

Communicating Knowledge across Language Borders “Moderating” as a Communicative Form at Bilingual Social Events among Spanish Speaking Migrants in Bavaria

1. Introduction

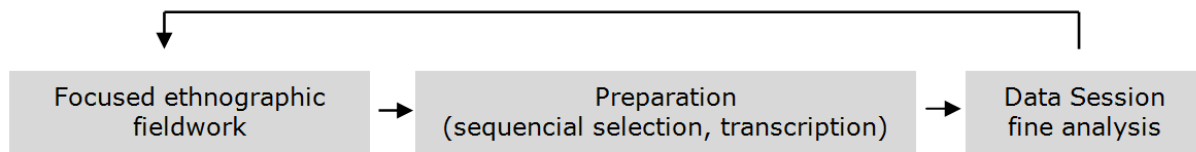
Gatherings (Goffman 1961) are social situations in which participants communicate face-to-face. They can be more or less formal, may include a larger or smaller audience and typically evolve following a predetermined schedule. Its purpose may vary, so may its implementation. However, in either case, participants act and react in each other's immediate presence. This social realm – the “interaction order” in Goffman's term (1983) – constitutes a level of social organization *sui generis*. Studying it in its own right contributes to an improved understanding of the mechanisms of social integration. Nonetheless, it requires particular attention to the details of the on-going action and interaction, focusing on how several communicative modalities work together. Qualitative video-analysis (Knoblauch & Tuma 2011; Heath et al. 2010) as a recently developed instrument for social research is especially fruitful for studying complex social interaction and gaining in-depth insight into unknown social worlds. Following an interpretive approach, this study focuses on social gatherings organized in the context of Spanish-speaking migration in the urban areas of Bavaria. We study the social forms and communicative genres by which knowledge is being distributed both within the migrant population and between migrants and the resident population. When scrutinizing these processes, we pay special attention to the interplay of various communicative modalities, including speech, body movement, gesture, posture, deixis etc. in order to identify the expressed forms of knowledge.

2. Videography and Genre Analyses

Our methods are part of a developing field in qualitative social research that deals with audio-visual data recordings of “naturally” occurring social situations. Methods for analysing social interaction with video have received substantial input according to microscopic analytical approaches based on Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis (Heath et al. 2010). In our project, the analysis aims to describe the patterns of communicative action. Therefore, we conduct ethnographic field research using the method of “focused ethnography” (Knoblauch 2005a). The core data is in the form of recordings of naturally occurring situations (Silverman

2005). This method (Knoblauch & Tuma 2011) emphasises the ethnographic aspects of video analysis. With this practise, we are especially interested in the situational aspects and the ethnographic background knowledge.¹ Sociological genre analysis (Günthner & Knoblauch 1995) provides detailed descriptions and analysis of communicative action. In theory, “communicational problems” can be managed with communicative genres that are solutions to specific problems in the social stock of knowledge. Therefore, these solutions can be seen as highly important for the stability of a culture. Communicational genres are consolidated linguistic patterns that provide specific solutions to communication problems (Luckmann 1988). They act as mediating instruments between social structures and the knowledge of the individual as well as providing material for the *communicative construction of reality* (Luckmann 2006). For these reasons, communicational genres form the institutional core of social life (Knoblauch 2005b).

Figure 1: Iterative Research Process applied in Video-Analysis



Focused ethnography, as used in this project, is part of an iterative research process. To generate the data we follow a theoretical sampling method, which systematically selects similar, deviant and contrasting cases. Each case – a naturally occurring event in the context of migration – requires extensive and time-consuming preparation as well as the practical involvement needed to realize the audio-visual recordings. Once the data has been taped, we begin initial analysis of the raw material. The observation of recursive patterns in the audio-visual recordings allows us to select particular short sequences for further analysis. This selection is one of the critical parts of the research process. It is tailored for the general research interest (in this case: looking for sequences relevant for communicating knowledge) *and* the recursive patterns that might emerge from the material itself, independent from our pre-established research focus. Video-analysis is, not exclusively but for the most part, a method of discovery. The selected sequences are transcribed, prepared for analysis, inspected and discussed in extensive data processing sessions. As we progress, these findings help us to choose further sequences from the data set and continue on to the next step in the method.

