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COMMUNICATION, CONTEXTS AND CULTURE¹

A communicative constructivist approach to intercultural communication

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I. Culture and the 'communicative paradigm'

The analysis of the problem of intercultural communication rests on and depends upon the clarification of the relation between communication and culture. Is communication only one subordinate element of culture, and is intercultural communication, consequently, only one path among many between cultures? Is culture to be considered as only a sub-system of the communication system, and intercultural communication then something like an interpenetration between systems? Or is culture on the very bottom of society, so that real intercultural communication falls prey to cultural relativism and becomes virtually impossible?

The relation between culture and communication might appear obvious, if not trivial to those influenced by postmodern, poststructuralist or cultural studies' thinking. However, even contemporary theoreticians, e.g. Richard Rorty, still refer to culture in terms of science, philosophy or arts. This traditional notion of culture has been defined by Scheler (1960: 31f; 60ff) as the „higher forms of knowledge“, that is the bourgeois notion of „representative culture“ (Tenbruck 1990) which pursued the bourgeois ideals of 'Bildung'. This elitist notion of culture had been already attacked by Vico and such 'romantic' thinkers as Herder and the Grimms. In sociology, the discovery of culture beyond the 'higher forms of knowledge' goes

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back to such authors as Simmel who considered prostitution, fashion, or dining as cultural phenomena. With the „discovery“ of everyday life sociology came to stress culture as something that is linked to meaningful or symbolic action. Yet the turn towards communication has not been possible without the strong impact of Saussurian linguistics on anthropology (Levi-Strauss) which came to consider culture according to the linguistic structure of „la langue“. Before culture used to be understood as a system of meaning to be learned by its members, now it seemed to be a system of signs.

This „pansemiotic“ concept of culture has been criticised by another stream of thought also preoccupied with language. As a consequence of the „linguistic turn“ initiated by authors such as Wittgenstein and Austin, it has been argued that signs cannot be considered in isolation from the actions in which they are produced. Rather than focusing on sign systems (or the postmodern dissolution, bricolage or parody of these systems), anthropologists came to stress that culture is to be found in the „parole“, the spoken language (Hymes and Gumperz 1964). This approach to culture follows what has been coined by Habermas (1988) the „communicative paradigm“ (Habermas 1988). This paradigm may be characterised by the assumption that culture is being constructed in communicative actions. Although in the English language, the notion of communication may be misunderstood to refer to a cybernetical model of the transmission of information, here communicative action is meant to include the performance of social action in the use of language or, for that matter, nonverbal signs, cultural objects and artefacts, thus referring to the theories of social action developed by Max Weber and Alfred Schutz.

Although programmatically proposing a theory of communicative action, I shall show that Habermas himself does not succeed in escaping the structuralist notion of sign systems independent of social action. This task has been accomplished in a much more successful way by some empirical approaches within the social sciences, such as „conversation analysis“, „ethnography of communication“ and „interpretive sociolinguistics“ which show that „language in use“ is one of the principal means of this construction process. However, hardly any theoretical attempts have been made to appreciate the contribution of these empirical approaches to the theory of communicative action and culture.²

Evaluating the theoretical outcome of such diverse empirical approaches may be considered an intricate task. Yet as all these approaches as well as Habermas' theory of communicative action rely on the theories of social action as founded by Max Weber, Alfred Schutz and other proponents of „interpretive sociology“ or „Verstehende Soziologie“, I shall consider them as

common denominator and as a starting point for the following reflections. Within this framework I want to stress the particular contribution of Alfred Schutz. Schutz is widely considered as a theoretician of the „life-world“ who clarified Weber’s notion of subjective meaning by which social action is guided, oriented to and coordinated. Yet, it has been hitherto ignored that Schutz not only mentioned the role of communicative action; he also asserted that the life-world is thoroughly a „communicative environment“. Since he takes the socio-cultural life-world as being constituted by communicative actions, it may be reasonable to take this theory as a basis for a notion of communicative culture.

On this basis, I then want to develop a notion of communicative action which can provide for a general framework for analysing intercultural communication. Communicative action will be shown to construct contexts which are reflexively generated by the very communicative actions which are performed in this context. We will refer to this reflexive process as „contextualisation“. On an analytic level, one can distinguish three different analytical aspects of communicative actions which, consequentially, refer to the different ways contextualisation is accomplished. Culture can thus be considered as the construction of contexts by means of communicative action.

In order to characterise the notion of communicative action, I shall first contrast it to Habermas’ theory of communicative action as well as to the systems theory notion of communication (section II). Communicative action is characterised by its reflexivity, a feature which is also emphasised by conversation analysis and interpretive sociolinguistics. By referring to the notion of reflexivity held by these approaches, it will be shown (III) that it is reflexivity which relates communicative actions to their contexts. Then, the three aspects of contextualisation will be sketched with respect to the analytical features of communicative action (IV). These contexts constitute what may be called communicative culture, a notion which, finally (V), is proposed to be pertinent for the study of intercultural communication.

II. Language, social and communicative action

The notion of communicative action has been brought to the forefront of sociological discourse by Habermas’ (1981) renowned theory of communicative action. Yet, despite the importance of Habermas programmatic claim, his theory fails to solve the problem for two reasons.

² With the exception of e.g. David Bogen 1989.

A) For Habermas (1981: 114f.), communicative action is characterised by the rationality of language; rationality is, so to say, imparted in language, since language allows for the distinction of different validity claims („Geltungsansprüche“) which roughly correspond to Bühler’s three functions of language (representation, expression and appeal).³ Habermas refers at this point also to speech act theory, but he opposes its „subjectivist“ theory of meaning and opts for an „intersubjective theory of meaning“: language should not be considered only as a means for transmitting subjective meaning but also as a medium by which actors can share meaning intersubjectively. Communicative action thus relies on the actors sharing the same „repertoire“, and it is the shared language which enables speakers to understand „the same matter in the same way“ (1988: 136f). Language, as a normative system of signs, is not only detached from subjective intentions; it also imparts the „dimensions of meaning and validity“ (1988: 148) to which actors orient. Habermas’ notion of communicative action, therefore, is dependent on the existence of a language system which, by virtue of its semantic autonomy, bestows its rationality on actors.

This concept was criticised especially by Bourdieu (1982). To Bourdieu, it is a mistake to look for the social effects - i.e. the co-ordination of actions between speakers - in language (and the so-called illocutionary effects); language does not work by virtue of a mechanism internal to its system. It is *the use of language in social contexts* which makes language work. Language, therefore, has to be considered as a form of practice rather than as a system working independent of ongoing actions.⁴ A similar critique had already been voiced by Voloshinov (1975: 95ff) who referred to the view that language has a rationality on its own as the „abstract objectivistic view of language“. As Voloshinov argues, this view ignores the speakers’ action, the ways how language is used and the social contexts in which language is being used. Instead of the meaning of language guiding communicative action, it is rather the social use of language (and, for that matter, any sign-system) in action which constitutes its meaning.

