

# Technologies of research and teaching in the Pacific

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## Abstract

This paper engages in a series of questions arising from the potentials and pitfalls of using digital technologies in teaching and research in Pacific communities. As will become clear, we were unable to answer these questions during our recent projects in the Cook Islands (Dale) and Samoa (Tina). We are colleagues working together in the Department of Postgraduate Studies of the School of Art and Design, AUT University, and our projects were framed by the conditions driving university strategies in Aotearoa/New Zealand: the imperatives of the knowledge economy and the increasing globalisation in the Pacific.<sup>1</sup>

Technologies, be they the specific practices involved in distance learning and teaching, or those driving design collaborations or research through digital means, always correspond to “technologies of the self” (Foucault). These technologies’ formation is significantly influenced by lasting discrepancies in the global flows of information, technologies, people and capital. Research and teaching are inevitably caught up in this predicament. Two case studies (of a Master of Art and Design programme delivered in the Cook Islands and a research project in Samoa/ Germany about traditional art and architecture in the globalised leisure industries) provide tangible contexts for this paper. They will propel a wider discussion of cross-cultural collaborations in indigenous and economically disadvantaged communities in the Pacific.

## Keywords

Research and Postgraduate Teaching, Cross-cultural Collaboration in Indigenous Pacific Communities, Distance Learning, Research Protocols, Foucault’s Technologies of Self, Heidegger’s Gestell

## Theoretical frameworks

Cross-cultural collaborations in knowledge production in indigenous communities will always raise questions such as: What counts as knowledge? Who has, or should have, access to particular kinds of knowledge? How is knowledge properly transferred? Who will benefit from such transferral, and how do different configurations of power and knowledge come into play? What is new knowledge? How is new knowledge generated?

We will not necessarily attempt to answer these questions here. Rather, we hope they

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Elizabeth Grierson and A.-Chr. Engels-Schwarzpaul, "Internationalism, Education and Governmentality: Critical Perspectives," *ACCESS Critical Perspectives on Cultural and Policy Studies* 23, no. 2 (2004/5), and Amanda Bill, "“Blood, Sweat and Tears”: Disciplining the Creative in Aotearoa New Zealand" (paper presented at the 3rd International Conference on Cultural Policy Research, August 25-28, 2004, HEC Montréal, Montreal, Canada, 2004).

will resound throughout the text, to remind us that it is not so much answers that are productive, as the attempt to generate them collaboratively amongst all involved in knowledge production. In many ways, even applying Western epistemologies and philosophical concepts such as “technologies of self” in this context is fraught with problems.<sup>2</sup> Are these very frameworks “technologies of domination” from the perspective of Pacific epistemologies?<sup>3</sup> It may seem obvious that concepts such as self, equity, and integrity are likely to operate in different ways in the Cook Islands, Samoa, Aotearoa/New Zealand and Germany. However, do we know how that is the case? We hope that what we offer here will be seen as an account from one perspective, which only along with others can give us an understanding of how we make sense of the world.<sup>4</sup>

The title of this paper, “Technologies of Knowledge Production in the Pacific”, refers to a range of different types of technologies. Firstly, there are, in the context of research and postgraduate learning/teaching, those involving specific resources and media. In our case, digital technologies, which facilitate relationships substantially based on physical distance, are of particular interest. Next, there are locally specific techniques in learning, design and research collaborations. They correspond to “technologies of the self” that are significantly shaped by the global flows of information, technologies, people and capital. Research and teaching are inevitably caught up in these configurations. Finally, the conditions under which universities strategise their involvement with Pacific communities in the area of research and teaching impacted on our projects.

We will approach these various modes of knowledge producing technologies by looking at three different types of engagement with technology. First, we will look at issues of differential resources and various forms of capital, as well as users’ skill-based, cognitive, behavioural and cultural adjustments, which are often raised in discussions of researchers or educators’ involvement in countries with “emerging and developing economies”.<sup>5</sup> The research on which these discussions are usually based deploys notions of technology in the taken-for-granted sense of an ‘engineering

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<sup>2</sup> Concepts such as ‘liberation’ and ‘freedom’ may be difficult to translate even between French and English. Tina Besley, “Foucault, Truth Telling and Technologies of the Self in Schools,” *Journal of Educational Enquiry* 6, no. 1 (2005), 80.

<sup>3</sup> See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> See Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed. (Chicago (Ill.): University of Chicago Press, 1958; reprint, 1998), 57.

<sup>5</sup> IMF World Economic and Financial Surveys, World Economic Outlook, Database—WEO Groups and Aggregates Information, October 2009, <http://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/weo/2009/02/weodata/groups.htm#oem>; see also <http://data.worldbank.org/country/samoa> (as a non-member of the World Bank, the Cook Islands are not included in this database, but Stewart classifies them as belonging to the upper middle income range, compared to Samoa in the lower middle income range. Stewart, Rob. "Economic Roundup Spring 2006. An Economic Survey of Developing Countries in the Pacific Region." Australian Government. The Treasury, [http://www.treasury.gov.au/documents/1190/HTML/docshell.asp?URL=08\\_pacific.asp](http://www.treasury.gov.au/documents/1190/HTML/docshell.asp?URL=08_pacific.asp)).

tradition'. It considers technology as continuously developing<sup>6</sup> and assumes "both the possibility of human control and the neutrality of technology".<sup>7</sup> Second, we will explore Michel Foucault's "technologies of the self", which is one of four major types of technologies that he identified in attempting to understand the ways, as he put it, "humans develop knowledge about themselves".<sup>8</sup> The other types are technologies of production, technologies of sign systems and technologies of power. Each is associated with what Foucault calls "a certain type of domination" but they tend to be interlinked and seldom function in isolation.<sup>9</sup> "Technologies of self" refer to the specific devices (mechanical/digital or otherwise), ways and practices that human beings use to constitute who they are, who they become and how they might be in the world – or, "how they will be perceived as 'selves' by 'others' and them'selves'".<sup>10</sup> Self and self, self and other, and social selves interact constantly and are always likely to be affected by technologies of power (the social power relations shaping a self's behaviour). How could one ascertain, at any time, when one's knowledge of self arises from self and when from other? In projects like ours, spanning the diverse settings of New Zealand, Germany, Samoa and the Cook Islands, mutual understandings of technologies of the self and power still need to be constantly re-negotiated.