1 Focused ethnography concentrates on communicative, situationally and temporary limited field stays, that are audio-visually tape-recorded in order to enable subsequent analysis. Thereby, the researcher tries to survey natural contexts that could have taken place in the same way without his attendance. In addition to the technical documentation and the conservation of communicative contexts, the researcher has the status of an observer in the field. Accordingly, he composes field reports and searches for background information by asking the performing agents. Subsequent analysis of this data takes places in regular data analysis sessions.

3. Communicating migrants' knowledge in staged events

Consider the following sequence from our sample. The discussion was recorded during an arranged information meeting that took place under the auspices of the »Latin-American theme week«, celebrated on a regular basis each year in Nuremberg (<http://www.lateinamerikawoche.de>). A broad alliance of groups and associations involved with the Latin American community organize a series of events, including charity and fund-raising meetings, public rallies and lectures as well as cultural exhibits and performances. These are designed to inform, entertain and raise political awareness of Latin America. The organizers work alongside a broad alliance of civic associations and church-based organizations along with representatives from public administrations who deal with migration issues.

The event we will focus on here took place in the evening and lasted about two hours. Throughout this period, two women sit on stage behind an elevated desk decorated with posters and deliver a speech to an audience of between twenty to thirty listeners. The speech as a whole deals with the subject of the current political, social and economic situation in El Salvador. The particular extract we will focus on, addresses the political role of communal radio stations in this country.



Image 1: In this staged event, the German-speaking female moderator (M) is performing consecutive translation for the Spanish-speaking activist (A). The video extract of the analysed sequence can be accessed at: www.soz.uni-bayreuth.de/de/videoanalysis

Maria, the manager (M) of a local Bavarian aid organisation for Central and South-America, moderates the event. Maria had been previously living in El Salvador for two years. She acts as a translator for the activist's speech. This is delivered by Angela (A), a Salvadorian woman and activist for the radio station, who is exclusively

Spanish-speaking. Angela is the central protagonist of this event, representing a “voice from Latin America”.

Angela’s slow and clear pronunciation allows Maria to understand, memorize, translate and reproduce each part of Angela’s speech. However, her speed and articulation may also be due to her attempts to adjust to a mixed audience of both native German and Spanish speakers, some of whom do not understand Spanish. Although only Maria and Angela have verbal parts in this sequence, it seems clear that this is not a dialogue between the actors on stage, but a *triad* of communication. Both interact verbally with each other not only in front of, but directly addressing the audience. This audience is the third component of the exchange and the main recipient of the communicative activities on stage. Furthermore, both of them have the specific purpose of “informing” the audience (in contrast to other events we have been recording, in which persuasive or ludic elements may dominate). In order to successfully communicate their meaning, it is imperative that they achieve unity between what Angela intended to communicate and Maria’s translation.

The following sequence is initiated by Maria who speaks in well-articulated Spanish. In this 26 second-sequence, Angela and Maria talk extensively. Angela is speaking Spanish and Maria is speaking German as a translation of each part for the benefit of the audience. After finishing her sentence, Angela signals Maria to start the translation with a short pause. Maria will immediately begin her translation. Consider the first part of the original speech delivered in Spanish:

Transcript 1a: sistema democrático

- 1 A: en el salvador las radios
in El Salvador communal radios
- 2 comunitarias se le(s) ve como
are seen as
- 3 los medios opositores (-) ah:
opposing media
- 4 (.) al sisTEMA demoCRATico
against the democratic system
- 5 que hay en el salvador (-)
established in El Salvador

The sequence above (cf. transcript 1 “sistema democrático”) is an example of the recursive communicative phenomenon observable in our data, which will now be described in detail. In terms of speech content, Angela is alluding to the heavy criticism community radio stations are facing in her home country without, however, specifying *who* is attacking them. In line 2, she chooses a passive voice when describing this criticism: “in El Salvador, communal radios are seen as opposing media”, emphasizing the fact that these radio stations were opponents to the established “democratic system” in El Salvador, an ironic statement given the deficient

state of democratic development in El Salvador and the denunciation of those who allegedly fight for democratic improvement as “opponents” (line 3). The “democratic system established in El Salvador” (line 4) is rhetorically working as a *contradictio in adiecto*. Angela emphasises this, making it stand out from the rest of her speech. The irony is expressed through a special pronunciation distinct from standard Spanish (in Spanish, words are in principle “llanas”, i.e. pronounced on the second last syllable). In line 4, she raises the tone of her voice and puts special emphasis on two words: “sisTEMA demoCRATico” by exaggerating the expected prosodic contour.