B) In the line with the classical Critical Theory of Horkheimer, Habermas distinguishes „teleological action“ categorically from „communicative action“ („strategical action“ being a mixture of both). The categorical distinction refers to how the coordination between actors is accomplished: either as an interlocking of different utilitaristic calculations of individual actors who pursue their egoistic goals, or as a process of co-operative interpretation by which

³ Habermas refers to Popper’s theory of three worlds as subjective, social, and objective spheres which are addressed by expressive, regulatory, and propositional utterance and which correspond to different forms of social action; with respect to communicative action, he adds a fourth function, understanding.

actors try to communicate and understand each another's intentions. Whereas the former type of action lies at the basis of functional systems (such as economy or politics), the latter, communicative action, defines what Habermas (referring to a notion coined by Schutz) calls the „socio-cultural life-world“. The difference between both these 'spheres of life' lies in the assumption that only communicative action allows for rational understanding. Habermas concedes that everyday communication is „uneradically rhetorical“; yet the very fact that speakers, even if they disagree, go on talking to one another demonstrates their „contrafactual“ orientation towards the possibility of rational understanding and coming to terms with an another.

By means of this peculiar distinction between two types of action, he builds up two distinct ontological spheres. Teleological action and its 'functional rationality' gives rise to systems, whereas communicative action pertains to the 'socio-cultural life world'. Although this distinction allows him to detect the 'systemic colonisation of the life-world', it establishes an opposition between 'two worlds'. It is not only difficult to explain how these two world are held together; the separation is not even accepted by systems theory. For systems theory (or theory of autopoietic systems) holds that communication is an all penetrating phenomenon (Luhmann 1984). To systems theory, everything social is not only functional, but also communication.

Whereas systems theory this way proposes a much too general and undistinctive notion of communication, phenomenologically orientated sociology⁵ formulates an alternative theory of communicative action which allows an explanation of how the context of communicative action is constructed by and provides meaning for these very actions. Starting from Weber's notion of action as any meaningful behaviour, phenomenologically orientated sociology tries to clarify the subjective constitution of meaning that guides action. As Schutz argues, *action* is any meaningful oriented experience which is orientated towards and anticipates („modo futuri exacti“) a future state of affairs. Thus, pondering upon a problem may rightly be called an action as well as not jumping into the cold water (in order to save someone). Since communicative action is intrinsically orientated to someone else, it is almost by definition a form of *social action*. But it is as a special form of social action since it is not only orientated to another agent, it is also characterised by a reciprocal orientation: in principle, it is orientated to some kind of „reply“. This reply may only be a form of thinking: I want the

⁴ Habermas tries to overcome this problem by overstressing the notion of the „illocutionary force“ of utterances; yet he still maintains this force to depend on its semantic content.

⁵ Following Luckmann (1979) we prefer to speak of a phenomenologically orientated sociology since philosophical phenomenology provides but the foundations for the empirical science of sociology.

other person to know that there is „x“; but it may also be another act of working or another communicative action: I want the other person to do „y“, or I want the other person to answer my question. Similarly to Habermas, Schütz and Luckmann thereby presuppose some kind of orientation towards understanding. However, whereas Habermas assumes language to provide for understanding, Schütz considers the basic intersubjective principle of *reciprocity* to lie at the heart of common understanding. Reciprocity is not to be misunderstood as „equality“ of the communication partners, contrafactually assumed in the very act of communication. Reciprocity, rather, applies to any form of social interaction, as, e.g., a conflict of interest or even a fight among unequals. It refers to such acts of consciousness and their bodily counterparts like the principle of the interchangeability of standpoints which is presupposed even in such simple action as shaking hands, and the principle of the reciprocity of motives which underlies intersubjective sequences of action (Schütz 1962: 12).

This problem of intersubjectivity lies at the heart of Schutz' thought: how do we cope with the fact that we have no direct access to the other's intention? How do we cope with the 'transcendence' of the other's mind? Although we never ultimately solve this problem, we attempt to do so via communicative action, i.e. we indicate what we mean by way of some form of „objectivation“, „expression“ or „sign“. These objectivations are products of action (to be more exact, of 'acts of working'), yet at the same time they are intended to 'signify' our intentions. Communicative action thus involves different processes, such as 'intersubjective mirroring', reciprocity, and taking the role of the other, yet it also requires a kind of „objectivation“, of producing an object by which other's intentions are „appresented“.

Schutz distinguishes several kinds of objectivation. Objectivations can be found already on the elementary level of spatial and time references, such as *indications* and *marks*. References to subjective intentions are *signs in the narrower sense* which are typically part of a more encompassing sign system. The most important sign system is, of course, language since it provides actors with what Schütz calls „a store-house of preconstituted types“ of experience and action. Finally signs which refer to a reality other than the reality of everyday life in which we communicate are called *symbols*; symbols may be found in the formalised language of mathematics, in the metaphorical language of poetry, or in the icons of religion.

Yet, signs and other objectivations are not seen in isolation from action. First, the referential meaning of signs is constituted in interaction.⁶ Moreover, signs are produced by the communicative action itself as products of an 'objectivation' in the common environment. Third, these objectivations are produced with the intention of transmitting some meaning.

Since the understanding of this meaning is anticipated and, in the course of its production, indicated and ‘mirrored’ by the other’s expression, action or response, objectivations, finally, function as „co-ordination devices“ for the interactants. By means of objectivations actors can, so to say, gear their actions (i.e. coordinate) into one another by retrospectively and prospectively interpreting (i.e. ‘synchronise’) their corresponding motives.

This synchronisation of action-projects and the co-ordination of courses of action can be exemplified by Schutz’s analysis of the question-answer sequence: „I ask you a question. The in-order-to motive of my act is only the expectation that you will understand my question, but also to get your answer; or more precisely, I reckon *that* you will answer, leaving undecided what the content of your answer may be. (...) The question, so we can say, is the because-motive of the answer, as the answer is the in-order-to motive of the question. (...) I myself had felt on innumerable occasions induced to react to another’s act, which I had interpreted as a question addressed to me, with a kind of behaviour of which the in-order-to motive was my expectation that the Other, the questioner, might interpret my behaviour as an answer“ (Schütz 1964a: 14).

