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What's the Boss Doing? Everyday Communication of High-level Personnel[1]

Abstract

The following analysis explores the nature of everyday activities of people in economic leadership positions.[2] It inquires as to the institutions and people they are in contact with, and the way they communicate with them. First, I will present existing studies in this field and the ethnographic procedure of this study. I will then describe the communicative activities of high-level personnel and their communication networks based on observations. These are then linked to their communicative tasks and types of interaction. Finally, I will discuss some characteristics of the communicative style.

Introduction

The leading figures of a society, such as the Federal Republic of Germany, appear to be old friends. We see them day after day in the media, they tell us about their plans and achievements, their expectations and fears – they almost seem to be addressing us personally via the TV-screen. Thus, we feel we know them and are communicating with them, even if the communication may be a little one-sided.

Media presence, however, is but a small part of the everyday life of leaders; moreover, it concerns only a fraction of the elite, mainly people in sectors such as politics, economy, and associations, and to a lesser degree in administration and science. What, one might ask, do leaders do when they are not at the center of public attention, what do they do all day?

This is one of the questions raised by a study on the "Communication of Societal High-level Personnel," itself part of a broader research project on "Communicative Social Styles," which is conducted at the Institut für deutsche Sprache (IDS) in Mannheim. This project aims at describing characteristics and functions of communicative social styles in important

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[1]   Translated from German by Stephanie Morris.

[2]   (Transl. note:) The German term "Führungskräfte" has no direct translation in English. The translation makes use of a variety of expressions in an attempt to accurately render the meaning of the German term, namely: *high-level personnel, leadership personnel, people in leadership positions, leading figures,* and *leaders*.

dimensions of society in Germany, and to elaborate their importance for the social identity of members of society, for processes of integration, differentiation, dissociation and exclusion. Relevant dimensions are work, leisure time, age, public life, private life, new media and cultural background – and also the vertical dimension of society, which is the focus of this paper.[3]

One of the basic assumptions of this research project is that styles of communication reflect the specific requirements faced by the respective groups in their social world.[4] These requirements shape communicative activities in a typical way and make it recognizable for the members of the community, thus enabling them to have a part in the community as well as separating them from other social groups. This has been shown for the world of "ordinary people" (Keim 1995), and the same is true for a society's elite. Even more so since the results of participant observation and explicit statements of all persons studied and interviewed characterize their work as "one hundred percent communication."

The following analysis explores the nature of everyday activities of people in leadership positions, it inquires as to the institutions and people they are in contact with, and the way they communicate with them. The focus will be mainly on the leadership personnel of a society's economy, in order to look at the typical features of this specific sector. First, I will present the existing studies in this field, and I will explain the ethnographical procedure of this analysis. After having illustrated the communicative activities of high-level personnel with the help of an observation protocol, I will seek to reconstruct the communication network of high-level business personnel. I will also describe communicative tasks and the types of interaction that are linked to their communicative activities. Finally, I will briefly present some characteristics of the communicative style of leadership personnel before outlining further steps of analysis.

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[3] The following studies have hitherto been carried out as part of the research project: Keim (2002, in press a-b), Schmitt (2002), Schmitt/Brandau/Heidtmann (1999), and Spranz-Fogasy (2002).

[4] On the concept of social worlds, cf. Kallmeyer (1995), Müller (2002), and Schütze (2002).

1.   Leadership personnel in science

Linguistic research has produced only few studies on the oral communication of high-level personnel. Holly's analysis of the language of politicians (1990), and various studies on the communication of politicians and other societal leaders (e.g. Atkinson 1984, Klein 1989, Kindt 1995, Diekmannshenke/Klein 1996, Harras 1999, further literature in Holly 1990), contains analyses of patterns of interaction and argumentation, analyses of institutional constraints, on the diversity of communicative tasks, on particular types of interaction and specific functions of action, as well as analyses of semantic and syntactic patterns. Contrary to their original purpose, the results of these studies can be interpreted from a communication-typological and communication-stylistic standpoint.