Since technologies of the self are largely invisible (in contrast to the hardware of technologies of production) and difficult to compare, the development of shared understandings of differences and commonalities in these different locations is complex. Foucault, in his later writings, provides a starting point for such articulation: technologies of self exist in all cultures, in different forms.<sup>11</sup> Power is not monolithic but "positive, productive and capillary".<sup>12</sup> Within the acknowledged limitations imposed by the larger apparatus, or *dispositif*, Foucault's later view of power allows some leeway for any human subject.<sup>13</sup> What a 'subject' is, in our diverse contexts, is of course another question, to which we will return. Despite this reservation, we find Foucault's framework useful to think about how technologies of the self might be reinforced by technologies of domination (typical of academic institutions or digital networks) to modulate the differences between our research contexts.

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<sup>6</sup> Michael A. Peters, "Towards Philosophy of Technology in Education: Mapping the Field," in *The International Handbook of Virtual Learning Environments* (2006), 97. This perspective implies models of development and underdevelopment criticised early by, for instance, Homi K. Bhabha, "Freedom's Basis in the Indeterminate," *October* 61 (1992), 47.

<sup>7</sup> Feenberg in Peters, "Towards Philosophy of Technology in Education: Mapping the Field," 99.

<sup>8</sup> Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," 146.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ernst Buchberger in David Gauntlett, "Foucault And "Technologies of the Self"," School of Media, Arts and Design, University of Westminster, <http://www.theory.org.uk/ctr-fou6.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics: An Overview of Work in Progress," in *The Essential Foucault*, ed. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose (New York: New Press, 2003), 123.

<sup>12</sup> Michael A. Peters, "Technologising Pedagogy: The Internet, Nihilism, and Phenomenology of Learning," *SIMILE: Studies In Media & Information Literacy Education* 3, no. 1 (2003).

<sup>13</sup> Chris Philo, "Michel Foucault," in *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*, ed. Phil Hubbard, Rob Kitchin, and Gill Valentine (London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2004), 127.

The third discourse on technology we engage here complicates matters further. Martin Heidegger, whom Foucault calls the “essential philosopher” whose writings determined his own development,<sup>14</sup> belongs, like Foucault, to a tradition of philosophy which turns to “cultural critique and tend[s] to investigate the interface between technology and culture”.<sup>15</sup> Heidegger asserts that what lies at the heart of technology is nothing technological,<sup>16</sup> but a mode of being that results from the estrangement of humans from the world. In this frame of mind, *Gestell*,<sup>17</sup> humans look at the world as an assembly of objects. *Gestell*, like Foucault’s *dispositif*,<sup>18</sup> brings together technical tools, perspectives and practices, which en-frame nature (and culture) as a mere standing reserve (*Bestand*). Under the sway of *Gestell*, thinking is unconditional. It “drives out every other possibility of revealing” and occludes other horizons of understanding: “the real reveals itself as *Bestand*” exclusively,<sup>19</sup> the world becomes “nothing but” a source for raw materials. Respect and care give way to rigorous ordering and disposal.<sup>20</sup> Everything is “extracted and stored”,<sup>21</sup> “unlocked” and “transformed”, “distributed” and “switched about ever anew”.<sup>22</sup> A thing’s original structure is destroyed to fit it into systems of calculation and exchange. While humans may believe that they control these processes, they, too, become part of the “frantic transformation of everything ... into efficient machines and resources”.<sup>23</sup> In this scenario, everything must be extractable, mobile and exchangeable. How, under the sway of *Gestell*, can the interests of university systems (sites of technologies of production, signs, and domination) be commensurable with the specific concerns of

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<sup>14</sup> See, for instance, Stuart Elden, *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the Project of a Spatial History* (London: Continuum Press, 2001), 1.

<sup>15</sup> Peters, "Technologising Pedagogy: The Internet, Nihilism, and Phenomenology of Learning."

<sup>16</sup> Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1977), 35.

<sup>17</sup> The *Gestell* is a “particular placing (*Stellen*) and framing or framework (*Ge-stell*) as which the work occurs when it sets itself up and sets itself forth”. Martin Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," in *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), p.62. - *Gestell* has been translated as *enframing*, and the weaknesses of this term have been noted by several writers. We will stay here with the original term to avoid the narrowing of connotations that the translation is likely to effect.

<sup>18</sup> Elden, *Mapping the Present: Heidegger, Foucault and the Project of a Spatial History*, 79.

<sup>19</sup> Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 27, 24. All revealing is now marked by the “regulating and securing of *Bestand*” (27).

<sup>20</sup> “Since objects, in such experience, are removed from all relation to our practical interests, they are removed, too, from all relation to care, to fear and hope” Julian Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 10. For the relevance of this aspect of *Gestell* to indigenous knowledge systems, see Laura Brearley and Treaahna Hamm, "Ways of Looking and Listening. Stories from the Spaces between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Knowledge Systems," in *Creative Arts Research. Narratives of Methodologies and Practices*, ed. Elizabeth Grierson and Laura Brearley (Rotterdam: Sense Publishers, 2009), 46f.