This example does not only demonstrate how the synchronisation of motives (i.e. subjective intentions) and the co-ordination of the courses of conduct are interlocked. It also hints at a further, most important feature of communicative actions which, in systems theory, has been called the „problem of double contingency“: communicative actions which are projected as questions may never be answered; what has been intended to be co-ordinated may fail in the course of the interaction. To put it another way, whatever actors may intend, they only know what they do by the corresponding acts of their co-actors. With respect to successful communicative action, this problem can be can be also reformulated as reflexivity of communicative acts: the answer is not only an answer, it also shows that the question has been understood as what it had been intended. Although never accomplishing ‘perfect understanding’, by reason of reflexivity communicative action allows for ‘common understanding’ by doing both, acting and indicating the understanding of the act (mirrored by the objectivation within the common environment of the actors and by the reciprocal orientation towards one another).

III. Reflexivity, contextualization and context

⁶ For a detailed analysis of this consituation of signs cf. Luckmann 1983.

The reflexivity of communicative action can be considered as one of the subject-matters of the empirical research in conversation analysis. Conversation analysis (CA) started by analysing the mechanisms of communicative interaction, especially with respect to the organisation of turn-taking in conversations. Like the other approaches in question, it is characterised by a decidedly empirical study of natural communication, i.e. communication in non-experimental settings, and by the use of (audio and visual) tape recordings of the communicative objectivations in these settings. Although CA prefers the notion of „conversation“ or „talk in interaction“, it not only refers to the exchange of utterances, but also to its interpretation. This is done by assuming that communicative actions are not only observable and interpretable by the scientific observer, but that interpretation of utterances is the very problem for the interactants themselves. This phenomenon is labeled by CA as reflexivity. *Reflexivity* means that in the course of their actions, „participants“ indicate the meaning of their actions and their understanding of prior actions. The ways by which the utterances are produced constitute the methods by which these utterances are made observable, understandable and accountable. This reflexive character ascribed to actions reminds very much of Schütz's description of reciprocity. Particularly his description of question-answer sequences cited above seems almost to be echoed in the account by Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson (1978: 44)⁷: „When a speaker addresses a first pair-part, such as a ‘question’, or a ‘complaint’ to another, we have noted, he selects the other as next speaker, and selects for him that he do a second part of the ‘adjacency pair’ he has started, that is, to do an ‘answer’. (...) The addressee, in doing the second pair-part, such as an ‘answer’ or an ‘apology’, not only does that utterance-type, but thereby displays (in the first place to his coparticipants) his understanding of the prior turn’s talk as a first part, as a ‘question’ or a ‘complaint’“.

Moreover, CA analysis opts for a *strong notion of reflexivity*, „for it is a systematic consequence of the turn-taking organization of conversation that it obliges its participants to display to each other, in a turn’s talk, their understanding of other turns’ talk. (...) Regularly, then, a turn’s talk will display its speaker’s understanding of a prior’s turn’s talk...“ (Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson 1978: 44). Thus, speakers do not only interlock their motives and coordinate their actions, in speaking they also demonstrate what kind of actions they are performing. This shaping of certain actions is brought about by the methods speakers use. By following these methods, speakers accomplish a specific orderliness of their utterances.

⁷ As opposed to the narrow notion of indexicality in conversation analysis which refers mainly to the speech context, Schütz holds a much broader notion of indexicality resp. indication.

This notion of reflexivity may be called strong since conversation analysis assumes that the orderliness of utterances, their „systematicity“, is produced locally, i.e. by the very utterances which then form part of the order. In this view, the order of conversation is, like any social order, an accomplishment of the actors in the situation in which their actions are performed. The social facts construed by these actions are exclusively due to this situative, local production: „Not only is the allocation of turns accomplished in each turn for a next, but the determination of turn size is locally accomplished, that is, accomplished in the developmental course of each turn, under constraints imposed by a next turn and an orientation to a next turn in the current one“ (Sacks, Schegloff, Jefferson 1978: 41). As a consequence, turns at talk construct the very context of which they form part: on the one hand, utterances are „context-shaped“, i.e. they are embedded in a sequence of actions in such a way that this sequence guides their production and interpretation; on the other hand, they are also context-renewing, since they themselves contribute to and constitute a part of this context (Drew /Heritage 1992: 18f). Context thus is characterised by its distinctive dependence on the local production of turn, by its *situatedness*.

Because conversation analysis stresses the local character of situated actions, it analyses the features of observable communicative interaction in a very detailed way. Thereby CA is able to demonstrate the fine grained reflexive interlocking of talk. Yet, CA has been criticised for two reasons which have been most clearly formulated by Goffman (1981: 32ff): How can CA account for those elements which are not observable in the momentary interaction (a problem especially pertinent for those conversation analysts who restrict themselves to the audio channel)? And how can CA account for those elements of the situation which lie beyond the few communicative turns under investigation? Thus, in stressing the local character of actions, Goffman argues that CA ignores the broader social context in which they occur. This argument is even more accentuated by Bourdieu who criticises CA for its „pointilist hyper-empirism“. In his view, CA falls prey to a radical situationalism which takes actors to construct social reality in every moment anew without being able to rely on rituals, conventions and institutions.

Both arguments are tackled by an approach which is based on the „ethnography of communication“. Coined by Gumperz and Hymes in the early 1960s, the ethnography of communication tried to describe the features of the situation in which language is used, i.e. the „speech event“.⁸ This speech event has been analysed in terms of several components,

⁸ I can only mention here other researchers such as Sherzer, Bauman, Briggs, and Hanks. For an overview cf. Bauman and Sherzer (1975).

such as „setting“, „participants“, „norms of interaction“ etc. (Hymes 1962). However, as within conventional sociolinguistics, Hymes restricted context to a set of factors which could be determined independently of the ongoing speech event. A more reflexive notion of context has only been later introduced by Gumperz' approach of interpretive sociolinguistics. In distinction to the ethnography of communication, this approach considers interaction to be the crucial feature of communication. According to Gumperz (1990a: 2), it is only by way of interactive communication that meaning and significance is bestowed upon utterances. Especially by the central notion of this approach, *contextualization*, it can claim to have developed a „reflexive notion of context“ (Auer 1991: 21f). Contextualization means that in communicating, speakers and listeners use verbal and non-verbal signs by which they indicate what they are doing: arguing, debating, informing etc. These „contextualization cues“ are not considered to be universal but depend on local contexts. It is the specificity of certain contextualization cues that makes up for specific contexts. Thus, the membership in a particular speech community is constructed by the use of certain cues which are to be understood as indexical for this community (ranging from certain prosodies, to lexical, up to stylistical and rhetorical features) (Di Luzio/ Auer 1986). But context is not restricted to large-scale social categories, such as speech communities or networks; it encompasses also situations and communicative forms (cf. Luckmann and Günthner, this volume): the competence to perform at a job interview, a sales talk or a managerial meeting also presupposes certain contextualization cues with respect to the situated code and style used, the structuring of arguments and informations, the sequencing of turns etc. Contextualization cues are not „variables“; one should rather say that situations are constituted by the use of these cues. For example, sales talk between immigrant British Indians is contextualized differently than sales talk between British English, and this difference is brought about by the communicative actions through which the specific context (i.e. sales talk) is constructed (cf. Gumperz, this volume). Thus, context can neither be defined with respect to some basic universal apparatus nor by some variables external to the communicative acts. Rather, *context is a feature which characterises the communicative actions*; the typical contextualization cues are conventions within certain communities of practice by which typical contexts are constructed. In order to be a competent member of a culture one has to know and to be able to perform (and negotiate) this contextualization. Culture thus consists of the „shared typifications that enter into the signalling and use of activity types in interaction, as well as systems of contextualization conventions“ (Gumperz 1992: 51).

