writing

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<sup>37</sup> E.g. Institut für Völkerkunde und Afrikanistik (Mainz), Institut für Europäische Ethnologie (Münster), Institut für Europäische Ethnologie (Humboldt-Universität Berlin), and as consequence of being IWF in Göttingen the Seminar für Volkskunde (Göttingen) and Institut für Ethnologie (Göttingen).

people. At the moment, the development is quite anarchic but incredibly quick. Just to follow the developments takes a lot of time. Every month new features are brought forward, opening new possibilities. But being constantly occupied with following the developments, evaluating the usefulness etc., little or no time is left for critical reflection.

Anthropological CD-Rom production worldwide is still at its beginning<sup>38</sup>. It is quite time consuming, requires a lot of computer knowledge, calls for non-linear thinking, demands its own way of script writing, and needs graphic designs. All in all, CD-Rom production is very expensive. And: the marketing of CD-Roms is very difficult. In the US, the CD-Rom market has broken down because of lacking infrastructure. The development in Germany as elsewhere in Europe may be different. But to have a marketing infrastructure does not mean to have consumers. Who is going to be the consumer? Why should I buy a CD-Rom? What do I gain from a CD-Rom in comparison to a book or a video? These questions have to be asked first. It is important to know the special advantages of CD-Roms (and also its weaknesses!) and to be able to act accordingly in the construction of CD-Roms. The non-linear construction is typical for the postmodern time. The theoretical free combination of information of different kind seems to offer the consumer the possibility to make his own interpretations. He is supposed to do his own montage, his own construction with the material put together on the CD-Rom. This could be a reality in future when we may have really interactive CD-Roms. At the moment, all CD-Roms are constructed by authors, they all have an hierarchical structure with jumping possibilities to different topics in other categories. I have to admit, intellectually I am very much attracted by the possibilities of CD-Rom/Internet productions overcoming the limitations of writing and film editing because of their non-linearity. The idea of combining video and text, to be able to add to a video the big amount of information which I have about the actors, on the event, the symbols, the culture in general etc. is fantastic. Just having a video and comment it on different levels, to add photos, other images, personal comments on video of the protagonists etc. How rich could a CD-Rom-publication be! However, at this moment first of all, the technical resources still do not allow the storage of long videos on CD-Rom, it might be different with the DVD. Internet is even worse than CD-Rom. And secondly, I am not sure whether the user will enjoy the CD-Rom as much as I do constructing it. The computer media are quick and short-term media, we are still not used to sit in front of the computer to study for hours, we much more used to

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<sup>38</sup> See electronic publications Biella, Chagnon and Seaman 1997.

jump quickly from one place to the next. Because of distribution difficulties, in the US the development seems to go into the direction of direct Internet publication, reducing the various possibilities even more.

In Germany the development is still very much at the beginning. Mainly the museums try to use CD-Rom for publication either of their collections or in combination with special exhibitions. There are some anthropology students interested in CD-Rom and Internet production, there are some analyzing the Internet, virtual reality being their research subject, doing their M.A. thesis on these topics.

IWF supports anthropological multimedia production as it did with film and video production. It supports the development on the methodological and technical level as well as on the theoretical one. It is most important to join forces, to gather the few people working in this field and to support —after the period of «writing culture» and «filming culture»— the development of «multimediating culture». Therefore, it is necessary to have an idea, what the background of «multimediating culture» might be.

#### ANTHROPOLOGY AND INTERNET

«Multimediating culture» is developed in the context of the Internet. The Internet has various dimensions which are interesting for anthropologists and especially for visual anthropologists.

... for today's heterogeneous 'global village' is not just a scaled up version of a local village writ large. Its many diversities (linguistic, cultural, social) introduce to the same urban street, farming settlement, refugee camp previously unknown complexities and uncertainties in interaction among neighbours. ... Global processes thus present us as anthropologists with two discipline-threatening crises: one conceptual and theoretical, the other methodological. Such crises are familiar, so let us not panic; but how do we investigate the global and its relations with the local realities? (Cheater 1995: 118)

The relation of the global and the local, the actual main topic of IWF media production in anthropology, is an anthropological topic per se. The development of Cybersociety might be something like a revolution. On the one hand, there is the development of transnational and international networks of huge organization, industries, institutions. On the other, there are regional networks<sup>39</sup>, networks of minori-

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<sup>39</sup> It started with regional radio, regional TV. Now also regional Internet networks are added. It seems as the globalization process also supports regional development and integration.

ties<sup>40</sup>, migrant cultures<sup>41</sup>, networks of communities<sup>42</sup>. Some are closed networks, many are open. The Internet seems to be an egalitarian place where everybody can get into contact with everybody else. The possibilities seem to be endless, so could be the discussion on it. Here I would like to make a special point which makes the critical study of the Internet, of Cybersociety, of «multimediating culture» so important. Cybersociety is a virtual society, a constructed society still without laws, without controlling systems, with all the possibilities of hiding. There are virtual communities, e.g. news groups, chat groups etc., which might be topic-related, gender-related, age-related, interest-related. These communities do have their virtual culture, their own language, rules, history. The virtual culture is learned voluntarily by interaction. But there are no records, there is no definite membership, no recorded history, no security. Even the membership might be a virtual one. A person can hide his or her identity, can have multiple identities, can adopt a false identity, can steal the identity of another person. And the realities presented might be virtual: the boundaries between real and virtual are likely to blur. In real life people are used to take for granted what is seen. The Internet works a lot with visual communication and people have to learn in future not take for granted what they see<sup>43</sup>. Because of the fact of virtuality the discussion of «multimediating culture» will be a much more serious one than in the case of «writing culture» or even «filming culture». It will be a difficult task, and a task to be done.