<sup>21</sup> Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 14.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>23</sup> Vincent B. Leitch, "Postmodern Theory of Technology: Agendas," *symploke* 12, no. 2 (2004).

Cook Islands or Samoan communities?<sup>24</sup>

### **The projects**

Some of our questions concern the role of digital technologies in our projects, as a means to bridge geographical distance in collaborations with Samoan and Cook Island participants. Not only disparities in the provision of these technologies impacted on the projects, though. Another set of questions arose from unforeseen issues concerning different expectations of “technologies of self”.<sup>25</sup> For, even though Western Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Aotearoa/New Zealand share, for instance, forms of government, these systems rest on significantly different traditions and socio-economic configurations.<sup>26</sup> Our projects’ locations and aims were different and, thus, their circumstances revealed particular assemblages of problems and opportunities.

#### *Postgraduate programme delivery in the Cook Islands, 2008-2010*

In 2007, staff from University of the South Pacific (USP) and the Cook Islands Ministry of Education invited AUT University to the Cook Islands to investigate possibilities of delivering New Zealand accredited tertiary art and design courses locally.<sup>27</sup> From a Cook Islands perspective, this was desirable to keep students in the local community: to enhance local employment opportunities; add value to local art and design; improve local curatorial expertise and practices; broaden international exposure for the local arts;<sup>28</sup> and, for members of the local arts community, to gain qualifications to teach in the USP’s future Pacific Studies department in the Cook Islands.<sup>29</sup>

AUT University’s decision to collaborate with USP was based on recent technological advancements, the support from the local university, and also on some perceived commonalities. Auckland is the largest ‘Polynesian city’ in the world, and the Master of Art and Design programme has a sizeable cohort of Māori and Pacific students. There

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<sup>24</sup> See Michel Foucault, "The Subject and Power," *Critical Inquiry* 8, no. Summer (1982), 787.

<sup>25</sup> Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self." In *The Essential Foucault*, edited by Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose, 145-69. New York: New Press, 2003.

<sup>26</sup> New Zealand shares historical ties with Samoa and the Cook Islands: the latter was a New Zealand protectorate between 1888 and 1965, Samoa was under various forms of New Zealand colonial government from 1914 to 1962. Both countries are now governed by elected parliaments, and both economies depend on remittances from nationals living overseas (in the first instance, New Zealand). Samoa was a Germany colony from 1900 to 1914, when New Zealand moved in as a quasi colonial power.

<sup>27</sup> As New Zealand citizens, Cook Island students are eligible for government subsidies at New Zealand universities.

<sup>28</sup> By branding the Cook Islands as a producer of Pacific art from Pacific islands (versus Pacific art arising from communities in New Zealand or Australia). See, for example, Tautai Contemporary Pacific Arts Trust, <http://www.tautaipacific.com/>, a group formed in New Zealand in the 1980’s to support the growing number of contemporary Pacific artists practising in New Zealand.

<sup>29</sup> The importance of this vision for the community is reinforced by Professor Graham Hingangaroa Smith: “Where indigenous people are in educational crisis, indigenous educators and teachers must be trained as change agents to transform these undesirable circumstances. They must develop a radical pedagogy (a teaching approach for change). Such pedagogy must also be informed by their own cultural preferences and respond to their own critical circumstances.” Graham Hingangaroa Smith, "Maori Education: Revolution and Transformative Action," *Canadian Journal of Native Education* 42, no. 1 (2000), 70.

are genealogical links between New Zealand and Cook Island Māori. All applicants were fluent English speakers, educated in New Zealand or Europe, and had well established art or design practices in their local community. All this made us assume that there was a shared set of attitudes, practices and techniques all participants could draw on.

In February 2008, we commenced our Master of Art & Design programme by distance to a cohort of nine students in the Cook Islands, under the leadership of Dale Fitchett. We assumed we could model this distance delivery on our New Zealand experience where, since 2003,<sup>30</sup> teaching blends engagement through an online environment with face-to-face activities. Students are clustered in specific locations to encourage the development of peer-learning and support communities through geographical proximities. Face-to-face learning opportunities occur in intensive residencies, which are held four times throughout the year. In the online environment, weekly teaching forums take place in synchronous group discussions on theoretical and methodological issues, as well as practical work. Additional asynchronous forums offer ongoing support to individuals and groups.<sup>31</sup> In hindsight, an important question prior to the collaboration might have been: “How well will our model support students in this cross-cultural environment?”

*Research of “Tropical Islands – Virtual Worlds”, 2005-2009*

The AUT funded “Tropical Islands – Virtual Worlds” project explored how traditional Samoan art and architecture are deployed in the globalised leisure industries. The Tropical Islands Resort in Brand, Germany,<sup>32</sup> for instance, is a ‘tropical resort’ catering for a clientele unwilling or unable to travel to ‘real’ resorts. Like others of its ilk, Tropical Islands Resort proffers an Ersatz experience of the tropics ‘at home’. In 2005, a traditional Samoan fale (house) was built there by Samoan tufuga fau fale (master builders) in a “Tropical Village”. By exploring the fale’s conception, production and reception through interviews, participant observation, visual documentation and archival research, the project sought to establish how iconic Samoan cultural forms are

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<sup>30</sup> Distance delivery of the two-year full time masters programme, which is driven by individual candidates’ practice-based research projects, initially became possible in 2003 with the launch of an online teaching and learning environment, which uses the open source software Moodle as its platform. Our online environment attempts to emulate the classical studio teaching of art and design programmes, where much of the learning is achieved through making and subsequent critique sessions of processes and outcomes. Moodle is generally text based but provides image galleries, as well as options to upload visual material (like jpegs and video) directly into discussion forums. What it cannot provide is the opportunity to experience art and design works physically – an important short falling in all cases where experiences of three dimensions or haptic qualities matters.