Gumperz overcomes the situationalism of conversation analysis, by stressing the importance of social conventionalised cues which are being used in communication and stressing their relation to larger communities. Moreover, Gumperz focused his empirical analysis mostly on intercultural communication, stressing the tight link between contextualisation cues, i.e. communicative conventions, and culture. However, being a linguist, Gumperz is, of course, preoccupied with the linguistic and paralinguistic features of these cues. The sociological question, however, how contextualisation relates to social action, to social situations and larger collectivities, still remains open.

IV. Context and the three horizons of contextualisation

Since Malinowski's seminal essay on the significance of context for the understanding of language (1923), the notion of context has been rediscovered only recently. Despite this rediscovery, current anthropological linguistics still maintains context as something which is defined in contradistinction to communication. Thus Hanks (1989: 96), for example, draws a distinction between „text“ and the extratextual context which constitutes the „broader environment (linguistic, social, psychological) to which text responds and on which it operates“. Also Duranti and Goodwin (1992: 4ff) still stick to the notion of context in terms of „settings“ and „extrasituational contexts“ which are distinguished from communication, leaving open how the relation between communication and context is to be established. Whereas these anthropological approaches tend to maintain the distinction between communicative actions and a context of a different nature, CA is concerned with the identification of the context as something speakers orient to in their actions. In orientating to their actions, certain 'features of the context' are made „relevant“ (Schegloff 1992). „The idea of context therefore, is not simply concerned with a frame within which an action or activity occurs, but rather an analysis seeks to specify, and provide evidence for, the relevance of features of context which inform the very accomplishment of the participants' conduct“ (Heath and Luff 1992: 312). To CA, different contexts can be considered as „contingent 'transformations', 'adaptations' of casual conversation“, „derivations“ or „variants“ of the basic turn taking model of conversations (Corsaro 1985: 170; Zimmerman and Boden 1991, 15-17), i.e. of the „primary and prototypical form of language use (Heritage 1985: 7). In analysing talk in different organisational settings (informal communication, legal settings, therapy sessions, sales talk etc.), turning to longer stretches of talk (Jefferson 1992), and

comparing conversation in Western culture to those in other cultures (Moerman 1988), CA attempts to show how the respective contexts are produced by specific features of talk (lexical choice, turn design, sequence organisation etc.). CA thus succeeds in identifying a multiplicity of contexts which vary depending on the respective organisation under investigation. Therefore also the features of ‘talk in interaction’ exhibit peculiarities with respect to virtually any setting under investigation. Facing such a variety of different organisations of talk with respect to social settings, one has, however, to ask: can we find some order with respect to these varying contexts? Are contexts just ephemeral, contingent features of situative communicative actions, or are they organised according to some overarching principle?

The answer I want to suggest is as follows: *In arguing that context is being constructed in the very communicative actions which then form part of the contexts, one can, first, conclude that the context of communicative actions are produced by these actions themselves. It is by way of their reflexivity that communicative actions produce their very context. Second, the actors’ consciousness serves as to link communicative actions to the contexts produced by them in terms of time. This explains the role of cognition and the stress we lay on the fact that communication is performed by actors.*⁹ *Third, since we assume that the general organisation of contexts depends on the type of communicative action performed, we can distinguish different levels of contexts depending on the type of communicative action.*

In order to do so, we may find it helpful to turn to Schütz’ theory of social action and social „transcendences“. Although Schutz himself did not develop a theory of communicative action himself, we suggest that a notion of contextualisation by communicative action can be developed drawing on three elements of his theory. (a) In his theory of action, Schütz distinguishes „*direct immediate social action*“ which is oriented towards a copresent participant from *mediated action* which extends action into the „secondary manipulatory sphere“ which lies beyond of what is in reach. (b) Furthermore, in a (widely ignored) categorical distinction, he subdivides the spheres of the social world on three levels, all referring to different kinds of transcendences which are coped with by the interactants.¹⁰ In this understanding, social transcendences can be understood with respect to the questions: How is the problem of intersubjectivity solved? How is the reciprocity of communicative actions accomplished? Since Schutz’ distinctions of different contexts correspond to (c) the

⁹ This is what distinguished the constructivist approach presented here most clearly from systems theory as well as from ‘constructionist’ or ‘discourse’ approaches.

various forms of objectivations elaborated earlier, it seems sound to take these three theoretical elements (types of actions, kind of transcendence and form of objectivations) as a starting point for distinguishing *three horizons of contextualisation*: (1) the immediate we-relation of actual ongoing face-to-face interaction, which may be equated with what Goffman calls the „interaction order“. We will refer to communicative actions on this level as *immediate contexts*. Here interactants communicate by the whole range of bodily symptoms, and the most intense interlocking of motives and dense co-ordination of action occurs. This has to be distinguished from (2) the social world in „potential reach“, towards which we can act and which can act upon us by (nowadays mostly technologically) mediated action by which *mediate contexts* are constructed. And finally (3) actors can act on social collectivities, such as the state, society, the church by the use of symbols, and also the „response“ is „symbolical“: we can call this level transcending the actual and potential reach of communicators the *societal context* since it is also constituted by communicative, symbolic action.

It should be stressed again that all these contexts are constructed by communicative actions. For this reason, we should rather refer to them in the active mode as ‘contextualisations’ i.e. to three different ‘horizons’ of contextualisations. (Within phenomenology, ‘horizon’ has been used to refer to the different degrees of reach of typifications and action projects.) Yet, it is not only for the sake of brevity that we continue talking about ‘contexts’. There is, in addition, a methodological reason for doing so: although being subject to ongoing construction processes in social reality, from the perspective of a scientific method we have to ‘reconstruct’ rather than deconstruct the order of these processes. Context, in this methodological understanding, is a theoretical „second-order construct“ (Schutz 1962) which refers empirically to and has to be distinguished from the ongoing construction processes, the actors’ meanings and the reflexively produced, i.e. contextualised, order of their communicative actions.