Other approaches to research on societal leaders can be found in political science and sociology in the context of the so-called elite-research. The extensive and diverse literature on management- and leadership-training, or on leadership styles, that has been published in the fields of business administration, psychology, and speech sciences, however, cannot serve as a basis in this respect (e.g. Bartsch 1994, Breisig 1990, Garfield 1995, Geißner et al. 1998, Grunt/Zündorf 1980, Ivey 2000, Minssen 1999, Neuberger 1984, v. Rosenstiel et al. 1991, Städler 1984, Wever 1994, Wiendieck 1990, Witt 1993). These studies are essentially founded on macroanalytical premises drawn from industrial and organizational psychology, as well as from organizational sociology or on assumptions deduced from speech sciences. Leadership styles and recommendations of conduct or communication are often put forward on this basis. However, more often than not, these recommendations are postulated without having been studied in an empirical communicational context.

In political science, research on elites has a long tradition (for a summary, cf. Endruweit 1997). A series of extensive studies exists in this field, the most recent one being "Eliten in Deutschland" (*Elites in Germany*) by Bürklin et al. (1997), that can be considered the continuation of work by Wildenmann, Hoffmann-Lange (1992), Kaase, et al. (in detail in Bürklin et al. 1997). All together, these studies can be regarded as a cross-section of the evolution of societal elites in the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) after World War 2.

The empirical research performed in political science is based mainly on surveys and interviews. The starting point tends to be the so-called func-

tional or positional approach, i.e. the determination of leadership positions defined institutionally, as approaches focusing on origin, decision-making, power, professional value or individual contribution raise a number of theoretical and methodical problems with regard to representative selection (cf. Bürklin et al. 1997:15 et sqq.; Bude 2000; Hradil 1980; Schluchter 1963). In this context, institutions are assessed according to their function within the society of the FRG.

The research in political science divides today's society into sectors. According to this point of view, relevant sectors are politics, administration, administration of justice, business/financial economy, associations (business associations, unions, trade organizations, central municipal corporations, environmental and consumer associations, EU-organizations, etc.), media, science, culture, Church, military, etc. Within and among these sectors various factors are examined, such as the degree of openness, origin, ways of social advancement, circulation, consensual integration of the elites (horizontal integration), potential for integration with regard to society (vertical integration), patterns of interaction and networks, integration and segmentation, political attitudes, values, problem awareness, autonomy, and potential for cooperation, etc.

The sociological research into elite studies has other objectives. After having long avoided further development of a conceptual approach due to the perversion of the notion of elite during the Nazi period, sociologists followed the Anglo-Saxon tradition, which conceives elite as a non-normative sociological category (Dreitzel 1972). In doing so, they take an interest in the social structure of a society, in the conditions of preservation and alteration of the social structure, in the generation and tradition of norms, in the recruitment of the elite (e.g. Hartmann 1996, 2000, Herzog 1982) and its function in the context of cultural sociology (cf. Bottomore 1966, Boudon/Bourricaud 1992:*Eliten*, Dreitzel 1962, Jaeggi 1967). More recent sociological research on social inequality examines situations of living, and ways of life, but, in doing so, hardly looks at the upper strata of society (cf. e.g. Kreckel 1983, Berger/Hradil 1990).

In the above-mentioned disciplines of social science, societal factors are analyzed macroscopically. The concrete communication of leaders, however, is at the most analyzed in its institutional context (cf. Sauer/Schnapp 1997), not as the working manner that determines their everyday life.

2. An exemplary case

So, what does a boss do in a day's work? – Here are some first impressions that arose from the ethnographical notes of a day's observation:

9:00   The BOSS[5] arrives at her company (after a two hour journey during which she was permanently on the phone).

9:05   to 9:15 Private meetings with her personal assistant discussing schedules, and with the director of the department for information technology (IT) on the question of succession, as he will presently leave the job.