<sup>31</sup> Occasionally, telephone and Skype sessions are also used.

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.tropical-islands.de/en/visitors.html>

deployed in spaces organised for tourism.<sup>33</sup> We also explored how the involvement of Samoan professionals and community representatives influences the representation of Samoan culture and their own understanding of professional, political and cultural agency. Finally, we wanted to know how iconic representations in globalised tourism and leisure environments might reflect on Samoans' perceptions of Fa'a Samoa (the Samoan Way).

Between 2006 and 2009, the project was carried out in Samoa and Germany by two AUT staff members: Albert L. Refiti and Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul, born and bred in Samoa and Germany respectively. From the research hub in Auckland, the project expanded globally to involve two contrasting cultural locations, which once shared a colonial relationship. Our interest here lies in the exchanges that occurred in Samoa as a research location,<sup>34</sup> but it is interesting to note that the "technologies of self" championed by the AUT ethics committee proved to be out of kilter with Samoan and German understandings of dignity and professionalism.<sup>35</sup> Concepts such as 'dignity', when used across different cultures as in our paper, are problematic – and we will discuss some troubling aspects later.

We planned the project on the assumption that, at least with most research participants, it would be possible to find a shared set of tools and techniques with which to frame the research direction. This assumption was mainly based on Albert Refiti's dual membership of communities in Samoa and the Samoan diaspora in Auckland.<sup>36</sup> We also assumed that it would be possible to follow up on face-to-face engagements through digital communication. This worked only to a limited extent, as became apparent during the phase following initial data collection. What might have been the reasons for a manifest lack of response, by both German and Samoan interview participants, to our emails requesting the review of attached interview transcripts? Were they similar, or did different reasons combine in some ways to produce similar effects? Could the lack of response suggest a difference between the very notions of self in Samoa, Germany, and New Zealand? On a more mundane level,

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<sup>33</sup> See Engels-Schwarzpaul, A.-Chr. "A Warm Grey Fabric Lined on the inside with the Most Lustrous and Colourful of Silks': Dreams of Airships and Tropical Islands." *The Journal of Architecture* 12, no. 5 (2007): 525-42; — — —. "Tillers of the Soil/Traveling Journeymen: Modes of the Virtual." *Transformations. Walter Benjamin and the Virtual: Politics, Art, and Mediation in the Age of Global Culture* (2007), [http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue\\_15/article\\_12.shtml](http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_15/article_12.shtml); — — —. "Travel in Tropical Islands - Enemies Coexisting in Peace." *Interstices: Journal of Architecture and Related Arts* 8 (2007): 21-30; — — —. "-13.833333/-171.73334 in 51.466667/14.766666. Whose Tropics, Whose Fate?" In *Sahanz 2006 Contested Terrains*, edited by Terrance McMinn, John Stephens and Steve Basson, 119-26. Fremantle: Society of Architectural Historians, Australia New Zealand, 2006.

<sup>34</sup> It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss analogous aspects of discrepancies between New Zealand, on the one hand, and Samoa and Germany, on the other. However, a comparison would show that there were similar discrepancies regarding, in particular, expectations with regard to institutionalised technologies of self.

<sup>35</sup> Thus, the committee's requirements (to distribute information to potential participants in a highly formalised, written form; to obtain willing participants' signatures before an interview; and to submit transcripts to participants for their scrutiny) can amount to an insult in Samoan, and to an imposition on a participant's time in German contexts.

<sup>36</sup> And, to a lesser extent, to Tina Engels-Schwarzpaul's long term experiences as an immigrant and subsequent member of a culture not her own, as well as previous cross-cultural research collaborations.

email protocols vary, too. These variations are likely to be amplified by disparities in internet access, for instance, or by the different roles daily, face-to-face engagements play in the three countries. Finally, we had assumed an interest in our research proposition by Samoan academic communities, with whom we hoped to co-operate in building an agenda and research framework for our project. This was difficult to realise – presumably because, due to our always short-term visits, we were unable to locate researchers with shared interests.

### **Theory in Practice**

Both our projects were significantly shaped by technologies – as a tangible array of tools and their use, but also as a less tangible set of ways and practices engaged by researchers/teachers and participants/students. Heidegger and Foucault, who share a range of concerns, can help us question the possibility of technology's neutrality, and to recognise it as an apparatus organising the intersections of our research collaborations. Both also aspire to "thinking otherwise" by "disassembling" the self.<sup>37</sup> This 'self' is closely related, if not identical, with the Western individual – perhaps this makes parts of Heidegger and Foucault's work suitable to help us work through and make sense of 'collectives selves' in our collaborations with Cook Islands and Samoan people? However, they also differ in important ways: whilst Heidegger focuses on things and objects, Foucault's focuses on selves and relationships.<sup>38</sup> Heidegger's context is universal, despite his reference to Western metaphysics, whereas Foucault's is historically and geographically specific: he draws "our attention to the ways in which technologies [are] part of culture and society".<sup>39</sup>

In both our projects, questions arose regarding the kinds and procedures of knowledge in different systems. How do notions of traditional ideas of learning (where knowledge is received), for instance, intersect with neo-liberal notions (where knowledge is produced by individuals), when the latter set the 'research degrees agenda'? For whom, in such mixed environments, is the production of knowledge carried out? In the delivery of the Master of Art and Design degree in the Cook Islands, the production of art work was always in tension between community and institution. The research project in Samoa was intended to return results to Samoan communities. But who were those 'communities' with respect to our research? Would we have found this easier to establish had we found an institutional partner prior to the start of the project? Also, how do oral traditions of knowing relate to evidence based research paradigms predominant in institutional environments?