However, the expression of this irony is barely apparent to the German audience without additional explanation. Consider the way Maria immediately translates the following sentence into German:

Transcript 1b: Quotation marks

- 6 M:hm (-) und ((caughs)) das problem ist auch das
the problem is also that
- 7 in El SALvador eigentlich so kommunale radios
in el Salvador such comunal radios
- 8 immer als opposiTION gesehen werden zum
are always seen as opposition against
- 9 demokratischen (.) an´=in anführungszeichen
the democratic in quotation marks
- 10 demokratischen system in el salvador
democratic system in El Salvador

The translation starts in line 6 with a delay marker combined with a micro-pause, followed by a paralinguistic expression (coughing), and the sentence finally starts with a problematization (“the problem is”). Note that all four of these elements are absent in the Spanish original and therefore constitute additional *contextualization devices*. These contextualization devices are designed to provide the audience with the necessary information to enable them to understand the meaning of Angela’s statement. The transcript already allows us to see the minute details of the interaction. However, the way in which the whole process of communicating relevant “knowledge” is performed by the participants only becomes clear when examining the interplay of verbal and visual conduct, especially the role body language plays in the interaction. This is used in order to enrich the speech with additional elements that help the audience to understand not only the denotative, but also the subtleties of the connotations of Angela’s “message”.

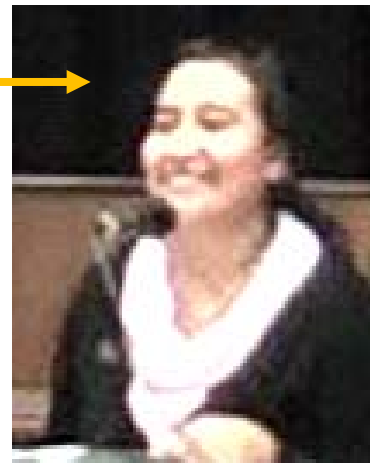
Score extract 1: Expressing irony

verbal interaction

Gesture and facial expression

...al sisTEMA demo-
CRATico que hay en el Sal-
vador

glances in
audience
direction and
smiles



Inspecting video sequence 1 in detail (www.soz.uni-bayreuth.de/de/videoanalysis) reveals some surprising results. After “medios oppositores” (line 3, transcript 1a), Angela leaves a micro pause, followed by “ah:”, another signal of delay. This pause operates as a break for further consideration and is followed by the two specially emphasised words: “sisTEMA demoCRATico”. The functional meaning of this apparently inappropriate accentuation becomes obvious the moment we consider, as well as the verbal interaction, the prosodic and gestural elements involved (cf. score extract 1):

Angela expresses this through pauses and emphasis. She accompanies it with a quick smile at the audience. It is the *simultaneous combination* of lexical, prosodic and mimic elements that produces this communicative form and expresses the intended irony. In other words, her smiling reframes her words, indicating that they should not be taken literally and are intended ironically. Thus, anyone who listened only to the apparent meaning of her words might completely misinterpret her meaning. Although Angela provides additional cues to show her intended meaning through her facial expression, non-Spanish speaking members of the audience might be unaware of or still not able to understand the full meaning of her message. They may simply be confused by the apparently contradictory meanings of the verbal and the mimic modality. Consider how, in the following section, Maria attentively responds to the need to reframe and contextualize Angela’s speech:

Score extract 2: Translating irony

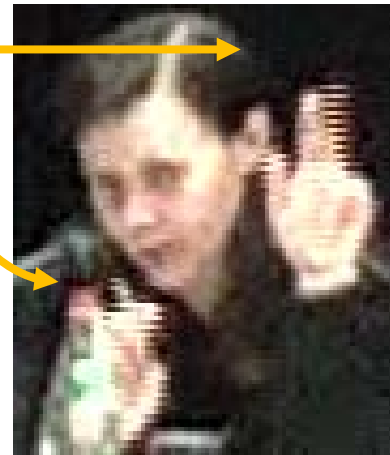
Verbal interaction

Gesture and facial expression

... zum demokratischen (.)