9:16   I am welcomed as a visitor and ethnographic observer.

9:17   Phone call from a company employing handicapped employees about the telephone installation that is about to become available. The BOSS declines the offer on the grounds that the company is too profit-oriented.

9:20   Brief talk with the ethnographic observer; the BOSS had planned to spend half an hour on this talk, but now changes her schedule.

9:25   E-mail check: about 50 messages that arrived during the weekend are dealt with. The mail includes the following: applications for a part-time job, a message from a Swedish franchise-partner on a planned advertising campaign, an up-date on market discounts of other firms from the temporary sales manageress, instructions to a Spanish subsidiary firm to rent representative premises on the Ramblas in Barcelona (the BOSS forwarded this e-mail to an intern collaborator, who is in charge of the Portuguese market; from the Iberian Peninsula, the company plans to build up a branch in South America – "a gigantic market!").

9:50   Meeting with personal assistant in which the applications for the part-time job are discussed and sorted out, the assistant is instructed to ask about salary requirements; discussion of the temporary internal succession of a colleague and consideration of a possible external successor; announcement of a letter of intent for the collaboration with a large group of laboratories; the BOSS had been able to make this agreement at the weekend (with the help of a well-prepared goods basket), the letter must be sent off before twelve o'clock; information on an event on Saturday in the city she lives in: at a concert held for the demission of a prominent honorary consul, arrangements were made with ministry officials on the setting-up of an international call center (see 10:20).

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[5]   For the purposes of this account, the person in focus will be described in her function; this is emphasized by capital letters. Further information on the company and its manager can be found subsequent to the observation protocol (A particular problem in studying high-level personnel lies in the handling of confidential data. In this specific case, however, no obligations regarding confidentiality were imposed. It would therefore be possible to reconstruct the company based on the available data. However, I considered this an unnecessary exercise).

10:03 Phone call with the company's tax consultant on the restructuring of the company; the office is asked to evaluate the project as far as tax matters are concerned, and to develop concepts that can be achieved in two months time; sections that have hitherto been part of the internal firm structure (marketing, IT, call center) are to become independent services, as partners with Limited Liability (in German: GmbH); the BOSS expects an efficiency boost as soon as the new companies invoice independently; a meeting is arranged.

10:10 Phone call to the image-agency that is working on a new concept for the company; the BOSS asks the agency not to rush the conception of the campaign until the new firm structure is apparent and until the results of the tax consultant are available; this issue is to be dealt with again by the personal assistant in the 44th calendar week.

10:20 The BOSS calls the director of the local job center and tells him of her conversation with the ministry officials of the ministry of trade; she arranges a meeting for the next day in which the setting-up of an international call center will be discussed, an unprecedented venture in Germany that experts consider impossible; the BOSS nonetheless wants to take the risk: "I'm all the more determined!"...

The above mentioned series of events that took place during the first hour are part of more than 60 events, some of which are in turn made up of several minor events, that I made note of in the seven hours I spent in the company of an independent business owner. The BOSS is a businesswoman, who has built up a mail order firm in the medical sector. Her company is a company of women, at present it has about 150 women employees and a "male quota" of about 20% (a figure which the BOSS is not planning on increasing!). What is more, the BOSS takes an active part in social and political issues concerning the qualification of women in business and in institutions.[6] She is also an art patron: The company building is laid out in a very modern and appealing way and contains many works of art, as well as so-called creativity-rooms for meetings.

The phone rings non-stop throughout the day: The callers are principal clients, ministry officials, competitors, tax and business consultants, as well as, within the company, the accounts department, the call center, the marketing department, the laboratories. In between these telephone calls, she makes a couple of private calls concerning the renovation of her flat. She converses with collaborators on publicity measures, on the letter of intent mentioned in

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[6] Amongst other things, she is chairperson of a nation-wide initiative for the promotion of women in business and in public institutions, an initiative that has the support of some very well known people in Germany.

the above protocol (a seven-digit turnover is involved), on misleading product-information and the necessary corrections in the catalogue, on legal regulations for trainees, on a company chronicle, and so forth.