We will now look at these questions under three headings: first, how does a progressive, 'engineering tradition' view of technology relate to aspects of culture, community and self? Second, how does a Foucauldian concept of technologies of self plays out in the context of our projects? Third, how might Heidegger's *Gestell* (or, Foucault's *dispositif*) help to understand how knowledge production in the Pacific is connected to the use of culture as resource, knowledge economies and universities as

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<sup>37</sup> Alan Milchman, "Timothy Rayner, Foucault's Heidegger: Philosophy and Transformative Experience (Review)," *Foucault Studies*, no. 6 (2009), 82. See also Timothy Rayner, "On Questioning Being: Foucault's Heideggerian Turn," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 12, no. 4 (2004): 426.

<sup>38</sup> Hubert L. Dreyfus, "Being and Power: Heidegger and Foucault," *International Journal of Philosophical Studies* 4, no. 1 (1996).

<sup>39</sup> Peters, "Technologising Pedagogy: The Internet, Nihilism, and Phenomenology of Learning." See also Rayner, "On Questioning Being" 427.

producers/providers of knowledge?

## 1

From a progressive, engineering orientated view of the situation, it is important to realise that access to resources and capital is very disparate in New Zealand, the Cook Islands and Samoa. In 2009, internet penetration rates amounted to 83.1%, 42.1% and 4.1% respectively.<sup>40</sup> Access to ICT is, in most Pacific countries, restricted to expensive and low-quality satellite services.<sup>41</sup> Thus, Cook Island students were constrained by speed and cost of internet connection, disruptions of power supply, and weather conditions (cyclones and tsunami – actual or forecast). The digital divide and other disparities impacted on their skill-based, cognitive, and cultural adjustments; their learning and knowledge production.

In Samoa, these disparities mean that internet access (other than through private connections or educational institutions) is limited to a few internet cafés, at high prices, with slow connection speed and virus infected terminals. Communication with non-institutional research partners thus takes place under difficult conditions. While interviews could be arranged quite easily, it was near impossible to follow up with participants, other than during subsequent visits in Samoa.<sup>42</sup> However, digital technologies of selves are developing in Samoa. People in villages use cell phones nonchalantly and many Samoans, at home and abroad, stay in contact via facebook. Some valuable information for our project was gleaned off blogs and newspaper webpages.<sup>43</sup> Thus, the technological conditions are complex, even at a commonsense level. Even critical debates, however, which advocate the need to “create a fair and level playing field”,<sup>44</sup> often do not address questions about what technology might be, or how technologies operate in different settings.

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Despite very low internet penetration rate, Samoan blogs and websites globally demonstrate local engagement with ICT, often driven by the tourism industry. Beyond these manifestations, though, how much do we know about the digital technologies of self which participants bring to a teaching/research situation, or learn in the process? How might Foucault's sets of technologies interconnect with others in our respective settings?

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<sup>40</sup> <http://www.internetworldstats.com/pacific.htm#ws>. Yet, according to the Global Information Society Watch 2008, Samoa's national leaders stand out in the Pacific for giving early recognition to the importance of ICTs and telecommunications so that Samoa is seen as “the poster child for liberalisation and achievement” in the region in this regard. Don Hollander, “Regional Report: The Pacific,” *Global Information Society Watch* (2008), <http://www.giswatch.org/gisw2008/GISW2008.html>. In 2006, Samoa opened cellular services up to competition. ICT are embraced by the population, “far and wide”, according to Hollander, and have been introduced to Schools, by dedicating scarce resources to ensure that “students have at least rudimentary skills” (78).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> The completion of the project is still pending due to uncertainty whether or not some participants received transcripts for comments. Just when we sought to obtain the last outstanding approvals, the Tsunami rendered our project locally rather irrelevant.

<sup>43</sup> E.g., <http://savaii.blogspot.com> and <http://www.samoobserver.ws/news/local/>

<sup>44</sup> Hollander, “Regional Report: The Pacific.”

Such questions arose during the Master of Art & Design delivery in the Cook Islands. We knew from previous experience in New Zealand that a large metropolitan academic institution's technologies of power inevitably frame the delivery of postgraduate education in small, non-metropolitan communities. In the Cook Islands, students' learning was additionally constrained by low levels of digital literacy. How did this affect their confidence, their experience of the learning environment, their ability to engage? How did they perceive their performance, particularly in comparison to face-to-face situations?<sup>45</sup> The Moodle platform relies mostly on text-based communication and cannot accommodate real-time audio or video chats. Apart from the challenge of text-based online communication, students had to address a lack of prior knowledge of new media technologies.<sup>46</sup> Communication suffered from slow and inaccurate typing; from problems with operating a digital camera and uploading images. Students often did not understand what was required because they found it difficult to orient themselves in the virtual space of the Moodle platform. Their time management was hampered by difficulties with processing digital files and researching electronic databases. How did this all impact on the development of their digital selves, and on the effectiveness of their relationships with others in the online community?<sup>47</sup>