IV. 1. Immediate contexts

Schütz’ first type of social action, ‘direct’ or ‘immediate’ social action, corresponds to the immediate contexts. This sphere of face-to-face interaction where both interactants are within mutual reach resembles to what Mead has called the primary „manipulatory sphere“. To

¹⁰ It is well known that Schütz distinguished between three types of transcendences; but it is less well known that he subdivides the mediate level of the social, intersubjective transcendences again in three levels. It is

Schütz, this immediate context is of primary importance since it is this context and only this in which the participants have access to the fullness of one another's bodily symptoms (Schütz 1974: 235); one could say that it is characterised by the broadest range of intertwined modalities of communication, ranging from the visual, acoustical, to the tactile and olfactory. Moreover these „symptoms“ are perceived, interpreted and enacted in, so to say, a holistic way. (In this respect Schütz, like Goffman, lays stress on the essential fact to the presence of bodies.) But there is another reason for the peculiarity of this „pure we-relation“ or „encounter“ (Schütz 1972: 74f) as the „prototype of all social interaction“ (Berger/Luckmann 1984: 31). It is here where the principle of reciprocity is elaborated to its fullest extent. It is here where the actions of A are produced in a „polythetical way“ both with respect to time and modalities, and where they are received by the addressee in shared, common time (which allows for the complex interlocking of action and motives in face-to-face interaction). It is this sharing of the polythetic constitution which is the basis for the „we-relation“.

This stress on the peculiarity and the distinctness of face-to-face interaction can be found also in the work of Erving Goffman. Goffman may be considered as the most important analyst of the immediate context or, as Giddens (1987: 115) puts it, the „theorist of co-presence“, for two reasons: first, he has been analysing the rituals and strategies of face-to-face interaction in more detail than Schütz did; secondly, he himself stressed the distinctness and peculiarity of this „sphere“ which he came to call the „interaction order“ (1981).

In fact, Goffman has not only analysed forms of rituals and strategies within this „order“ (by the use of different metaphors, such as role, move, ritual etc.), he also stressed the contexts created by these actions, which he called, interchangeably, „natural bounded units“, „basic interaction units“, „basic substantive units, their recurrent structures and their attendant processes“ (cf. Williams 1980: 211). And although he rarely mentioned the role of communication in the construction of these units¹¹), he concentrated in most of his later work particularly on the role of communication in „framing“ situations.

The immediate context is mainly made up by the *social situation*, i.e. when at least two interactants are in co-presence.¹² In order to grasp the specificity of the multitude of interactional situations, Goffman analysed different „ambulatory units“ and types of social

exactly this level which is referred to here.

¹¹ Of course, with the exception of his pioneering description of turn-taking (Goffman 1972: 65) and his distinction of two types of communication in his „Presentation of Self in Everyday Life“.

¹² „I would define a social situation as an environment of mutual monitoring possibilities, anywhere within which an individual will find himself accessible to the naked sense of all others who are ‘present’, and similarly find them accessible to him“ (Goffman 1972: 63).

situation („contact“, „encounter“, „social occasion“, „gathering“ etc.) which may provide the basis of the distinction of different kinds of immediate contexts.

In building on the results of conversation analysis, Goffman (1981) also showed that the basic verbal and non-verbal (ritual as well as „systemic“) structures of exchanging actions (such as conversational pair sequences) may constitute a fundamental element of immediate contexts, exhibiting both, a general applicability for the most diverse purposes as well as a very strong „context-sensitivity“, i.e. capacity to shape specific contexts. On the most basic level of immediate contexts we can identify the bounded communicative episodes as *communicative patterns* or *genres* (Günthner/ Knoblauch 1995). Communicative patterns, such as sayings, narratives, greetings and other „genre“-like forms, such as conversion stories, jokes, or tall stories, may be considered as communicative contexts for the particular communicative actions of action sequences by which they are constituted insofar as the actors orient to them and expect them as the longer stretches of action sequences. Commonly, these patterns exhibit an elementary structure of beginning, middle and end which is constructed by the participants. As a frame of communicative orientation and a means of co-ordinating actions, these patterns fulfil the function of relieving actors from the task of negotiating each communicative sequence step by step.¹³ Therefore they may be said to solve a certain communicative problem in such a way as to provide frameworks of expectation in common situation. In the course of their interaction, actors often produce chains of different communicative patterns, i.e. a greeting ritual may be followed by gossip, then by a joke etc. Thus, it may be said that the sequence of certain patterns and genres constitutes specific social (or, to be more exact) communicative situations. Situations which are constructed communicatively can be described in terms of ‘aggregations’ of sequences of different communicative patterns, the typicality of the situation being dependent on the combination of particular patterns co-produced by the interactants. In some cases, the interactants seem to follow typical expectations with respect to their communicative conduct, producing a structured sequence of events; such situations which appear to the observer as more formally patterned may be called „*communicative occasions*“; this holds for example for the “genre“ of medical consultation (Heath 1986), sales speeches (Knoblauch 1987), or Church Assemblies and meetings of „Anonymous groups“ (Knoblauch 1995: 145-161). Communicative occasions seem not only to be structured with respect to the linguistic means applied; also non-verbal communicative actions exhibit a structure with respect to the „shared space“ (which may be, furthermore,

¹³ One should stress that patterns are not rigid norms but that participants may renegotiate or reframe communicative patterns, and very often do so in order to change the definition of the situation.

endowed with diverse other cultural signs), with respect to the expected time shared and, finally, with respect to the situational identities, the participation statuses and the constellation within a participation framework (Günthner and Knoblauch 1995). Whereas all these features of different communicative occasions may vary to a considerable degree, some are characterised by a focused communicative event; in accordance with research in the folklore of communication, we may call these events *performances* (Bauman 1990).

Performances may not only include 'traditional high art' events, but also such diverse events as Brethren-meetings (Borker 1986), tale-singers in Turkish coffee-houses (Basgöz 1975) or publicly staged political debates in front of an audience.

Despite their differences there is one thing these contexts have in common: they are immediate contexts, i.e. they form what Goffman has called a „microecological orbit“ constituted by means of communication. As already mentioned, Goffman was very explicit in stressing the distinctness of this „interaction order“ as a „reality sui generis“ by distinguishing it categorically from what he called the „social order“, i.e. institutional organisation, class differences, modes of production etc.¹⁴ The distinction becomes most clear where Goffman analyses the „interfaces“ between the interaction order and the more traditionally considered elements of social organisation: Goffman considers different kinds of key situations, people-processing-encounters, and ceremonial occasions to constitute such interfaces with the social structure, the political and the economical system. But, surprisingly, although he conceded that letters and telephone conversation constitute special cases of interaction, he did not account for one important „interface“ which is currently becoming so important in our daily lives: mediated communication.

