



Intercultural Communication in cultural, ethnic and religious conflicts

Panel Intercultural Communication:
**Theory and Practice of the International
and Intercultural Communication**

ECREA 2008, Barcelona

27 Nov. 2008



Context



Context – cultural, ethnic and religious conflict

Environment:

Weak and failing states
War economy,
Passive civil society
Intervention of external actors

Individual level:

Ethnicity/ Culture/ Religion
as central element of
personal identity

Intergroup level:

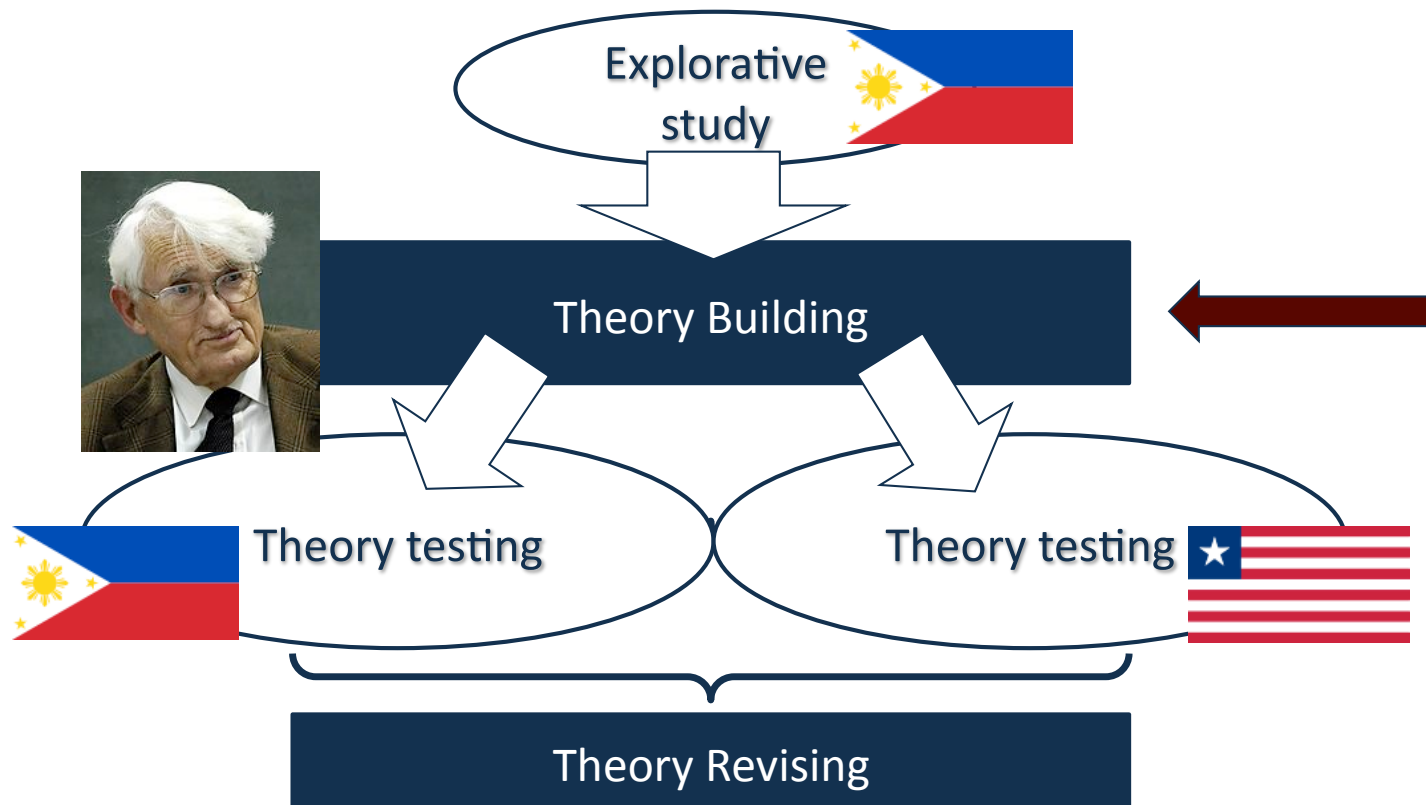
Inner coherence
outer differentiation
dehumanization
Escalation
Reenforcement of emotional and
material factors

Intragroup level:

Social identity
quasi-native
categorization
Exclusivness

Leading question

How can communication transform violent cultural conflict?