The very digital interface that, we thought, might offer the potential of Foucault's technologies of production (permitting users "to produce, transform, or manipulate things")<sup>48</sup> and technologies of signs (permitting them "to use signs, meaning, symbols or signification")<sup>49</sup> seemed to become a technology of domination. How could the collaborators negotiate and renegotiate technologies of self in the process? How do particular notions and practices of self intersect with technologies of power to constitute what Foucault calls governmentality?<sup>50</sup>

We have no answers to these questions, but our projects seem to suggest that there are different notions of technologies of self for Samoans and Cook Island people than Foucault would have foreseen. His technologies of self concern ways of advancing a singular self, to tally-up, measure, or discipline, one's self. There is a fundamentally important, though implicit, assumption that a self has responsibility for the self. In Samoa and in the Cook Islands, we met with a notion of self, a collective self, that is

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<sup>45</sup> We would have liked to include the students' voices by quoting from correspondence and discussion forums. However, since we did not anticipate to publish about this project, we never applied for the ethics approval that would allow us to do so. This is regrettable since, as one of the reviewers quite rightly noticed, such "evidence is crucial to add strength to the themes ... emerging from [our] interactions with the students". On the other hand, we do not intend to prove anything here but to articulate questions for further research engagements.

<sup>46</sup> Specifically in the processing of digital images to document their projects' processes and outcomes.

<sup>47</sup> See "The Digital Self" in Michael I. A. Kent, "The Invisible Empire Border Protection on the Electronic Frontier" (Murdoch University, 2005), 177ff. <http://www.wlib.murdoch.edu.au/adt/browse/view/adt-MU20051222.112058>

<sup>48</sup> Michel Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," in *The Essential Foucault*, ed. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose (New York: New Press, 2003), 146.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> "This encounter between the technologies of domination of others and those of the self I call 'governmentality'." Foucault, "Technologies of the Self," 147.

responsible to others.<sup>51</sup> In the Cook Islands, this means that collaboration is a way of being, rather than a visual arts strategy employed instrumentally by individual artists.<sup>52</sup> In the students' practice, a constant slippage between the two modes of collaboration (responsibility to self and to others) occurred. In Samoa, similarly, each person participated in some sense as a part of the collectives he or she belonged to. In discussions and interviews, a personal observation might stand in tension with views held by the collective. This could evoke solidarity or anxiety. How difficult is dissent in small communities, particularly if they are ruled by conflicting systems?<sup>53</sup>

Does the difference between a sense of self as individual or collective modulate understandings of creativity? The sense of creativity that permeates design education imagines a process driven by an individual considering him- or herself a creative practitioner (producing creative works on commission, for exhibitions, or for a market). Commissioning, exhibiting and selling establish the individual as creative practitioner. In the context of a research degree in art and design, creativity is a process generating knowledge which can be assessed as research. This view of creativity opens up particular ways for people to constitute themselves as creative and make sense of their creativity.<sup>54</sup> It is likely to conflict with another view of creativity, in which creation is cumulative and collective, and in which the outcome is never automatically commodifiable. Do these contrasting views of creativity propose, model or impose different types of relationships to oneself and different practices?<sup>55</sup>

Technologies of self are criss-crossed with technologies of production, signs, and domination. We will focus now focus on a particular configuration of technologies. It is implicit in Heidegger's notion of *Gestell*, which prefigured Foucault's concept of *dispositif* in many aspects.<sup>56</sup>

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- <sup>51</sup> This sense of self is permanently in conflict with the Western, democratic notion of citizens. See Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the History of Western Samoa* (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies, University of the South Pacific, 1987). Thanks to Albert Refiti for bringing this to a point. In comparison with the Western concept of an independent, self-contained and autonomous Self, Chen reports that a growing number of psychologists propose alternative concepts of self from a cross-cultural perspective, such as the *enssembled self* (Sampson 1988), the *interdependent self* (Markus & Kitayama 1991), the *collective self* (Triandis 1995), and the *relational self* (Ho 1993), which all view the self as connected to social context and not differentiated. Ping-Hwa Chen, "A Counseling Model for Self-Relation Coordination for Chinese Clients with Interpersonal Conflicts," *The Counseling Psychologist* 37, no. 7 (2009): 990-1.
- <sup>52</sup> What may well be a "new collaborative mode of 'creativity for the economy'" in New Zealand, is presumably a long standing practice in the Cook Islands and Samoa. Bill, "'Blood, Sweat and Tears': Disciplining the Creative in Aotearoa New Zealand", 8.
- <sup>53</sup> Statements should not embarrass the collective, on the one hand. On the other, participants may fear being taken to task, should their statements become public knowledge. See Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the History of Western Samoa*, 211ff.
- <sup>54</sup> See Bill, "'Blood, Sweat and Tears': Disciplining the Creative in Aotearoa New Zealand", 4.
- <sup>55</sup> Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern of the Self as a Practice of Freedom," in *The Essential Foucault*, ed. Paul Rabinow and Nikolas S. Rose (New York: New Press, 2003), 33.
- <sup>56</sup> Giorgio Agamben, "What Is an Apparatus?," in *What Is an Apparatus and Other Essays* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2009), 12.

### 3

Seen through these frames, global investments in knowledge production and the creative industries raise questions of what counts as art, creativity or community anew. In the 1990s, New Zealand was re-branded as a “creative nation”, with certain sectors increasingly being “calculated and systematically re-imagined for the purposes of management in a new, knowledge-based economy”.<sup>57</sup> Creativity has since become a core curricular value. In the same period, Government policies in New Zealand promoted the export of education to international markets.<sup>58</sup> Terms such as ‘relevant knowledge’ and ‘transferable skills’ are now well established and incorporated into a modular curriculum. Outcomes, performance indicators and evaluation criteria package and compute knowledge and research. There is now an expectation of universities to derive financial gain from educational and research initiatives or, at least, not to incur financial losses. In this climate, support of non-revenue earning parts of knowledge provision is severely cut back.