IV. 2. Contexts of mediated communication

The notion of mediation also derives from Schütz' theory of action. By mediated social action he refers to such actions which are either transmitted in space (such as phone calls) or delayed in time (such as letters or testaments). Since it is obvious that phone calls or letters almost by definition communicative, we should refer to *mediated communicative action*. The main feature of mediated communicative action, however, is negative. It is distinguished from the immediate face-to-face interaction by the lack of the participants' access to and use of the fullness of the bodily symptoms and the whole range of intersubjective reciprocity. Whereas immediate contexts are characterised by the „primary manipulative zone“, mediated contexts

are built up within what Schütz (and Mead) called the secondary manipulative zone (Schütz/Luckmann 1979: 69ff, 313).

Mediation is, of course, rendered possible by certain „technologies of mediation“ which are applied in an immediate context. By means of technologies of mediation communicative actions can be rendered accessible to other immediate contexts. The means may be quite diverse: broken branches on trees may signify where to go, the letter may be destined to be read after my departure, the electronic mail or the telephone chat may be used to establish a common, yet mediated context between participants. Yet, despite its ‘mediatedness’, the communality of mediated contexts and the principle of reciprocity typical of immediated communicative action still apply at the immediate form: any communicative action is *per definitionem* designed to be received by someone else, and in case the reception occurs, the understanding, response or reaction establishes a minimal structure on which mediated contexts are built.

It is obvious that there are different degrees of mediation: whereas a chat or a sales talk on the phone establishes a social relation at least for a short „lived time“, the design of an advertisement spot is addressed to mostly anonymous recipients which are conceived of in a very mediated, anonymous and generalised way (be it as the „target groups“ of market research, as exemplified in „focus groups“, as the „implicit readers“ of novelists or as statistical TV watchers). Thus, mediated contexts vary according to the degree of „interactivity“, that is, the possibility of establishing a reciprocal relationship between the participants. In contradistinction to immediate contexts, reciprocity is first restricted with respect to the „fullness of bodily symptoms“ with which we may reciprocally communicate (we may only hear the other’s voice, we may see a digitally produced picture of her, we may only read her letter and not touch her). But even more important, it is characterised by „anonymisation“: The means which are used in mediated communication are dependent on what may be transmitted technically.

On this basis, Schütz (1974: 253ff) already suggested that the use of highly anonymous signs in mediated communication can transform the we-relation of immediate interaction into a „Ihr-relation“ (referring to the second person plural „you“) in which we communicate reciprocally as typical actors on the basis of anonymised signs and emblems. On this ground, Soeffner (1992) has recently argued that in the modern complex society most interactions are guided by standardised emblems and forms of self-representation by which the membership

¹⁴ One should stress that Goffman did not claim the interaction order to be more real or more important - it is just much easier accessible by any person and by the social scientist (1981b: 9).

of „style groups“ are indicated. This argument has been confirmed by recent empirical life-style research (Schulze 1992) which shows that these communicative forms are the basis of the constitution of „scenes“ and „milieus“ that are basically made up of communication and thus constitute mediated contexts on the basis of anonymisation only. By ‘scenes’ we refer to face-to-face setting in which actors are communicating with others on the basis of anonymous typifications, such as ‘raver’, ‘Scientologist’ or ‘nudist’. Milieus are constituted by scenes. Especially with respect to mass communication, this anonymisation becomes quite obvious. In order to maintain the possibility to synchronise intentions and to co-ordinate actions, mediated contexts have an increased need not only for the anonymisation but also for the *standardisation* of the signs. This obviously holds for the traditional means of mediated communication: love letters, war declarations or business orders follow a certain, standardised pattern (which has been subject already to the classical rhetorical analyses); it also holds for the conventional forms of mass communication: advertisement spots, television prayers or radio consulting take on genre-like forms which may become even ritualised and almost „canonised“, like the television sermon. By means of these standardised patterns the action they are intended to perform is conveyed to the addressees. The character of anonymisation holds also for the so-called interactive media; although a broad variety of communicative actions would be conceivable, messages on electronic mail exhibit as strong patterns as the messages on answering machines (Alvarez-Caccamo/ Knoblauch 1991); the same can be said about the new conventions in computer-mediated communication which range from certain signs (such as „BTW“ for „by the way“) up to the already conventionalised design of internet „homepages“. In fact, instead of founding an ‘anarchic variety’ of new forms, in terms of communicative culture these new means of communication trigger a quite small number of new communicative conventions. Because of this standardisation effect of mediated communication, one could even speak of a „secondary traditionalisation of communication“ which builds up the new „media culture“.

Since addressees of mediated communication can be orientated towards only „modo subiunctivi“ (Schütz/ Luckmann 1984: 123), anonymisation even affects the status of participants in mediated interactions: Whereas in phone calls „situated identities“ are built up by standardised means (such as a ‘joyful’ voice, a complacent remark, „giving a mail order“ etc.), phone tags on answering machines help to construct a network of „telephone-relations“, and the participation in an internet address may turn one into a fan of a certain Soap opera. This situated identities become most pertinent in the case of communicatively mediated work, e.g. computer supported co-operative work (Heath et al. 1995). The contexts built up by these

networks consist of series of standardised work activities by which certain tasks (i.e. guiding an aeroplane to the gate) are performed and in which the identity of each participant is defined by this activity.

The standardisation of mediated communication in seems to be a general feature on the part of mediated communication, constituting what we may call media culture. *Media culture* which consists of the communicative conventions in a network of technologically mediated communication, including mass communication between single senders and a mass audience as well as individualised mediated communication, e.g. electronic mail messages to particular receivers (or letters by mail). As Crane (1992) has shown, media culture not only builds on local social occasions in the interaction order (such as urban exhibitions, shows, performances), it may itself take the form of a social event, e.g. the focused interaction of a television audience with a particular TV show. (Of course, there is not *one* media culture, and the investigation of the different contexts which develop on this basis is of high concern for the understanding of modern culture.)

Media culture rests on the material basis of technological mediation systems (which may range from telegraph-lines to satellites). This material introduces an important social structural element into mediated culture (and, as we shall see, in societal contexts). This „infrastructure“ is the basis for the development of *social networks* as a structural component of media culture, i.e. the continuous communicative relations which are built up through mediated communication. The networks can be dependent on regular interaction, such as phone-“elective“ relations. They can depend on the regular anonymous reception of mass-mediated communication (as the fans of some movies), or they can depend more directly on the technical network of the means of communication, such as the internet. Yet, they impose certain structural restrictions on culture: the availability and the accessibility of the systems and their use which introduces „abstract“ social differences of power, wealth, and knowledge on this level.