Summarizing and generalizing these activities, the image of the manager as communication switchboard emerges, in which communication shows the following features: The succession of interlocutors, topics, and tasks is rapid, brief sequences of interaction alternate with long and detailed ones, conceptually relevant conversations come immediately after trivial ones.

The day described in this study may not be a completely ordinary working day, due to the projects of restructuring, but it certainly is not an unusual one. The BOSS arrives at the company, seizes all the batons and starts a juggling act – this was the picture that immediately came to my mind on that day, and during the whole course of my participant observation. Another thing is just as clear: Her activities are pure communication – with some specific characteristics: Almost all communication consists in channeling information towards either decision-making or giving instructions. Only twice on the above presented day of observation does the manager's communication have a different orientation: In business negotiations with the representative of a group of 150 laboratories, and during the organizational meeting with a ministry official about the international call center. Verbal offers are at the center of these conversations; decisions and instructions are obviously the responsibility of the interlocutors.

The mentioned approximate features of action are of course integrated in a series of other activities, such as *procuring and providing information, discussing and solving problems and conflicts, defending an opinion*, and so on, which fill up the day of our manager.

3. Analytical approach and methods

Determining such communicative features is the objective of the first analytical steps when studying communicative styles of societal high-level personnel. The study includes a whole series of people who hold leadership positions in politics, administration, science, associations, and – as we have just seen – business. The basic questions examined in the study aim at (a) determining common elements in the communicative activities of high-level personnel that are relevant for stylistic analysis; (b) determining sector-specific features of communicative styles; and, at a later point in the study, (c) also determining the importance of self-perception, and the perception by

others, for the social positioning of high-level personnel in the society. The selection of high-level personnel is defined by the concept of positional elite (cf. Bürklin et al. 1997:15 et sqq.) developed in political science: The persons observed are at the very top of institutions that have an important place in society, and thus exert a specific, regular, and firm influence on socio-political developments of the FRG.

3.1 *Ethnographic procedure*

These persons are to be analyzed in a process composed of several steps. Before making contact, the Internet and various print media are searched, looking for information on the person and the institution in question. In this way, the observer is in the position to address the object of his research personally by referring to communicative characteristics assigned to him or her by public opinion, as well as to their own ideas of communication.[7] As a rule, the selected persons are contacted with a letter proposing a first meeting in which the project will be explained. In many cases, this offer is accepted. Next, the persons in question are asked to propose one or more days for observation, preferably "ordinary working days," that is, days that are neither marked by a special event nor extraordinarily quiet days of pure desk work. On these days, the chosen person is followed throughout the whole working day, while at the same time every encounter and all activities are written down together with the necessary background information. In a next step, the schedule over a period of two months is analyzed together with secretaries or personal assistants, who will then be interviewed. It is important that the days intended for observation are in the middle of the analyzed period, in order to be able to assess the connection between calendar entries and observed events, and also to be able to relate these events to appointments before and after because the observation days provide a lot of information about events in their immediate proximity. The additional interview informs about periodic and long-term obligations in the communication network of the observed person. It also collects observations made by a person close to the manager concerning the latter's communicative activi-

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[7] This is worth mentioning in an ethnographic context, as the consent to cooperate was obtained much more easily after such a personal approach.

ties. Finally, informal talks[8] – or an interview, if necessary – provide an occasion to discuss anything that may be unclear, as well as biographical data, the observed person's ideas on communication, and her self-perception.

These different research steps enable us to determine the structures of the communication networks of high-level personnel. We then try to determine situations that are meaningful for everyday communication of high-level personnel. Such key situations are recorded on audio tape or video[9] with the consent of those involved, and, at least partly, transcribed. The conversations can then be subjected to a communicative style analysis with reference to the ethnographical data.