Thus, it was not possible to involve a culturally fluent, additional staff member in the Master of Art & Design delivery in the Cook Islands. In the Tropical Islands research project,<sup>59</sup> potential problems were mostly ameliorated by the fact that one of the researchers is Samoan.<sup>60</sup> If they are not insiders, researchers and educators in the Pacific will find it difficult, for instance, to gauge ongoing changes in what is termed ‘traditional concepts’. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century, an industry of ‘tourist art’, based on what were then considered by anthropologists as traditional ‘native’ concepts and practices, grew up in Samoa, the Cook Islands and Aotearoa (here involving Māori practitioners). In the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century, diasporic modes of existence and increasing globalisation further contributed to an iconic representation of Pacific culture, in which the typical and instantly recognisable is privileged over the enigmatic and specific. A flavour of Pacific-ness is now a marketing resource even in New Zealand, and increasingly becoming part of New Zealand’s national identity, at least in Auckland.<sup>61</sup> The market is served by creative practitioners based in their place of origin, or in the diaspora, but increasingly also by mobile producers in global contractual relationships. While economically successful, their artefacts do not necessarily feature as ‘art’ in New Zealand curricula. Does this lead to conflicts when successful practitioners become students or collaborators in a research project? At least in the Auckland

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<sup>57</sup> Bill, "Blood, Sweat and Tears": Disciplining the Creative in Aotearoa New Zealand", 7.

<sup>58</sup> In these ventures, success is measured in terms of financial base-lines, gains to educational providers’ fiscal productivity and, ultimately, the contribution to the GDP. See Grierson and Engels-Schwarzpaul, "Internationalism, Education and Governmentality: Critical Perspectives," 4.

<sup>59</sup> Building networks with other Samoan academics in this area was part of the research project’s goals but this took longer than anticipated. In the current climate, collegial support within institutions is under pressure. However, three AUT colleagues (Māori, Samoan and German) joint an advisory group at various times, whose support was on occasions crucial. The success of this project consists above all in the gradually building relationships with Samoan colleagues, which meanwhile go much further than the confines of this specific research project.

<sup>60</sup> This, however, put considerable strain on his own time and resource management.

<sup>61</sup> This has a precedent in the assimilation of Māori culture in New Zealand, see Robert H. G. Jahnke, "Voices Beyond the Pae." In *Double Vision: Art Histories and Colonial Histories in the Pacific*, edited by Nicholas Thomas, Diane Losche and Jennifer Newell, 193-209. Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1999.

diaspora (which may promote conservatism), the struggle over 'right', 'authentic' styles, appropriate for structures of community and identity, would suggest this. During the design of The University of Auckland's Fale Pasifika, for example, a controversy occurred: some in the decision making group proposed to carve its posts. However, Albert Wendt (Samoan writer and cultural commentator) argued successfully that, traditionally, posts in Samoan buildings were not carved. However, there are experts in Samoa who would debate this view. In any event, since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the carving of posts has become a tradition of sorts in Samoa.

Technologies of knowledge and signs will always be determined by questions such as: "Whose research [or creative work, or knowledge] is it? Who owns it? Whose interest will it serve? Who will benefit from it?"<sup>62</sup> But also: Who collaborates in it? Is it worth pursuing? Indigenous peoples may have answers to these questions that differ from the assumptions underlying our curricula and research protocols. Similarly, it is often likely that the frameworks for learning diverge: there is a difference between a conception of knowledge as something one receives and a view that researchers produce knowledge by themselves. Digital technologies' transformation of knowledge is but one aspect of what Heidegger termed *Gestell* (en-framing) and Foucault *dispositif* (apparatus). Both *Gestell* and *dispositif* are permeated with power. Heidegger (unlike most of today's knowledge engineers) conceives of *Gestell* as a late manifestation of *techne*, which reveals truth, and attributes little control over its processes to humans. This perspective may be better attuned to the more holistic Pacific traditions. However, he pays scant attention to how his concept might apply in specific circumstances outside the West. By contrast, each *dispositif* has a specific historical and spatial setting for Foucault and, while the whole of power is anonymous, acts of power and relations of power are not entirely. Foucault's account of these relationships allows a more nuanced analysis, perceptive of different ways in which technology and power/knowledge operate, particularly in situations where different modes of being co-exist with *Gestell/dispositif*.

What makes Heidegger interesting in our context is that he appeals to a way in which art can operate that is out of kilter with notions of contemporary art. He claims that art can be an area of resistance from which to develop an understanding of the *Gestell*'s danger,<sup>63</sup> as long as it is not absorbed into it. Art has to stand in relation to the "realm that it opens up" and received by a culture as a whole.<sup>64</sup> If art works are "torn out of their own native sphere", their world, they become a matter for the "art industry", to be maintained and be busied about, or to be supplied and critiqued.<sup>65</sup> As an object of "art appreciation", art turns into "a matter for pastry cooks", "only for the enjoyment of a few sectors of the population", providing pleasure to connoisseurs.<sup>66</sup> Are these claims worth re-examining in our context? Might they offer new vistas for the interlacing of traditional art contexts with the art market?

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<sup>62</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies. Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 9-10. See also Brearley and Hamm, "Ways of Looking and Listening. Stories from the Spaces between Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Knowledge Systems."