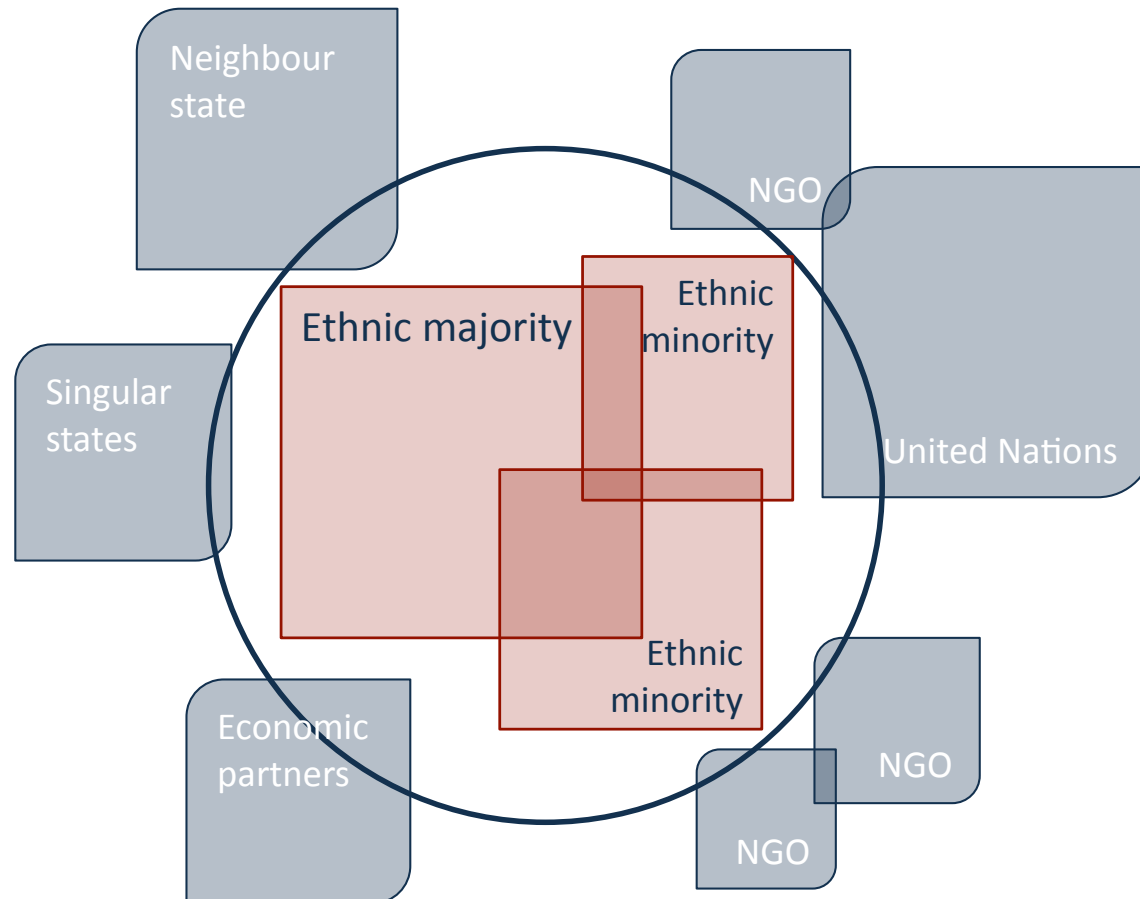




Communication in ethnic conflict

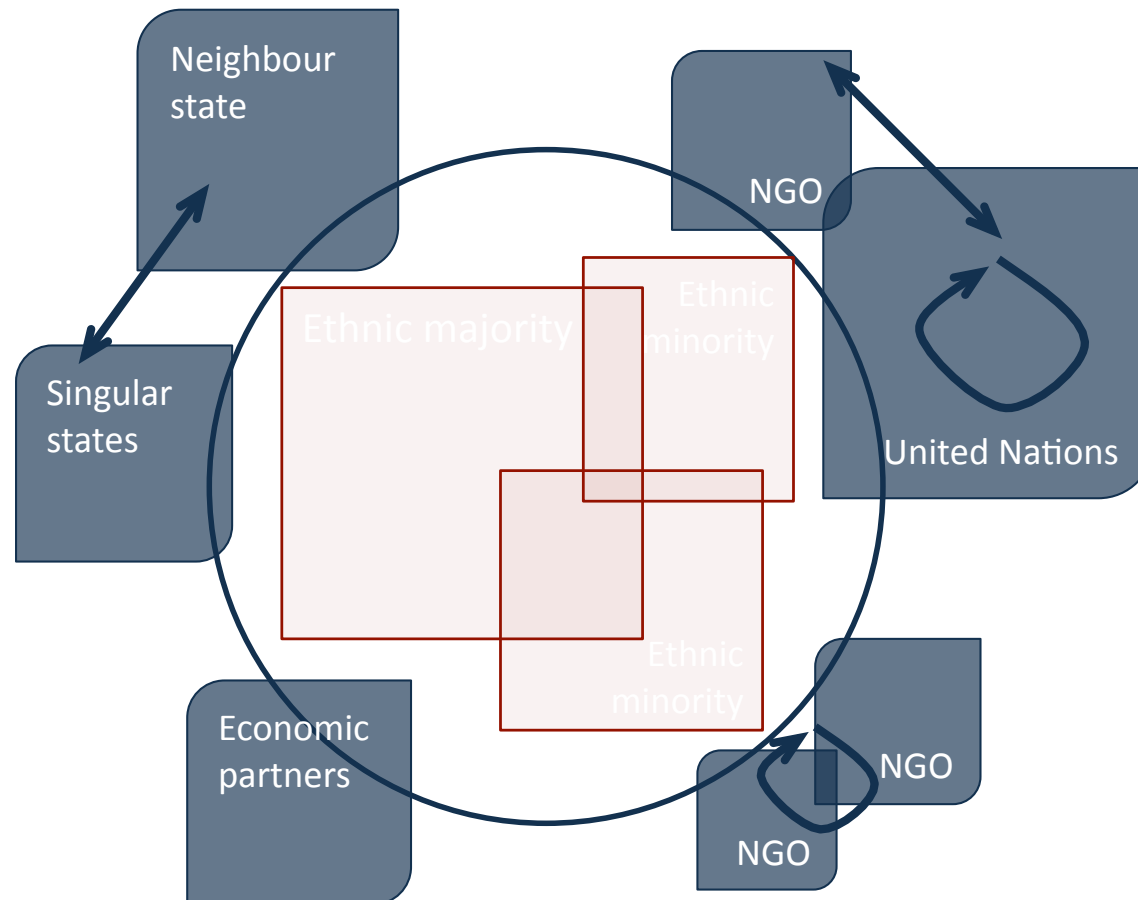


Communication situations - Participants





Communication situations - Participants

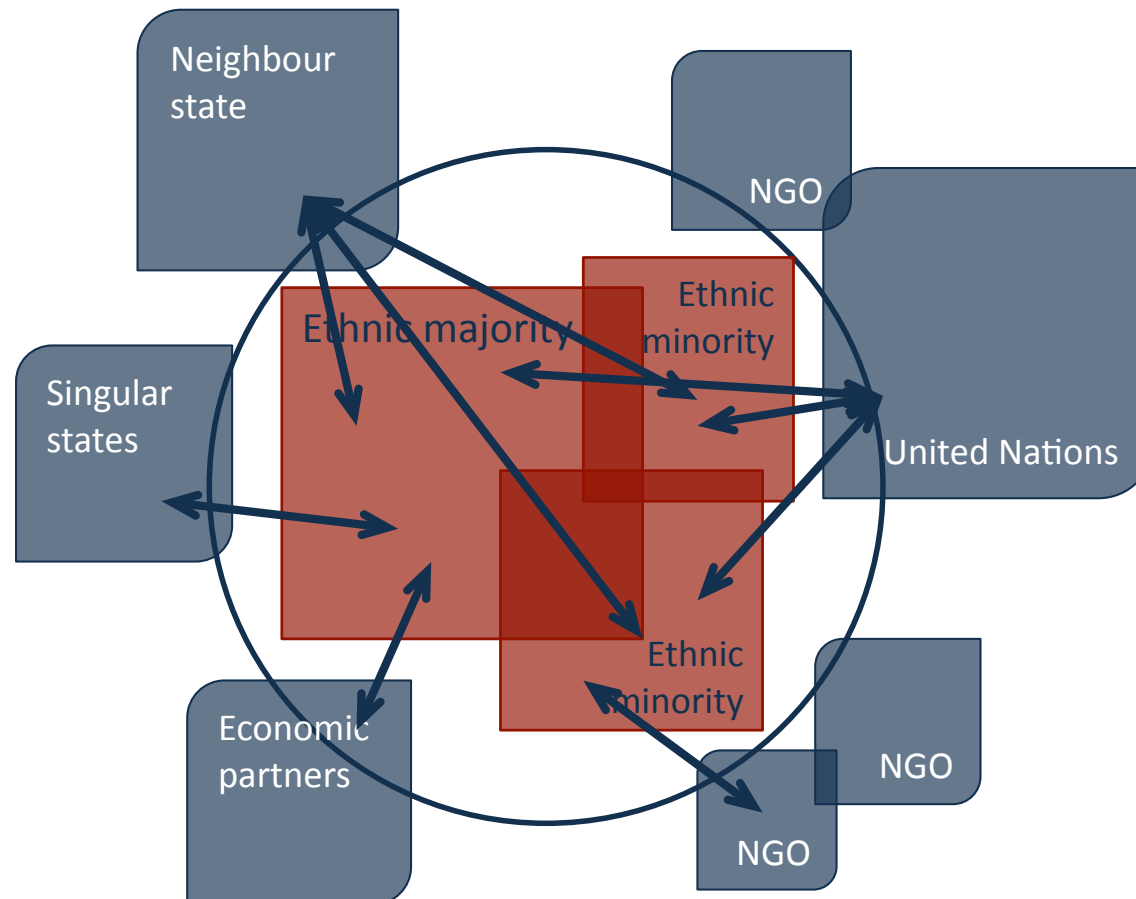


Communicative interaction

- **external - external**
- external – internal
- internal - internal



Communication situations - Participants

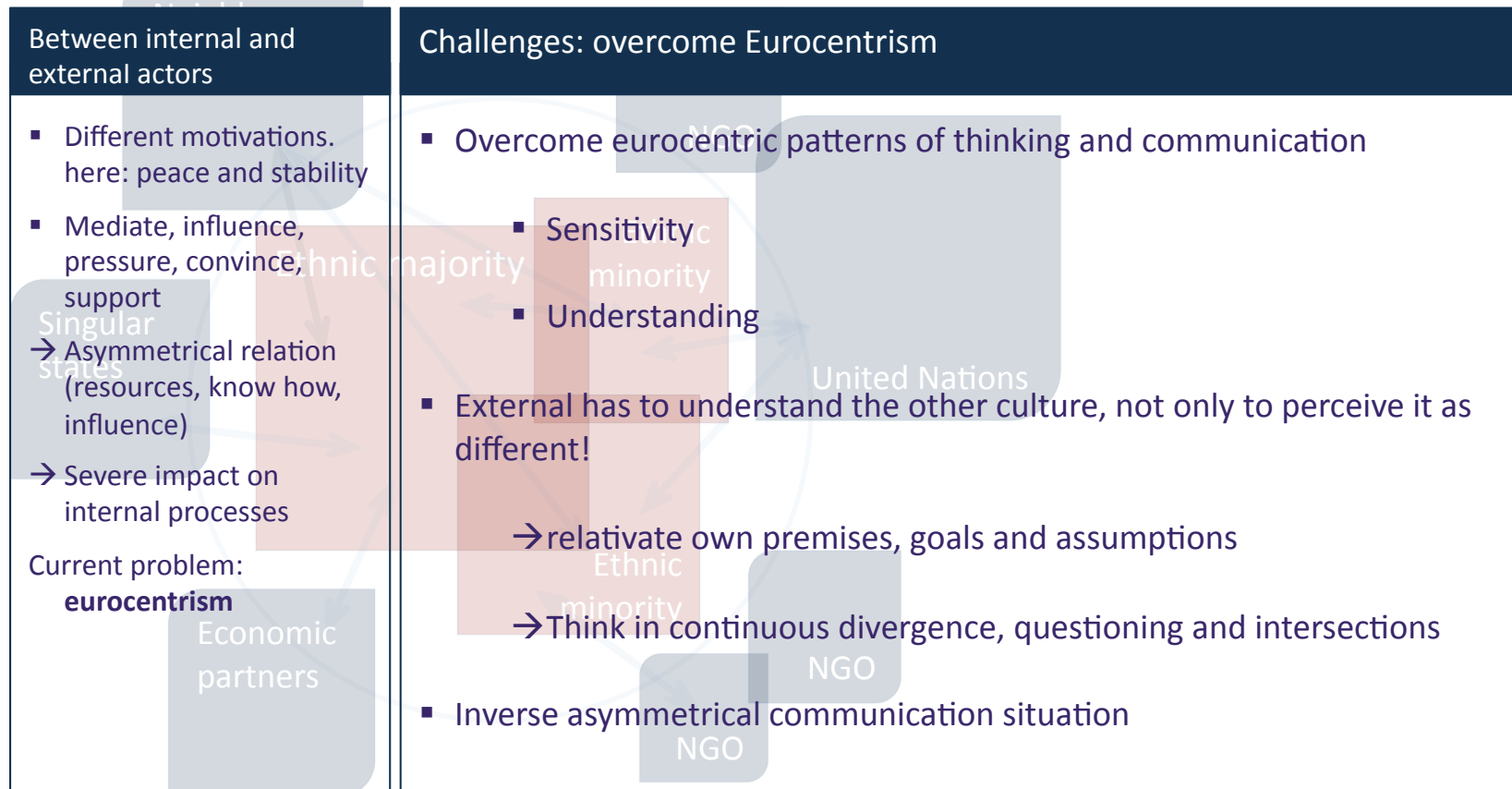


Communicative interaction

- external - external
- **external – internal**
- internal - internal

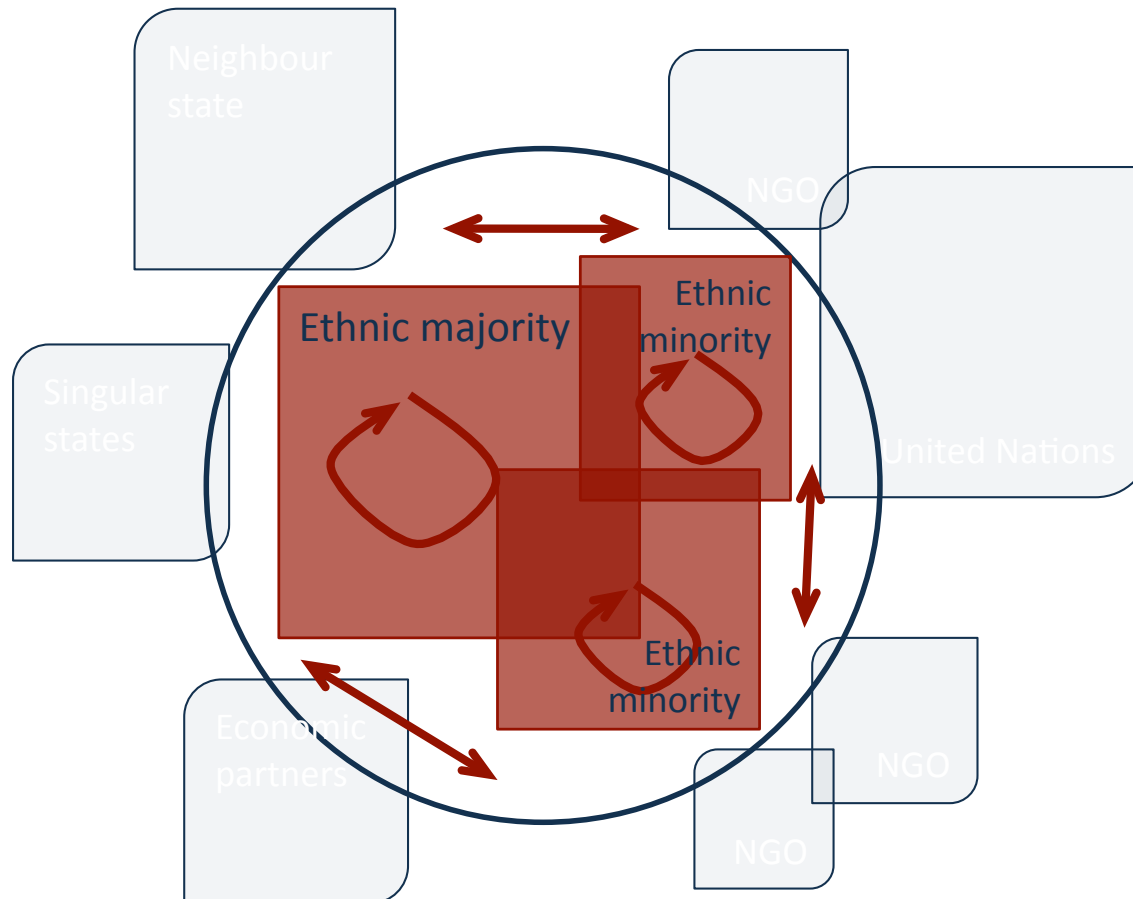


Communication situations - Challenges





Communication situations - Participants