an' in anführungszeichen
demokratischen system in
el salvador

glances up and
symbolises
quotation marks
with both hands



As the video shows, Maria is doing the “translation-work”. This translation-work, however, is not a mere transmutation of information from one language into another. Simple sender-receiver information models usually disregard the most important features of the communication, which has to be scrutinized according to the sequential, moment-by-moment unfolding of events including all the simultaneous actions in all communicative modalities. Focusing on the complexity of human interaction by identifying typical and recurrent communicative forms allows further empirical insight into the microstructures of how particular communicative processes work. Therefore, we have to pay special attention to the ways in which those who interact utilize a particular communicative form and combine communicative elements from various modalities.

In the sequence above we can see how Maria orchestrates her words with facial expressions and how this combination operates. It is the “orchestration” (Schnettler 2006) of several communicative modalities that results in a particular meaning. After saying “demokratischen” (transcript 1b, line 8) Maria interrupts her speech for a moment, and then starts to interpret the irony Angela has implicitly expressed through a verbal and gestured performance (score extract 2). Note that the translation-work she is performing entails the transformation of a certain piece of information - the *ironic nature* of the Salvadorian “democratic system” – from one modality to another. In this situation Maria does not only rely on her mastery of language. She also draws on contextual knowledge regarding the specific historical and current socio-political situation in El Salvador. She may be considered a specialist since she has lived in the country for two years and has been paying particular attention to the news from that country. This specialist knowledge not only qualifies her to moderate this event. In this situation, she can draw on it, enabling her to re-interpret the irony for the sake of the audience who do not, in general even if some are exempt, have the opportunity to draw on similar expertise.

This sequence effectively demonstrates Maria's knowledge that El Salvador does *not* have an established democratic system since she is able to interpret the subtlety of Angela's words. Maria's use of her specialist knowledge in interpreting Angela's performance makes her true meaning accessible for the German speakers in the audience. The discovery of a particular orchestration embedded in a larger sequence is known as "moderation". Analysis of the internal structure and the interaction not only uncovers its functional utility in terms of "translating" one piece of information from one place, situation, etc. to another. As the analysis demonstrates, knowledge production and communication is not only an activity archived through interaction. By the way in which the performance is realized by the actors, they are continuously reshaping, reinterpreting and adding new elements to the process of "knowledge communication".

4. The interactional organization of moderating

As shown by the above analysis of the audio-visual data and the data gathered from many public social events, moderation plays an important role in the process of communicating knowledge. Frequently, in a number of analysed sequences, moderation forms part of a predesigned performative arrangement, especially prominent in staged events. The communicative setting in which moderation occurs can be identified as an *interactional triad*, which consists of the audience, the performers and the moderator. This communicative setting is fundamentally asymmetrical: *Members of the audience* can be characterized as primarily listening and observing. Throughout our data, sequences in which the audience were granted the opportunity to participate actively in the main exchange were comparatively rare. In all cases, this participation only partially took place and was usually scheduled towards the end of the event. Nevertheless, the spectators are a crucial part of the moderation triad, since the performance is intended for them and meaningless in itself.

In this communicative triad, the *performers* play the role of "experts". Their task is to communicate their specialist knowledge so that it can be understood by the audience. Their performance is closely related to the main topic of the event. Consequently, their activities are dominant within it, both in terms of duration and intensity. The *moderator* plays a subsidiary part. He introduces, frames or brings the interaction to a close. Regardless the overall purpose of the event (to inform, to entertain, to solve problems; cf. next chapter for details), moderating is concerned with the opening and closing of the event, the introduction of the programme and information on its progress, the presentation of guests and the introduction of the remaining performers.

Indisputably, moderation is a general communicative feature found in all sorts of events, not exclusive to migration contexts. In our data sample however (for details, see above) we identify specific elements related to migration. This case is significantly different with regard to the communication situation in which the modera-

tion operates. Due to the language barrier between the Spanish-speaking radio worker, Angela, and the mostly German-speaking audience, Maria cannot address the audience directly. Her moderation does not simply serve the purpose of politeness or simply pleasing Angela as the event's main protagonist. Maria's moderation is a necessity, an actively designed and performed communicative activity, which is vital for the success of the event. Therefore, Angela speaks slowly and clearly enabling both the moderator and the Spanish-speaking individuals in the audience to understand her. Our research in similar contexts shows that foreign language speeches are especially reliant on specific gestures and mimes.