IV. 3. The societal context, symbolic reality and hegemony

Mediated contexts may be anonymous, or they may be constructed by technological means; yet in principle they are characterised by reciprocity - as passive as the reception by a communication participant ever may be. This feature does not hold if we move on to large social collectivities, such as „the society“, „the nation“ or „the country“. Whereas sociologists traditionally conceive of such phenomena in terms of social structure, from the point of view

of a communicative approach to culture they appear as something which differs from the other two contexts by the fact that they cannot be addressed either by immediate nor by mediated communication. This is also the reason why Schütz conceived of these realities as symbolic: „Social collectivities and institutionalised relations, however, are (...) constructs of common-sense thinking (...). For this very reason, we can apprehend them only symbolically; but the symbols appresenting them themselves pertain to the paramount reality and motivate our actions within it“ (Schütz 1962a: 353). The notion of society as a symbolic reality, however, should neither mean to reify social collectivities nor to ascribe to them an ontological status of their own. Nor should they be reduced to a cognitive category (as e.g. Husserl or, among the social scientists, Cooley did) since their reality is not constructed nor maintained by „cognitive activities“ only. To speak of social collectivities as symbolic realities means that they are contexts which are continuously constructed by communicative actions. Yet, the societal context is the realm of symbolic communication, i.e. of symbolically mediated knowledge and action, the symbolically shaped cosmos of world-views and of the traditions embedded therein (Soeffner 1990). Symbolical communication may even (and has to) make use of the very means which apply in other contexts: of the forms of immediate communication, mediated technology or the signs of anonymous communication. Yet, in contradistinction to immediate and mediated communication, symbolic communication refers to a reality beyond that in which each of the communication partners is communicating. Be it the Prime Minister, the President or the Chancellor, their acts of communication are still located in the interaction order of their life-world and transmitted by television, newspaper or radio. The difference to other contexts consists in the fact that they, additionally, „represent“ something else: they are „appresenting“¹⁵ an order that is not tangible to themselves by means of different symbols: the Stars and Stripes, the title of legitimacy, the ceremonial presentation as the „head of the government“. It is this reference to and representation of an order which makes these actions *symbolic* actions. Thus, as Gumperz (1982) has shown with respect to linguistic minorities (such as Slovenian in Austria, German in Alsace or Catalan in Spain), speakers may communicate their ethnic identity in stressing their membership in a speech community in using the variety of a certain language variety.

A special feature of symbolical communication is to be seen in the lack of reciprocity. This feature may be characterised by contrasting it, again, to a concept by Habermas, since it is exactly this feature which Habermas tried to overcome in his proposal of how to develop a

¹⁵ The notion of „appresentation“ lies at the very core of Schütz' theory of signs; suffice it to say that with respect to symbols the representing sign vehicle thereby „envokes“ something which transcends the reality of

political civic identity within large social collectivities, such as the European Union.

Habermas suggests that such a civic identity may develop if the *citoyens* have the possibility to interact communicatively on a reciprocal basis with this cosmion, by f.e. voting and balloting. However, in suggesting that this reciprocity should be established in some future, he presupposes that currently the European Union already addressed by symbolic communication, i.e. communicative actions which do not presuppose reciprocity.

The symbolic reality of social collectivities is particularly dependent on the means of communication by which it is becomes defined and legitimated to a wider public. Typically, these means of communication are unequally distributed. The different elites of societies dispose of and struggle about the access to these means of communications (an observation which is backed by mass media research). This inequality of the access to and disposal of the means of communication can best be grasped by Gramsci's notion of *hegemony*. Hegemony means that certain social groups define the symbolic values dominant in a certain society (Laitin 1986: 105). The power to define these values is, of course, dependent on the access to the means of communication and the competence of using them. Hegemony is to be distinguished from ideology in that other social groups are not excluded from these values. The symbolic values are rather negotiated with other social groups in order to involve them in the common cosmion. „That is, hegemony is not maintained through the obliteration of the opposition but through the *articulation* of opposing interests into the political affiliations of the hegemonic group“ (Turner 1992: 212). Since it is the articulation of interests, the hegemonial version of the cosmion is, almost by definition, a communicative construction. Hegemonical versions may, of course, be contested, and there may be conflicts about hegemony with different social groups involved. This conflict is reflected in the communicative constructions in what Silverstein (1979) calls the „linguistic ideology“. The very use of certain communicative forms indexicalizes, so to say, social groups. By way of this social indexicalisation, the communicative actions by which the cosmion is constructed, maintained and changed are linked to the social structure: thus it is not only the access and availability of the means of communication, i.e. the political economy, which supports the hegemony of certain groups; hegemonial inequality is expressed in and reflected by the communicative forms, the metapragmatic notions of language use, the relations of genres to social categories, and the linguistic economy.

The unequal distribution of the means of communication may be described in terms of what Luckmann (1986) calls the „communicative budget“, i.e. the totality of communicative forms

which affect a society's continuity and change. Communicative budget refers to the unequal distribution of communicative forms with respect to social milieus and institutional structures. Thus, the notion of a communicative budget also implies the unequal distribution of the means of communication and thereby maintains reflexivity of communication even on the „meso-“ and „macro“-social level: social milieus and institutional structures are not related to, but constituted by the communicative actions which are typical for them. Economical communication, e.g., takes on specific forms which make it observable as being economical; the same holds for religious, political or scientific communication; and even phenomena of institutional dissolution (as the effects of religious „secularisation“) are expressed in and can be seen as constituted by specific communicative forms (e.g. the use of conversion in Anonymous groups).

V. Contexts, culture and intercultural communication

As early as the 1930s Alfred Schutz turned to an analysis of the life-world of everyday life. In his view the life-world in which we live and act is always a social and cultural one. It is culture which bestows the taken-for-granted character on the life world. Culture thus not only comprises the 'mastery' of nature but also people's knowledge, ideas and meanings. Culture involves the set of typifications of objects, ideas and actions, and a system of relevance which guides the preferences for objects, ideas and action common to a certain group. Moreover, culture is not only a „cognitive“ phenomenon of consciousness which only allows us to „interpret“ the world; it also imparts actions¹⁶, and it is an eminent social phenomenon: „Culture and civilisation patterns of group life“ include „all the peculiar valuations, institutions, and systems of orientation and guidance (such as the folkways, mores, laws, habits, customs, etiquette, fashions) which (...) characterises - if not constitutes - any social group at a given moment in history“ (Schütz 1964: 92). It is by way of interactions that cultural meanings are being negotiated.¹⁷ Since this negotiations are performed by communicative actions, the socio-cultural world of everyday life is not only constructed in a continuous process. It is also essentially cultural. Since „only here [i.e. in the world of everyday life, HK] communication with our consociates is possible“ (Schütz/ Luckmann 1984: 306), this sociocultural life-world is built by means of communication. Building on the

¹⁶ It should be stressed that this position is held, for instance, by cognitive anthropology as well as by the sociology of knowledge. Cf. D'Andrade 1995.

theory of Schutz as well as on several empirical approaches to communication, we argued that since the culture of the world of everyday life is constructed by communicative acts, it is, therefore, essentially a *communicative culture*. By communicative culture we want to stress that culture cannot be reduced to knowledge, meaning, or sign-systems only. Communicative culture is neither located in the mind nor in the objectified system or discourse: it is produced, realised, and transformed in communicative actions.