Anthropology must confront, in these technologies of producing, transmitting, storing and retrieving visual mega-information, an increasing proportion of which will become the illusory ephemera of virtuality, their implications for our own

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<sup>40</sup> The groups which are politically and culturally involved in the defence of their own culture, the groups which were involved in indigenous filmmaking, find here new possibilities of information distribution and networking.

<sup>41</sup> People living as migrants in different countries have now a possibilities of networking, of being informed of what is happening in the home country, of participating in discussions. Migrants get the possibility to step out of the isolation they are living in.

<sup>42</sup> More and more local communities start to organize themselves with the help of Internet. The local government informs thorough Internet, the Bürger can participate in discussion concerning the community development. It seems that democracy has found its ideal communication platform.

<sup>43</sup> «Almost all of these technologies are visualised and, ..., "evidence from several sources indicates that two distinct representations of visual space mediate perception and visually guided behaviour respectively ... In designing spatial displays, the results mean that 'what you see isn't necessarily what you get'"» (Cheater 1995: 119).

professional collective memory and our future representations of representations of others' perceived realities, as well as the ways in which those other realities are differently structured by different technologies. Visual Anthropology has yet to address such issues. (Cheater 1995: 126)

## OUTLOOK

One has to admit that universities in Germany are still not very well equipped with computers and cultural sciences even less. As a new technology —the technology of the future— it is not surprising that the development in this field is mainly advanced by students. They do have their links into the Internet, they explore it, they develop their ideas, they write M.A. theses, they construct Internet performances.

The universities present themselves in the Internet. They mainly publish their lecture programme, some use it for communicating with the students. The anthropological museums start to present themselves in the Internet. The German Anthropological Society (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Völkerkunde) has its own homepage. The «German working group on Visual Anthropology» as well as local working groups started to publish mainly printed matters in the Internet. Many of these performances are still very text-oriented. Pictures are just added to the text, visual design still not being taken into account.

IWF is specialized on media production and accordingly is just now developing its competence in multimedia production. Based on the many experiences in scientific media production in many fields, including natural sciences, biology, technical sciences besides the social and cultures sciences, it has the advantage of combining the knowledge of many sources. The first CD-Roms have been produced in ecology and biology. In the cultural and social sciences first projects are in discussion. In the context of Visual Anthropology IWF first of all is involved in maintaining several international homepages of Visual Anthropology Networks.

## INTERNATIONAL NETWORKING

In recent years IWF and especially the Department of Culture and Society have intensified international networking in various ways. In media production as well as in research the amount of international cooperations has been growing considerably. I am not so much speaking here of working together with local protagonists. The film teams, the research teams are becoming international. For example the above-mentioned se-

ries of portraits of anthropologists is done in this way. Taking advantages of the possibilities of the various programmes of the European Union international cooperation have been also realized in the research project on Russian archives as well in the project on the development of local TV in India. New projects are planned.

International networking has also led to the foundation of the Göttingen International Ethnographic Film Festival<sup>44</sup>, a biennial event. At the festival the newest ethnographic film productions are presented. As most filmmakers are attending the festival, it has truly developed into a discussion forum on new trends in ethnographic filmmaking. Situated in the centre of Germany and in a way in the centre of Europe, the festival also serves as a bridge between East and West bringing in new aspects to the discussion on ethnographic film. It is planned to develop the festival further in direction of the new media. A first discussion has taken place at this year's festival on «Authorship in the face of electronic media».

IWF understands itself as a platform for international networking especially in the area of Visual Anthropology. Therefore, its anthropologists are actively engaged in various societies on Visual Anthropology, such as the «Commission on Visual Anthropology»<sup>45</sup> of the «International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences» or the «Society of Visual Anthropology» of the «American Anthropological Association». To support international networking IWF has taken over the management of the homepage of the «European Association of Social Anthropologists Visual Anthropology Network»<sup>46</sup> and is developing the homepage of the «Commission on Visual Anthropology». These homepages are serving mainly as an international communication and information centre. Anyone interested in submitting information is invited to do so<sup>47</sup>.

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The *Institut für den Wissenschaftlichen* (IWF) —The Institute for Scientific Films— was established in Göttingen in 1956. Ever since then, ethnography has been one of its main concerns. The work of the IWF on consulting and production, as well as its archives, make it one of the most important institutions in the world dedicated to the development of visual anthropology.