As shown in the example, moderation accomplishes considerably more than a literal translation. In order to meaningfully translate the irony, Maria uses prosodic markers (delay signals and emphasized pronunciation), gestures and facial expressions. But even the identification and application of all of these characteristics does not guarantee an adequate interpretation. This is only achieved using Maria's knowledge regarding Angela's social, cultural and political context. In addition to the correct interpretation of Angela's performance, it is important for the moderator to "read" the audience and infer its knowledge of context and understanding. Only then is Maria able to provide the required contextualization. Accordingly, Maria's role can be summarized as a *cultural mediator* between performance and audience.

5. Moderation as reflected in popular manuals

Based on our data, we have, so far, analysed some of the internal and interactional characteristics of moderation as a communicative form and identified the moderator of our sample as cultural mediator. With the purpose of taking a first step towards observing the external structural elements, we briefly consider the broader aspects of moderation as reflected in popular communication manuals. Moderation is currently used as a synonym for "processual design" (Seifert 2003: 75). Seifert points to the connection between the etymology of "moderation" and "temperance". He claims that two main uses of the concept have recently become significant. One for denoting a form of communication frequent in the context of mass-media and another for naming a particular social technique (Geißner 1993: 57f.). In media contexts, entertainment moderation is distinguished from journalistic moderation. The predominant purpose of moderation in the context of entertainment is to build "rhetoric bridges" (Seifert 2003: 75ff.). In contrast, the purpose of journalistic moderation is to produce information for an interested audience (ibid.).²

2 Seifert distinguishes between three types of moderation according to the dominating communicative purpose shaped after the three fundamental rhetoric functions and called: entertainment (*Unterhaltung*), information (*Information*) and problem solving (*Problembearbei-*

However, if understood as a social technique, moderation takes place in social contexts such as family therapy as well as in operational, organisational or public municipal development. There, its purpose is to mediate between the diverging views, efforts and desires of competing actors in in pursuit of reconciliation (Seifert 2003: 78). In similar contexts, Ziegler (1992) describes the desirable qualities of the moderator in the idiom of popular science. According to his statements, a “good” moderator is incorruptible and influential, has competence and a social reputation. As a “moderate” personality he must have the ability to sympathise with others in order to act “decisively”, motivate, animate and guide his audience (ibid.: 227f.).

However, our video analysis illustrates important differences in the features reported by the literature as relevant for a successful communication. The dominant, pre-set topic of the event is of relevance here. The execution of moderation varies according to the setting. If this setting is characterized by an informative purpose, as in our example, the priority is the accurate and thorough communication of knowledge to the audience, to which the moderator must contribute. In contrast, during a panel discussion or a public debate, the elements of control and moderation are dominant. In an entertaining event the telling of anecdotes or jokes may appear in moderation.

Examining the model sequence reported above allows us to further differentiate between moderation patterns and moderation forms. Whereas *moderation patterns* are the structural components of moderation in a specific communication form, *moderation forms* describe the ways in which these patterns are utilized in and through the interaction. A moderation pattern may include a welcome followed by an introduction of the topic of the event. The moderation form, however, can vary if, for example, the moderator uses certain types of expression or chooses to implement elements of the moderation pattern befitting the activity.

The analysis shows that the question of “best practice” must be considered for communication patterns in the context of moderation in migration. Unlike conventional guidebook literature on the subject of presenting and moderating, our analysis does not answer the question of what type of moderation is most appropriate. Neither do we primarily strive to determine the criteria of communicative success. Instead, we are searching for the answer to the more basic question of how communicative activities operate within a particular situation. Accordingly, a high-resolution chronological analysis of its development illustrates the internal mechanisms by which the particular communicative form of moderation works in this

tung) moderation. Entertaining moderation serves to build rhetorical bridges. Examples can be found in festivities or celebrations (direct moderation) or quiz programmes broadcast on television, radio or on the internet (indirect moderation). Informative moderation takes place on roadshows such as readings (*Leserforen*) or even talk shows. For the open communal space these can be social gatherings of clubs (*Vereinsversammlungen*), for the private familiar space divorce mediations (*Scheidungs-Mediation*) or family therapy sessions. Workshops for conflict-solving are examples of moderation taking place in the organization or business domain.

context. Combining the results obtained from both analyses – videographic micro-analysis enriched with ethnographic contextualization – allows us to describe outcomes that may also be used for more applied purposes, such as informing communication practices in migration contexts.