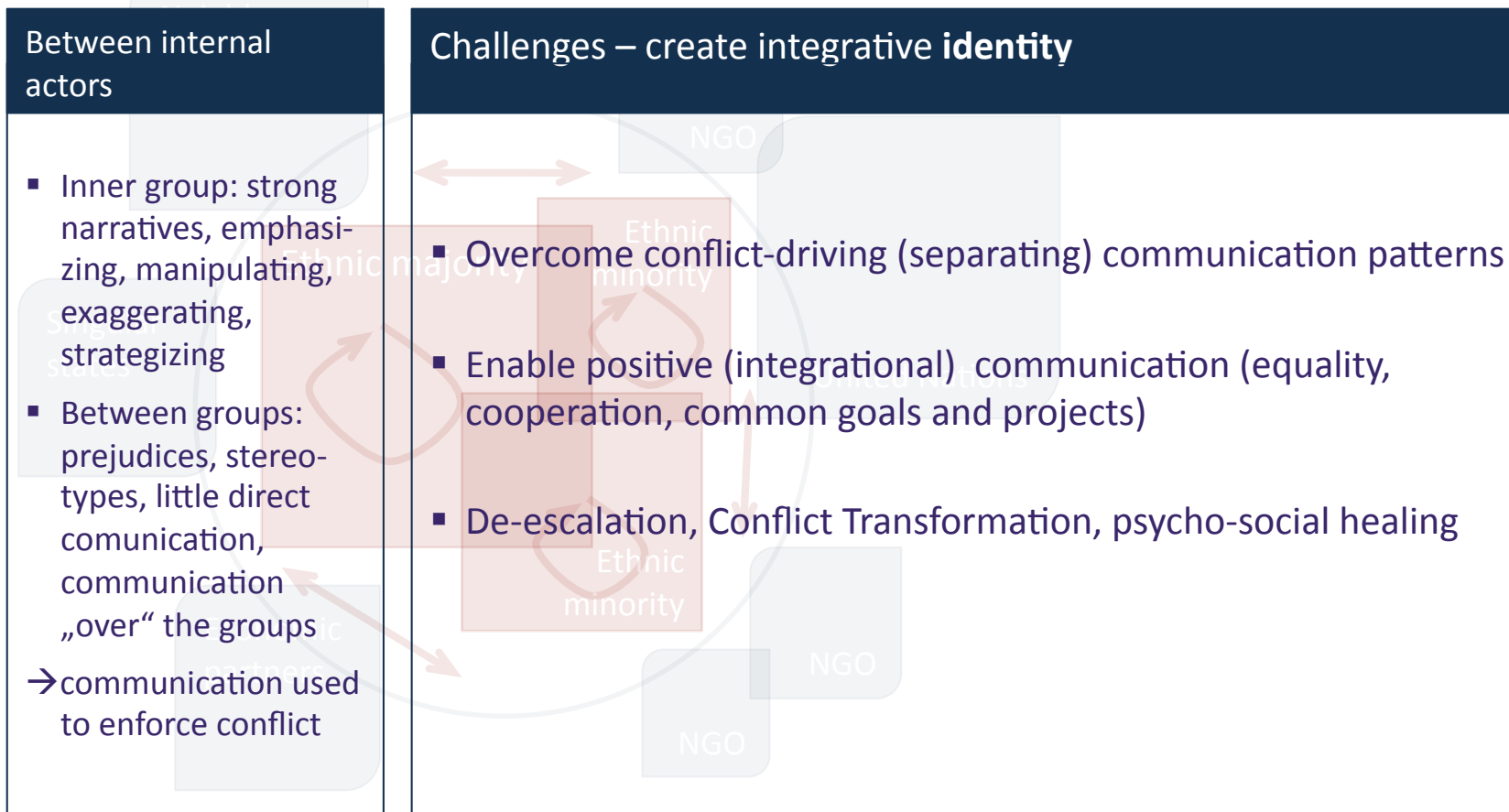


Communicative interaction

- external - external
- external – internal
- **internal - internal**



Communication situations - Challenges





First approaches



First approaches: Theory of communicative action

Communicative action

Consensus based, mutual agreement, nothing counts but the better argument

Lifeworld

- Shared social framework = base for communication and interaction
- Usually unconscious, background for daily communication

Truth, Rightness and Truthfulness

- Communication refers to: objective world, normative aspects and subjective factors such as emotions, personal experience