3.2   *The style-analytical approach*

Stylistic studies are based on approaches that work with recordings of natural situations. This concerns primarily the research done in interactional style-analysis (Hinnenkamp/Selting 1989; Selting 1995, 1997; Sandig 1986, 1995; Jakobs/Rothkegel 2001). These studies attempt to integrate observations on theories of interaction by Mead (1934), Schütz (1974), Garfinkel (1967) and Goffmann (1967) as well as Gumperz' (1982) contextualizational approach (cf. Auer 1986, Schmitt 1993). Furthermore, research in the field of conversation analysis on forms of self-portrayal (for an overall view, cf. Spiegel/Spranz-Fogasy 1999) and on person-related interaction profiles (Spranz-Fogasy 1997) are also taken into account. As far as the analysis of social worlds is concerned, the research project "Urban Communication" ('Kommunikation in der Stadt'; Kallmeyer 1994, 1995; Keim 1995; Schwitalla 1995; Keim/Schwitalla 1989) offers analysis on "communicative social styles" that provide theoretical, conceptual, and methodological reference points.

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[8]   Throughout the observation period there is ample occasion for such talks, in which previous or future meetings can be discussed and commented on, or general questions on communication, relations, or biographical data can be addressed.

[9]   If possible, at least one such conversation per observed person will be videotaped so that non-verbal aspects can also be taken into account. The manager's mobility is a major problem for the ethnographer, as it makes the recording of openings and closings of conversations more difficult. Especially for video-recordings, the observed situation must be stationary.

Accordingly, the actual study of the style of oral communication of high-level personnel takes into account all *verbal* and *non-verbal*, as well as *interactive* means of expression. Accordingly, verbal means of communication are analyzed with reference to phonological, lexical, and grammatical phenomena, non-verbal means of communication with reference to gestic, mimic, kinetic, and proxemic activities. As for interactive means of communication, the focus is on turn-taking, rules of speech, organization of topic-related and action-related aspects, as well as procedures of social categorization, etc. In this case, style means the integral, recurring, and systematic combination of different means of communication at various levels.

3.3   The database

The data hitherto ascertained refers to five societal domains: politics, administration, business, science, and associations. At a later stage of the study, the domains media/culture and church will be added. The participants, at present eleven people, are politicians at the federal or the federal states level (party members, members of parliament or ministers), directors of large administrative authorities, independent business owners and heads of executive boards of large firms, directors of scientific research institutes and presidents of associations. For this article, the observation of two independent business owners and the head of an executive board is at the center of attention.

In view of the small number of participants in this study, the following remark must be made: Quite obviously, I in no way claim representativeness for the results of my observations, this being quite impossible in such a time-consuming qualitative study. However, it was not my aim to collect representative data, but rather to determine relevant communicative characteristics and the communicative logic behind them. After preliminary observations and analyses, we assume that high-level personnel have a relatively large inventory of means of communication that are of high cultural value. Each individual has made, and continues to make, a specific (perhaps habitual) personal selection.[10]

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[10]   Cf. chapter 6: "Characteristics of communicative styles of high-level personnel."

4. Communication networks and communicative tasks of high-level business personnel

The evaluation of the data drawn from ethnographic observation of high-level business personnel will first of all focus on the *communication networks* and on the communicative tasks that come with the management of a company, and the establishment and maintenance of the necessary communication network. These features form the background against which the communicative style analysis will be carried out.

Communication networks of high-level business personnel can vary considerably, depending on branch, size, and market position of the company. An independent business owner has contacts different from those of an executive board member; executive employees in the service industry have a different network than persons in equivalent positions in the producing sector. To my knowledge, literature in the fields of political science, sociology, as well as business economics or industrial and organizational psychology offers no systematic description of communication networks of high-level personnel. Approximate frameworks for contacts and their frequency *within* the positional elite can be found in political science (Sauer/Schnapp 1997), and there are descriptions of personnel structures and of conversation types in the business world (personnel interview, negotiation, etc.), from which intra-company communication contacts could partly be derived. In this respect, this paper is but a first attempt to structure communication networks. Further qualitative research will therefore be necessary.