Besides the risk of the moderator misunderstanding the performance, there is also the danger of them misjudging the audience's knowledge. The latter can place restrictions on communication, for instance, when the moderator disregards necessary contextualisation. Or, in the opposite case, the “over-contextualisation” of an already well informed audience might be conceived as inappropriate, superfluous or even patronising, resulting in a bored or even irritated audience.

Our analysis of the audio-visual data is still underway. It would therefore be premature to draw final conclusions at this point. However, the results of our study so far seem to confirm the interpretation that the communication of knowledge in migration settings depends on certain performance prerequisites. Our analysis also indicates criteria for successful moderation and cultural mediation in the migrational context. Our future efforts in this project intend to collect and consolidate the findings of communicational patterns in the context of integration.

Comparison with other cases has shown that the accomplishment of this communication pattern for knowledge transmission depends on how the communication triad is used. Successful “transfer” of knowledge is, however, always dependant on the moderator's ability to recognize these capabilities and to adapt his moderation to them. Further study of the relationship between the event design and the on-going performance ability of the triad-members is still required. Our analysis aims to understand whether the moderation pattern varies according to the context, and if so, how.

6. Research on knowledge and migration

Video-analysis of situated interaction is an expanding area of research. Numerous studies exist today, mainly in the fields of science, technology, education or communication research. Within migration studies, however, video-analysis is a new tool. Therefore, in this section we will discuss the broader methodical implications of our research. We argue that our interpretive approach allows us to study migration from a novel perspective. Current research on migration focuses mainly on the dynamics of migration processes themselves (Pries 2001: 12, 32; Han 2005: 69; as an outstanding example see Delia Nicoue's multi-sided approach to this issue). Our analysis is focused on a sociological perspective grounded in the new sociology of knowledge (Berger & Luckmann 1991/1966). It concentrates on the social situations that emerge from the dynamics mentioned above, which become particularly important in certain situations of “contact and motion zones” where migrants and members of the resident population interact. We call these situations “intercultural

situations”.³ Interaction in these situations is structured according to the typical differences in knowledge between “strangers” and “locals” (Schutz 1944). Our analysis of the face-to-face communication in migration situations draws on previous ethnographic research in the *small social life-worlds* of ethnic communities in Germany and its integrative and segregative aspects (Zifonun 2010, 2008; Zifonun & Cindark 2004). This is particularly relevant in relation to the communicative patterns than can be found in the context of integration.

With this perspective, we try to raise awareness of non-regular migration. Largely unnoticed by the majority of the German public, a recent and significant shift has occurred in the evaluation of migration, in both economic and in political respects. Today, political leaders and representatives from private enterprises and firms constantly praise the potential of migrants. This is because those in power are realizing that migrants might provide the resources required to fill the gaps that the demographic decline is leaving in welfare, social security systems and the labour market. Migration need not be stopped any more but must still be controlled and governed.

This paradigm shift induced a number of political demands, including calling “highly qualified professionals” from abroad, promises to improve educational opportunities for young immigrants and the recent appeal to harness the labour potential of the immigrant citizens already settled in Germany who have not yet been integrated into the job market. These citizens are often very well educated, but possess qualifications and skills that are not officially recognised by German authorities and institutions. Counteracting this “brain-waste”⁴ in order to benefit from the reservoirs of unused faculties and resources these migrants possess seems to be one of the most important challenges for the future of our society, which faces remarkable demographic change and an increasing lack of professionals.

The projects of the Bavarian Research Network Migration and Knowledge (ForMig) are dedicated to exploring the potential of migrants in Bavaria. Their research is carried out from their particular disciplinary angle using complementary methods, both quantitative and qualitative. Each individual project, however, aims for more than just the identification of unused and economically valuable “cultural capital” (Bourdieu 1983: 53ff.) in order to allow it to be utilized. Above all, they intend to examine the knowledge of migrants, focusing on the “mechanisms” of its transfer and the creation of new knowledge in the host society (ForMig 2009). Beyond the specific academic contributions of each discipline to migration research, the network hopes to counter a flawed view of migration and integration in the German public and media by providing a differentiated description of its research results.