True, the notion of the communicative culture of everyday life is only indicated by Schütz; yet it may provide a foundation for corresponding concepts of culture. Thus Burke (1979: 37) suggests that in history culture can be grasped by means of communicative forms. Wuthnow (1992) pushes this even further with the notion of a „new sociology of culture“ which considers culture to be mainly communicative. Culture consists of the discourses, texts, symbolic practices and communicative events that constitute the ongoing stream of social life. Also Wuthnow and Witten (1988: 53f) suggest to define culture in terms of discourse and practice. From the perspective of the communicative approach, then, culture is not only „enacted“, it is to be seen as a continuous process of the construction of meanings by way of communicative actions.

In drawing on Schutz's theory, we have tried to show that the the order of this construction process is accomplished by means of routinised, typified forms, patterns and conventions of communicative action. On this basis we distinguished different contexts of what Schutz and Luckmann (1979: 25) call „common communicative environments“: immediate, mediated and societal contexts, each being characterised by a specific form of communicative action (face-to-face communication, mediated communication and symbolic communication). The communicative culture consists of the mediated and immediate communicative actions and communicative forms performed in this society. With respect to the social structure, the communicative culture depends on the distribution of the means of communication; but it is even more dependent on the differentiated use of communicative actions and communicative forms by which it is constituted and structured into communicative situations, milieus and institutional organisations.

This notion of cultural context allows us to evade the common distinction of two ontological spheres of contexts, such as an „outer“ social structural context which appears to be „external“ to interaction, and the „inner“ context which seems to be immanent to interaction.¹⁸ The proposed concept of context, rather, suggests that the different horizons of

¹⁷ Geertz (1973: 11ff) also offers a profound critique of the cognitivist approach to culture.

¹⁸ Thus Giddens (1976) suggests to distinguish a context „brought along“ and a context „brought about“.

contexts which have been distinguished analytically are inserted one into another. That is to say: these contexts do not exist in isolation; they are interlocked within one another: „each of us is living in all three spheres at the same time: in the immediate sphere as well as in the symbolically constructed one“ (Soeffner 1990: 67). Thus, by contextualising a certain immediate context (e.g. managers meeting), participants may simultaneously accomplish symbolic communicative acts, thus contextualising their membership to ethnic, national or (with respect to certain symbolically highly charged professions, such as soldiers, politicians, priests or international sportspersons) professional collectivities. Or, to give another example, work in high technology settings is frequently concerned with the management of activities by locally dispersed actors whose actions are coordinated by means of information and communication technologies. Yet, due to the standardised and anonymised features of this technologically mediated communication, the factual use of these technologies depends on and is accomplished by face-to-face communication in the situations in the work situations, thereby linking mediated with immediate contexts. One should also stress that the consideration of three forms of contextualisation is but a heuristic distinction based on general theoretical categories. As the examples have shown, the process of contextualisation demands for much more subtle differentiations

Nevertheless, by way of the general approach presented here, we do not only suggest a refined notion of communicative culture. We also propose a sophisticated access to the problem of intercultural communication and allows us to redefine this very notion. The common understanding takes culture to be something which is bounded and self-contained; this understanding is even presupposed in the notion of intercultural communication which is regarded as communication between bounded cultures. If we, however, conceive of culture as contexts, we can try to discern different aspects of intercultural communication, and we can focus on different aspects of context which do not (as it is currently coined) „enter into“ but constitute interaction. Instead of assuming an apriori boundedness of culture, which may be ‘interpenetrated’ by intercultural communication, culture itself turns out to be constructed by communicative actions. Culture, cultural habits and differences are not isolated entities but are embedded in and constructed by interactive processes (Günthner 1993: 16). Intercultural communication, thence, is not alien to culture but is itself contextualising in the ways described above. This may be best illustrated with respect to the investigation of the phenomenon of code-switching in multilingual societies in which situations of intercultural communication are part of everyday life (Günthner 1993: 13ff). As Gumperz (1982) has shown, the switch of Indian minority language speakers to the majority language Hindi not

just depends on caste relationships; codeswitching rather depends on types of social interactions and situations, such as formal, goal-oriented („transactional“) conversations or informal talk about personal matters. Also speakers' of Slovenian in German speaking Austria codeswitching is dependent on the typification of social situations. This way, certain types of situations and even activities carried out through language in the 'interaction order' are contextualised by the selection of a linguistic code.

Code-switching is also shown to contextualise larger contexts. In an investigation of communicative forms of speakers in different quarters of Belfast, Milroy (1980) has shown that speakers not only contextualise situations but also their membership to specific social networks which thereby are constituted as their respective local speech communities. The reason for the mediation of communicative contexts in intercultural communication can be seen in structural changes of 'ethnicity'. Whereas the 'old ethnicity' has been a „community of the ground“ (Gumperz, in press), a „place-defined group“ (Fitzgerald 1992: 113), being linked by recurrent interaction, the „new ethnicity“ is based on different kinds of communication networks. Communication by different interactive media, such as telephone, the use of mass media (television, radio, newspapers) allows to contextualise this kind of ethnicity as a „community of the mind“, a speech community sharing communicative habits by way of mediated communicative actions. Mediated and mass communication are also the means by which the symbolic reality of speech communities may be produced. Thus Anderson (1988) has shown how newspapers, book print and other forms of media communication led to the construction of an imagined community on a larger scale, such as „nation“. Yet, because of the dependence on the means of mediated communication, the construction of this „imagined community“ is subject to economic developments and political interests. To give an example, the 'symbolic value' of a speech community, such of Hungarian in Austria (Gal 1979), has been deteriorating because of the increasing urbanisation, industrialisation and political centralisation in favour of the German speech community. Moreover, by gaining access to the means of communication, certain „pressure groups“ may attempt to communicate (more or less intentionally and ideologically) ethnicity, social groups and nations (a process which has gained some importance in the recent spread of ethnical conflicts and the creation of 'new ethnicities), and this way constructing these very symbolic contexts.

Therefore the notion of communicative culture built up by different forms of contextualisation in communicative actions seems to be necessary in order to understand the complexity and differentiation of modern intercultural communication. In the face of this view, *what is*

usually considered as one culture turns out to be itself „pluricultural“, consisting of a host of different contexts. The suggestion of distinguishing different horizons of communication may be one way to grasp this culture in a theoretical way. Ethnographic analyses of communication in various sociocultural life worlds may be an empirical way to grasp the difference of culture - if this difference is a relevant feature of actor's communication. Either way, the implication is that cultures in modern societies are structurally characterised by pluralism. As a result, the phenomena hitherto considered as intercultural communication is itself constituting contexts on its own within and as part of pluralistic culture.

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