The following account is the result of the evaluation of observation, calendar analyses, interviews, and the recordings of various conversations of high-level business personnel. All the events that were observed or reported were taken down in an attempt to categorize and order the participating or mentioned persons and institutions, topics and communicative tasks.

4.1 Groups of contact persons

The contacts of high-level business personnel were subdivided into person-related groups, which were then classified as intra-company or extra-company groups. Extra-company groups were further differentiated according to sectors: Intrasectorial groups are themselves part of the business world, extrasectorial groups belong to other societal sectors (such as politics, administration, etc.). The sectorial differentiation corresponds to the sector-categories of political science (cf. Bürklin et al. 1997). Depending on the

line of business, however, the diagram will have to be differentiated differently.

The groups of contact persons, as detailed below, seem at the first glance to be easily distinguishable. However, in practice, it was often difficult to relate the persons in question and their respective reference systems. The relations could often be established based on comments made by the observed management personnel itself, or of subsequently obtained criteria, but nonetheless many things needed to be deduced according to the specific context, and sometimes relations had to be established by a decision of my own.

Attention must be drawn to one point in particular: Many firms enlist extern services for information technology, legal matters, financial affairs, taxes, advertising, etc., but at the same time have these services at their disposal, sometimes as entire departments, within the company. The connections are vast and extremely complex, to the extent that they may remain unclear with regard to certain persons (for example, representatives have an official function within the company, however, they can, in addition, maintain independent business relations with the same company or with another. In the field of IT especially, so-called "half-outsourcing" exists, which means that a person in charge of certain tasks is partly employed by the company and partly independent).

For groups employed within the company, the following categories have been established: people regularly working in the manager's immediate proximity, like for example the secretary or the personal assistant, possibly office personnel, the driver, in some cases security staff, etc.. Peer-persons are – for example – fellow members of the executive board or of the supervisory board. The term managerial staff applies to people autonomously directing a limited sector and who have to account only to the head of the firm, such as business managers, division managers, etc. Furthermore, intra-company contacts involve the staff level, group representatives, and partners with whom the firm cooperates. The staff level includes all levels of the company structure, such as production, development, information technology, accounting, logistics/sales, repair service, marketing, legal department, call center, etc. Group representatives are members of the work council, for example, whereas representatives and franchisees are considered as cooperative partners. It is obvious that these categories will overlap: Staff mem-

bers or franchisees can at the same time be group representatives, a member of the work council can also be a supervisor.

The category of company-external groups was subdivided not only in relation to the various sectors, but also according to whether the groups are production-/performance-related, whether they are service orientated, or whether they belong to the market domain of the company. Production- or performance-related contacts can be clients, suppliers, or job-applicants. The service-orientated group involves mainly consultants in a variety of fields, such as legal matters, taxes, finances, information technology, advertising/PR, media, communication. Market-related external contacts are, finally, competitors or cooperative partners.

Sector-external contacts can be subdivided into cooperative and general contacts, relative to their function with respect to the company. Contacts with public administration and authorities, with associations, or with politics or science will be defined as cooperative; general extra-sectorial contacts, on the other hand, are contacts with the media, with cultural institutions, the Church or the military, possibly also with petitioners and an interested public from quite different fields.

All these people or groups enter the professional sphere of high-level business personnel to a varying degree and in various contexts. First of all, this concerns the *scope* of the conversations, which reaches from important merger negotiations with business partners to simple communication of schedules to the secretary. It also concerns structural aspects of verbal interaction such as *communication constellations*: High-level business personnel has – as do most of us – private conversations, conversations with two or more people at once, as well as with two or more parties. At the same time they must be capable of holding monologues and performing in public – they must, therefore, be in the position to master all sorts of communicative constellations. Finally, this same conclusion also applies to the media of communication, whether it takes place in face to face conversations, on the phone, by fax, e-mail or letter, or via a mediator (this last point is an important means of communication for high-level personnel: many institutionally significant tasks are taken on by mediators that must be appropriately selected and instructed. Mediating tasks can be assumed by the secretary/assistant, by representatives and sometimes even by interpreters). Other ways of communication that high-level personnel makes use of are press,

radio, television and Internet, especially for the representation of the company in question.