3 Soeffner & Zifonun (2005) argue that social differentiation should not be conceived as a only product of internal dynamics and social processes within our society but as being decisively influenced by *transnational, global* forces from outside. Social situations are shaped by what the authors describe as structural “interculturality”.

4 See Englmann & Müller (2007) comprehensive study about the obstacles migrants face when searching for recognition of their foreign qualifications in Germany.

Our project “Communicating Knowledge in Social Gatherings: Focused Ethnographic Data Collection and Video Analysis of Migrant Knowledge” contributes to the network by allowing communicative activities to be differentiated and understood in the context of migration. Our questions are: How is knowledge communicated in public and semi-public events? What symbolic and ritual forms of communication are being used in these performances? The data is examined according to what (1) is being communicated by whom (2), how (3), and for what purposes (4). In this process, (1) is not relevant to context, but only to the object (stock of specialist knowledge) of the knowledge transfer. Most important, however, seem to be the properties of the agents (2) who determine the communication structure (3) themselves. In the example above, both the properties of the agents and the communicational structures have been reconstructed accordingly in order to provide results on the communication structures of their particular communicative form. According to the sociological concepts the new sociology of knowledge serves to elaborate (Berger & Luckmann 1991/1966; Schutz & Luckmann 1973, 1989), knowledge should not be defined in positivist terms as an external category. Knowledge is both individual and social: individual in the sense that it is indispensably tied to personal experience, competence and performance; and social because its distribution, objectification, validation and legitimization are bound to social interaction processes. It is obvious that knowledge does not exist separately from society. Empirically, knowledge can only be studied in terms of communication, taking into account all communicative modalities, such as verbal, gestural, facial and postural expressions.

The framework of our research determines the field in two ways. On the one hand, it is localised to the Bavarian region and the urban centres of Munich, Nuremberg and Augsburg, on the other hand we focus mainly on Spanish-speaking contexts. Within Bavaria, these three cities show a high percentage of migrants in their population.⁵ Within those borders, we have collected an extensive body of real-life video data including 24 open social events. Thematically, these events include cookery and language courses, musical and cultural festivals, readings, intercultural open air events and festivals of national-historic content.

7. The communicative environment

The remaining chapters of this article will discuss knowledge and migration within the research context including reference to further methodological and theoretical properties. Referring to our on-going data analysis, we have discussed the special role of the recursively occurring communicational structure, observable in the field,

5 The average percentage of citizens with migrant background in Bavaria is 19.4%, but it is much higher in these three cities. In Munich it reaches 35.2%, in Nuremberg 38.3% and in Augsburg even 39.4% (2010).

described as moderation. In this process, we look for the specific ways in which this structure solves communicational problems (Ulmer 1988: 20), especially in multi-lingual settings, and the relation of this structure to the *communicative environment*. A definition of this environment will be given below.

From a sociological perspective, our research focuses on communication in naturally occurring contexts in the region that is the recipient of migration. We are not primarily concerned with the process of migration itself, but rather with the resulting forms of public social gathering that are observable as outcomes of the diverse migration into our country. The migration process in its macro-societal dimension can be understood through recently developed approaches such as the cumulative causation concept (Massey 1998) or the theory of transnational social spaces (Pries 1996, 2001).

With our research, we refer to the typology of “migrant social worlds” (Soeffner & Zifonun 2008) and phenomenological tradition. Here, the environment is understood as a shared stock of social knowledge, routines and patterns of interaction. In general, the borders of an environment are drawn where shared assumptions, common interpretations and actions are no longer employed and expected behaviours are not fulfilled (ibid. 120). The communicative environment we have mentioned is understood as an addition to the five environments (migration environment, segregation environment, assimilation environment, marginalization environment, and intercultural environment) typified by Soeffner and Zifonun (2008: 120ff.). The core of this environment is established by the public gatherings of people who aim to combine sociocultural or political contexts from different parts of the world in one place. During these events a substantial part of the typical “communication within” (Schulze 2005: 174) takes place in an especially concentrated form. Related to this environment are those members of migrant groups, migrant and cultural associations, private and local political organisations who regularly participate in sociocultural and political activities during public events. Similar to the intercultural environment, we understand these agents as egalitarian amongst themselves but *unlike* the intercultural environment, the communicative environment includes a special interest in the communication of the thematic differences found in the events. What is unusual is that the interaction of those foreign to the environment in these events is especially prevalent in this environment.