- Accordance needs acceptance on all three levels

Ideal speech situation

- Recognize each other as equals → equal access to discourse and equal rights in discourse
- Goal is to convince the other by nothing but the better argument

Discourse

- On the level of objective world (truth) = theoretical discourse
- On the level of normative aspects (Rightness) = practical discourse
- No discourse on the level of Truthfulness = trust is needed!



What should transformative communication between internal actors do?

Communicative action

Reach a coordination of action by consensus not by force.

Lifeworld

- Overcome separational communication, create shared lifeworld
→ Emphasize and develop shared goals, joint narratives, visions, happenings

Truth, Rightness and Truthfulness

- Divide claims and causes of conflict along objective, normative and subjective elements
- Work on them in separate settings and with different methods

Ideal speech situation

- Create symmetrical situations, eliminate strategical elements (power, money) to enter discourse

Discourse

- Provide different methods to work on varying reasons for conflict (objective, normative and subjective)
- Reach local consensus on issues (discourse) or ways to resolve them where such cannot be found (meta-discourse)



First approaches: between internal actors

Communicative action

Needed as alternative to violent action
because no supervisory body exists

Imperative action

Impossible as no superior or representative
authority is accepted by all conflicting parties

What is our common goal / What means peace for us?

Which aspects of the lifeworld need to be shared?

How can we integrate those?

Which ones can and should we leave diverse?

→ **Local consensus**

Ideal spec

Discourse

- Addressing arguments and goal of discourse
- Clarify reason for conflict, underlying concepts, underlying needs
- Reach local consensus on issues or ways to resolve them where such cannot be found



First approaches: between internal and external actors

Communicative action

Needed to understand internal actors and to root new structures in their culture

Imperative action

Would only create unaccepted parallel structures, dislike for interveners, support opposition and extremism

Lifeworld

- External actors have to understand internal lifeworld
- Internal actors have to make themselves explicit → conscious of themselves!

Truth, Rightness and Truthfulness

- Support the internal process to divide conflict along these parameters
- Question personal implications and approaches along these aspects
- Use these aspects to understand internal problems and desires