<sup>63</sup> Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," 34.

<sup>64</sup> Heidegger, "The Origin of the Work of Art," 41.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>66</sup> Heidegger quoted in Young, *Heidegger's Philosophy of Art*, 11f.

Can Heidegger and Foucault's concepts, when reframed, become heuristic tools to account for specific situational complexities?<sup>67</sup> Perhaps they could help register the simultaneous sway of different, even conflicting, modes of being and networks of power relationships in the Pacific. Cook Island and Samoan artists live in relationships of exchange partially comparable to Heidegger's *Gestell*. However, it would be too simple to say that this is due to the introduction of Western models of commodification of nature and culture. Even similar contexts or behaviours might be motivated by quite different frameworks and traditions. The exchange of fine mats in Samoa, for instance, relies on a circulation of mobile objects – but can we assume that this exchange would fit into capitalist modes of exchange? In Samoa, the Cook Islands, and Aotearoa, tourist art and architecture has a long tradition. This art form has been criticised by Western observers as decadent and corrupted.<sup>68</sup> But might it be the Western critics who do not understand? While, as in a double coding, some aspects of tourist art and architecture are clearly recognisable, others are likely to be 'read' only by insiders.<sup>69</sup> The "going native of the natives" always happened on several complex layers, and probably under the critics' noses from the beginning of colonisation.<sup>70</sup> From the viewpoint of the producers of 'tourist art', might the buyers be the dupes? Could their double production and double coding sit well alongside their ongoing production of art for their own purposes? In both our projects, the manifestations of art production in Samoa and the Cook Islands may, on one occasion, fit into the categories of the *Gestell* – on others, they follow rules of a different type of circulation, which was termed communism by colonisers in the Pacific.<sup>71</sup> The disparate rules of circulation are sometimes difficult to identify, particularly when a capitalist apparatus comes into conflict with, for instance, *Fa'a Samoa*.<sup>72</sup> They are exceedingly difficult to assess for anyone "not on the ground". Thus, research and teaching at a distance will always operate from tenuous positions: out of context, without ongoing face-to-face contact, how could we tell which and whose apparatus is regulating exchange at any one time?<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> Frank Kessler, "Notes on Dispositif," (Utrecht (NL): Universiteit Utrecht, 2006), 15.

<sup>68</sup> In Aotearoa, by Augustus Hamilton, *Maori Art* (London: The Holland Press, 1901).

<sup>69</sup> The arrangement of entrances into the *fale tele* at the Sinalei Reef Resort on Upolo, for instance, is contrary to 'traditional' usage. A *tufuga fau fale* (building expert) commented in an interview with a ironic smile that these buildings, which demonstrate ' Samoan-ness' to every visitor, have "nothing to do with *Fa'a Samoa* (the Samoan way)". Interview with Vitale Feanati, 28.03.08.

<sup>70</sup> See Hans-Günter Semsek and Georg Stauth, "Contemporary Processes within System, Cultures and Life Worlds: Some Reflections on Colonization and Resistance in Everyday Life," *Theory, Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (1988).

<sup>71</sup> Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the History of Western Samoa*, 4. or even "bestly communism" Eric Pawson, "Two New Zealand: Maori and European," in *Inventing Places: Studies in Cultural Geography*, ed. Kay Anderson and Fay Gale (Melbourne: Longman Cheshire, 1992), 17.

<sup>72</sup> See Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the History of Western Samoa*.

<sup>73</sup> Further, the new technologies of self required to participate in digitally based research collaborations will tend to either exclude important knowledge bearers or, which amounts to the same, incline the latter to distance themselves because they seem incommensurate with their way of operating.

### Concluding remarks

What lies at the heart of this paper are questions of how we can act with integrity and respect in the research situations in which we participate. What are, and should be, our own technologies of self? What does it mean for collaborations with indigenous communities if the vast majority of researchers are based in the industrialised world?<sup>74</sup> Do the collaborations change anything about this imbalance? Does the development of Pacific material culture for global exports support or undermine the integrity of Pacific ways of life? What difference do digital technologies make? Will they make it possible for indigenous communities and their designers/researchers to participate in this conference?

Academics are knowledge producers. When we operate in environments without budgets for engagements with knowledge that will not generate financial return,<sup>75</sup> and as our careers become increasingly dependent on our participation in the knowledge economy, we need to hone our ability to self-reflect and critique.

Nothing is fundamental. ... the foundations of power in a society or the self-institution of a society, etc. ... are not fundamental phenomena. There are only reciprocal relations, and the perpetual gaps between intentions in relation to one another.<sup>76</sup>

We can, and must, develop conceptual frameworks and technologies of selves that respect the knowledge and integrity of indigenous and non-indigenous researchers and participants, students and educators, in collaborations across the Pacific. As change agents,<sup>77</sup> we can practice ways and techniques that transform the given and move beyond it – to generate new modes of experience and understanding.

We would like to thank the anonymous reviewers whose comments helped to improve our paper.

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<sup>74</sup> 4/5 of all researchers were located in the industrialised world in the 1990s. Paul A. David, "A Tragedy of the Public Knowledge 'Commons'? Global Science, Intellectual Property and the Digital Technology Boomerang," *Research Memoranda* 3 (2001), 10.

<sup>75</sup> A provisional conclusion for us it to make sure in future engagement that there is funding which will cover important aspects of our engagements that our institution will not. In hindsight, we wonder whether such projects should not have been funded by institutions such as UNESCO.

<sup>76</sup> Michel Foucault, "Space, Knowledge, and Power," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (London: Penguin, 1991), 247.

<sup>77</sup> See note 30.