Overall view of contact groups:

Intra-company groups	*Extra-company groups*
Personnel in the managers immediate proximity (e.g. secretary, personal office staff, executive board secretaries, driver)	*Intrasectorial*
	Production-/performance-related
	Clients
	Suppliers
	Applicants
Peer-persons (e.g. supervisory board, colleagues on the executive board)	**Services** Consultants (legal, tax, financial, IT, PR, media, communication consultants)
Managerial staff (e.g. directors, division managers, department managers)	**Market-related** Cooperation partners Competitors
Staff members (depending on the line of business and the degree of differentiation: production, development, IT, accounts, logistics/sales, repair service, marketing, legal department, call center...)	*Extrasectorial*
	Cooperation Administration Associations Politics Science
Group representatives (e.g. work council)	**General** Media Interested parties/public Petitioners
Cooperative contacts (e.g. representatives, franchisees)	

High-level business personnel

4.2   *Communicative tasks and types of interaction*

The communication network presented above reveals complex requirements that concern the types of interaction, their characteristics and their amount. As exemplified above, one of the main problems related to the communication of high-level personnel lies in the rapid succession of partners, topics,

rapidly and in accord with the company objectives. This leads to two main requirements for the communication of people in leadership positions: They are permanently under *pressure to decide and to act*; at the same time, they must also *communicate concepts*. The conditions in which they have to accomplish this are highly complex. The amount of information that must be processed is enormous, extremely heterogeneous with regard to its contents, and is offered and required at levels of abstraction and specification that vary largely. Moreover, the contents to be worked upon are connected to very different communicative activities – information has to be passed on, a problem needs to be solved, a company strategy developed, or a decision made concerning an entrepreneurial procedure. On a regular working day of a business owner, all known types of communication can be observed, discussion and instruction, advertising and consulting, planning or conflict.

As far as managerial conversation is concerned, the following *types of communicative activities and situations* have so far been determined (intersections are of course unavoidable):

- Organization
- Personnel interview
- Planning (development/production, sales, etc.)
- Information processing
- Problem solving
- Conflict management
- Counseling
- Developing strategy
- Instructions
- Acquisition
- Decision-making
- Advertising
- Arrangements/collusion

By far, the largest part of the communication of high-level personnel is of course directly *related to the functions* embodied by the person in question. (Even in informal conversations, the function of permanent representation of one's institution remains present.) The communicative activities of high-level personnel almost always shows, even at a superficial level, a marked degree of structuring with regard to the construction and succession of procedural steps, as well as an apparent target – most probably an expression of the economical constraint their communication is subjected to.

Overall, the communicative activities of high-level personnel are directed by a *principal of permanent communicative work on, realization of, and conveying of the institutional or entrepreneurial purpose*. This includes entrepreneurial concepts, the implementation of concrete purpose-related tasks and their coordination with the overall purposes. The defined purpose can be a task set by society or by a given market. These purposes each require a specific differentiation of the institutional subsystem, and in connection with this a specific size (for example, as far as turnover, personnel requirements, departments, and structure etc. are concerned). Linked to differentiation and size is, with regard to content, the *degree of generality* of the interactions, that is, the level of differentiation and abstraction as regards content; for example, a conversation will no longer focus on details and but rather be held in more general terms. Connected to this, with regard to social relations, is the hierarchical rank of the partners in communication. However, the frequency of various interactions clearly does not correlate with a higher degree of differentiation or the particularly large size of a company: The head of an executive board will typically have fewer but longer meetings than an independent business owner. One reason for this is that the former has a larger number of periodical obligations, which means that *institutional arrangements* of communication are more frequent (e.g. meetings with supervisors, executive board meetings, briefings with department managers etc.). Such longer conversations, however, show a higher degree of inner differentiation, which, from an analytical point of view, compensates for the smaller number of meetings (In the energy industry, for example, conversations can be observed in which participants adopt the functions of client, supplier, and supervisor at the same time. In such a case, it can be very difficult for a head executive to take an equal account of all functions!).