Ideal speech situation

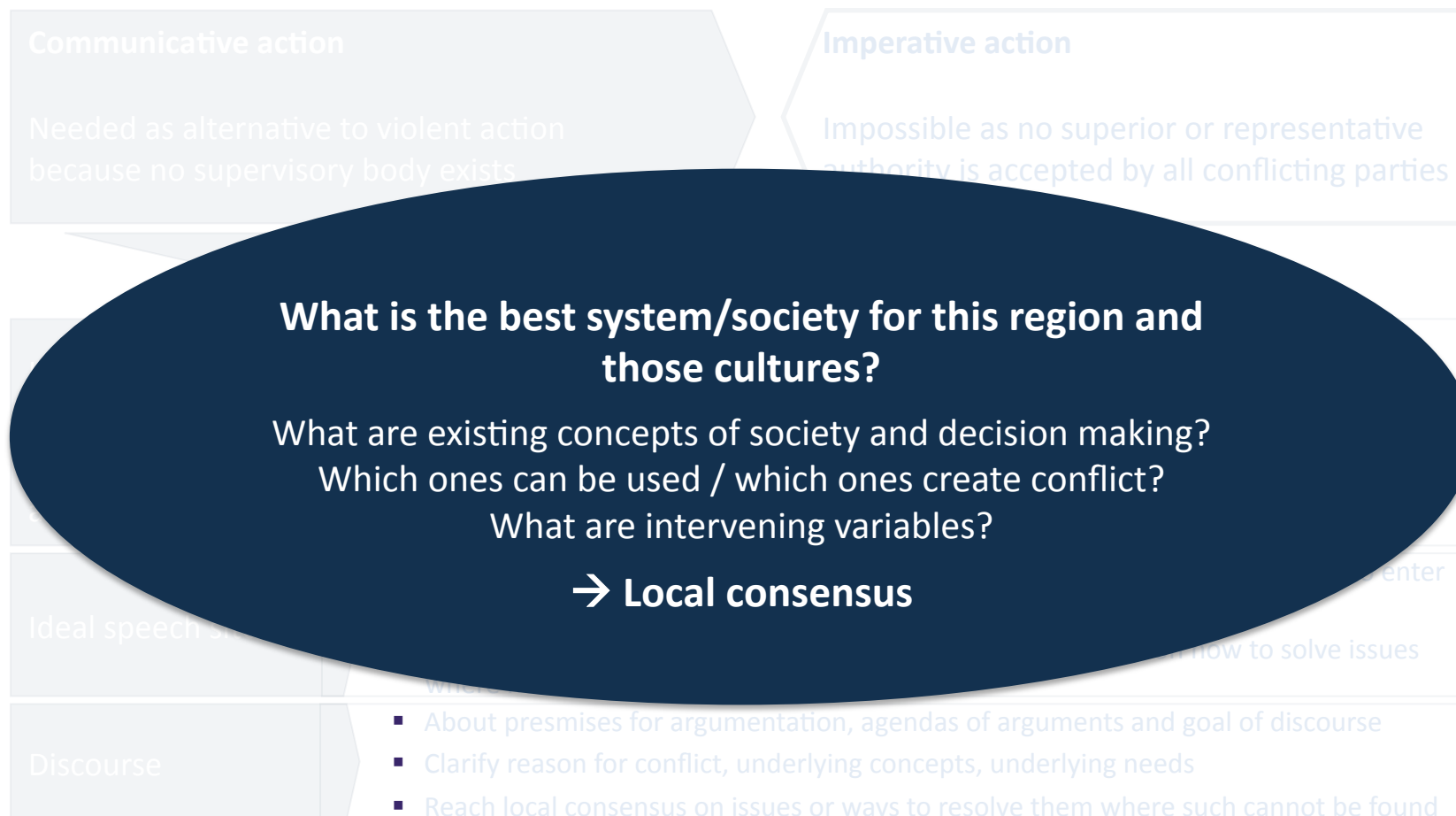
- Remain symmetrical, take internal actors serious, try to truly understand them → acceptance of commonly developed structures
- Consensus guided by wishes and needs of internal actors not by the external actors concepts of moral, democracy or capitalism

Discourse

- Helps to understand needs, causes and aims of internal actors
- Helps external actor to explain his ideas/concepts
- Provides symmetry that is not given in real context



First approaches: between internal and external actors





Conclusion



Conclusion

For Peacebuilding	▪ Community level ▪ Inclusive and integrative ▪ Guided by internal actors, supported by external actors ▪ Consensus based
For Communication	▪ Integrational instead of Separational → discursive ▪ Divide between objective, intersubjective and subjective aspects ▪ Create trust, discuss norms, clarify premises ▪ Achieve consensus or create institutions to settle dissens
For Theory building	▪ Adapt existing concepts of Intercultural Communication to special Challenges of ethnic conflict: ▪ Importance of culture/ethnicity for personal identity ▪ Problem of Eurocentrism and asymmetrical situation
For Theory testing	▪ Verify explanatory power of TCA in the field on community level ▪ In regions of ethnopolitical war ▪ In regions with ethnic tensions (prevention) ▪ In regions with migration problems



Thank you for listening, questioning, asking, suggesting.