In many cases, the events we are studying are (co-)organized and directed by groups and associations within the communicative environment that can be counted as providers of origin-specific “migrant knowledge”. Migrant knowledge can be understood as a stock of specialist knowledge that emerges from different sociocultural experiences, matters of cause and gained skills. This type of knowledge is expressed through forms of communication that define this difference. This means that what is common knowledge in one place becomes specialist knowledge in another (Kissau 2010: 360). As well as migrants that have their social origin in a specific region, non-migrants can be counted as holders of this stock of specialist knowledge. This can be the case when they are permanently located in the commu-

nicative environment (t. ex. as family members) or have intense experience in the respective region of origin. One result of our research that effects migration theory is that the label “migrant association” should be restricted in its use. We are discovering that these associations not only play a crucial role in the process of integrating migrants into the host society, as has been noted earlier (Heitmeyer), but also constitute zones of “cultural contact” themselves. All the groups we have been examining were not exclusively composed of one ethnic group, nor did they exclude particular members. As well as people with a migration background, we always find people from the host country participating in these events. Among these participants are family members (partners, children of migrants) and those who frequently participate, both with and without migration experience, and are interested in the subject of the particular groups. Regarding migration theory, the associations we are studying are not only important because of their role in identity-building within the diaspora (Lehmann 2001: 169), or as mediators and bridges between home and resident culture (Cappai 2000). Both are undeniably important functions with reference to the maintaining of the traditions of their emergent society in the receiving society. More importantly, they represent a specific place in modern societies, not hidden in the backyard of modernity, but at its forefront. They create spaces of intercultural interaction in which its members interact not only through the exchange of knowledge but create areas of contact to provide optimum conditions for innovation and the creation of new knowledge. Therefore, our experiences in the research praxis provide a strong argument for the integrative character of these events within the communicative environment. Therefore, the results of our field research also provide some information about integrative contexts.⁶

8. Conclusion: Social events as spaces of communicating variety

Communication in the communicative environment is determined by structural factors, such as the origin of content and its spatial and temporal realisation while the communication is also dependent on the present subjects and their relationships with each other. There exists a wide range of open social events in Spanish-speaking contexts. This includes, for instance, Cuban cookery lessons, Spanish Christmas song performances, a Mexican mariachi ensemble concert, stage plays, presentation of children aid projects and a recital by a well-known Argentinean writer.

Despite thematic differences between each event, the analysis reveals the common, comprehensive communication structures on which we focus. Basically, this setting can be described as being located between two poles on a dichotomous scale. The first pole signifies the informal *ad hoc communication* that appears in the spatial

6 Integration must not be conceived as result of a process but – following the idea of socialisation – as a process itself that emerges from continuous mutual interaction (Soeffner & Zifonun 2008: 118).

and temporal frame of the event. This form of face-to-face communication varies in location, time frame and personal awareness. Furthermore the communication is decentralised so that it is not accessible to all of the visitors to an event. The second pole defines strictly formalised interactions, e.g. performances that are locally bound and cover a specific theme. This pole is realised within a well-defined personal frame and a limited amount of time. The contents of this performance are not only known beforehand by the organisers but also by the visitors. This pole also shapes the official frame of the event. As “focused communication” (Goffman 1961), these contexts are structured in terms of a stage performance (such as a planned and practiced band gig, a presentation or an author’s reading) and as such are inherently accessible to each and every participant.

The presentation of formal communication in the field is recursively implemented as a triad. Participants are (1) the performers, who communicate specific knowledge while performing, (2) the audience, who receive this performance and (3) subjects, who act as mediators between both groups. These mediators we call moderators according to our results as demonstrated above. As we have shown, this role is not only an embellishment of the event, but an essential part of successful communication. The success of communication at formalized events within the communicational environment is achieved and influenced by these moderators through their expertise and knowledge of multilingual contexts. As a matter of course, moderators can fail in their task due to various reasons (cf. pp 8-11). However, as this on-going analysis shows, there is the possibility of determining the structure and requirements of successful communication in migrational contexts. This can lead to better recognition, integration and understanding of migrants in the receiving countries concerned.

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