5.   Characteristics of communicative styles of high-level personnel

The following brief presentation of features of communicative activities of high-level personnel refers to people in leadership positions in all societal sectors, not only in business. Presently, statements concerning such features and referring specifically to business personnel cannot be made.

People in leadership positions work very intensely on the structures of action and presentation of conversation. Presentations are often notably more precise and tasks assumed more effectively than has proven to be the case in other societal domains. In the case of people in leadership positions, both

these points are required of them by their interlocutors, either explicitly or implicitly.

It is this kind of "dense communication" that is part of a more extensive concept of communication which can be observed in leadership personnel: the concept of *situation control.*[11] In more general terms: people in leadership positions use verbal, non-verbal, and interactive means at all levels of interaction to control their own communicative activities and that of their partners. This can mean concise, assertive and directive speech, it can mean taking the initiative in communication, at times also avoiding commitment and allowing for vagueness, it can also mean slow speech, a striking phenomenon that enables the careful planning of statements and the control over conversational organization.

As a result of the research on the communication of high-level personnel that has been carried out to this day, the following general theses can be put forward (these theses are to be pursued further at later stages of the study):

1) People in leadership positions make use, in a particular way, of features that constitute interaction.[12] This refers to organizational structures at all levels, to constraints and possibilities of conversational organization and the organization of action, as well as to features concerning the organization of relations, topics, or modalities.

2) Leadership personnel markedly operates with culturally accepted values of communication, such as: empathy, awareness, involvement, especially well appreciated forms of self-portrayal (e.g. as far as competence, integrity, etc. are concerned), firmness, conciseness, target orientation, syntactic correctness (according to the standards of written language), appropriate variation of vocabulary (from elaborate to popular), etc.

3) There is a whole set of such values that each person recognizes differently with regards to the distribution of these values and their specific form. This difference is partly sector-specific (i.e. related to the respective societal domain).

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[11] You will find more on the concept of situation control, and especially on the characteristics of communicative styles of high-level personnel in Spranz-Fogasy (2002).

[12] For the theory of interaction construction, see Kallmeyer/Schütze (1976), Kallmeyer (1988), Spranz-Fogasy (1997:27 et sqq.).

Should these assumptions be correct, they can serve as a basis to determine individual interaction profiles on one hand, but also general patterns of communication that are highly functional in the context of leadership action on the other hand.

6. Final remarks

With the help of communicative resources, people with leadership functions can reach a position that enables them to confer rights and responsibilities of interaction as they wish, and their work aims specifically at dealing with communicative tasks. They remain in control of decision-making, even beyond the present communicative event.

Establishing and maintaining leadership through situation control is a central component of the social identity of high-level personnel, and thus an important part of its communicative social style. In the context of stylistic analysis, other aspects of the communication of societal high-level personnel and its concepts of communication can also be appropriate observation ground for societal processes of integration, differentiation, dissociation, and exclusion.

This macroscopic study on the structure of everyday communication of high-level personnel in the business world, founded on extensive ethnographical observation, can serve as a basis for further studies in stylistic analysis. It provides points of reference for the determination of essential situations of entrepreneurial interaction, as well as for the interpretation of the concrete interaction and activities. In doing so, it also prepares the foundation for the comparison of different leading figures within the business world by enabling the respective conditions of acting to be identified and related to one another. The study also establishes a basis for cross-sector analysis, which contrasts high-level business personnel with leadership personnel in other sectors, such as politics, public administration, science, or associations, thus enabling the elaboration of structures of everyday communication in these sectors as well.

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