

THE REPRODUCTION OF CULTURE THROUGH ARGUMENTATIVE DISCOURSE: STUDYING THE CONTESTED NATURE OF HONG KONG IN THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA

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Abstract

Discourse and communication approaches to culture have traditionally been concerned with the role of language in (mis)representing cultures. But how text and talk reproduce and transform cultures is just beginning to be understood. Proceeding from the view that cultural creation, development and transformation are constituted in and through situated discursive practice, this study explores the interconnections between argumentative discourse and cultural reproduction. The research is based on multinational and multilingual data of journalistic communication on Hong Kong's historic transition. It is shown that the causes of Hong Kong's economic success, as an important cultural feature, are used as arguments to undermine contrary claims. It is also revealed that the future development of Hong Kong is being constrained by the argument ad baculum. In addition, it is observed that Hong Kong's identities are used as bases for prescribing desired course of action. Finally, these argumentative strategies are re-examined in their broader historical and cultural context in order to show how Hong Kong's past, present and future are cultural realities bound up with Western desire and power.

Keywords: Social constructionism, Discourse, Argumentation, Culture, Politics, Power

1. Introduction

Modern western language and social theories have commonly assumed that culture is something external to language and society themselves even though they are related to each other. Existing as a form of tradition or limitation due to local circumstances, culture functions for example to prevent people from seeing the ultimate truth. Thus, from such a perspective, modern anthropology and ethnography have often sought to inscribe primitive and exotic cultures. Theories of modernity, similarly, have explained human progress and globalization as the triumph of scientific reason over traditional cultures. In language and communication studies, too, culture is often thought of as either a local tradition that constrains social communication and behavior (hence e.g. 'misrepresentations' and 'misunderstandings') or itself a distinct worldview that is structured by a particular language (hence e.g. 'cultural relativism'). However, whether culture itself has inner dynamic to recreate, change and thereby perpetuate itself is seldom considered (Taylor 1999). In partial consequence of that, much less is understood of how culture may be

maintained, regenerated and transformed in and through the very mode of social practice, in particular the social practice of situated text and talk or discourse (Hall 1996).

In this paper, we proceed accordingly from the perspective that culture is a contested field in which language and communication or discourse play a constitutive role and study in some detail the inter-relations between culture and discourse. Our goal is to examine how cultural realities are formed, sustained and contested in and through discourse. Because culture does not exist in some independent form, but is constantly appropriated and negotiated, or 'arguable', we shall pay particular attention to how constructions of cultural landscape are performed through argumentative discourse. (Of course, it could be equally interesting and productive to study the ways in which culture and other forms of discourse, say, narration, are inter-related; cf. Shi-xu 1997). Oscar Wilde once said 'life imitates art'; now we would like to maintain that cultural life imitates the art of argumentation. As a practical, case study, we shall choose the international mass media on the recent historic transition of Hong Kong. The data are taken from a multinational range of newspapers and magazines articles published in Hong Kong, China, Singapore, UK, Austria, Germany and America, respectively. After all, the inter-national, inter-cultural, mass, written communication is one of the most important sites and media in which cultures become salient.

In this study, we shall highlight three kinds of discourse of culture within the international media in particular. Firstly, we present a cross-cultural comparative analysis of international media accounts of Hong Kong's past economic success and show that Hong Kong's success, its causes and consequences, are part of competing claims to reject undesirable accounts. The reality of the whys and wherefores of Hong Kong's success then lies in the intercultural discursive contestability or 'argumentativeness'. Secondly, we offer a speech act analysis of the western media on the question of Hong Kong's future identity and show that Hong Kong's identities are objects of western threats and warnings and as such also part of the western discourse of desires. Thirdly, we focus on references, definitions and categorizations of Hong Kong in the international media and show that these formulations serve as rhetorical devices to advocate preferred action or identity.

It may be noted here that the present choice and arrangement of data material as well as research conclusions have been motivated by a political research framework, i.e. one motivated to construct a possibly useful critique of pressing social issues (see next section). Thus, for example, we try to reveal that 'factual', 'descriptive' accounts of Hong Kong's past are in fact argumentatively motivated. We highlight that symbolic violence is done to Hong Kong and China in western media's threatening 'predictions' about Hong Kong's future. And we show that the cultural identities of Hong Kong are tropes utilized to promote particular desirable projects. In addition, we attempt, where possible, at constructing potentially helpful versions of Hong Kong by e.g. re-casting the taken-for-granted in certain accounts, privileging more inclusive, over ideological, ways of understanding the causes of Hong Kong's economic wonder, and suggesting culturally more sensitive categorizations.

The present investigation is in a sense an exercise in the emerging discursive approach to Cultural Studies. This formative orientation seeks to examine the discursive penetration, mediation and transformation of cultural worlds, both professionally and popularly conceived. Critical approaches to anthropology and ethnography, for example, have highlighted the discursive creation, definition and saturation of human cultures, their

actions and identities (Bhabha 1992; Clifford 1988; Fabian 1983; Marcus 1986; Rabinow 1986; Streeck 1994). In travel literature studies, similarly, the dialectic and dynamic relation of discourse to the cultural-Self/Other is also beginning to be scrutinized (Pratt 1994; Said 1993; Shi-xu 1997). However, it is our understanding that more often than not, the 'discourse theory' behind Cultural Studies has remained largely implicit or ambiguous or even unsystematic. Where culture is assumed to interact with language, communication or discourse, detailed specifications of how discourse actually works in relation to culture are still lacking. In connection with that analytical deficiency, it may be noted that discourse studies of culture has seemed confined to the areas just mentioned; one of the principal media of culture - mass communication - paradoxically, has been little explored from a discursive perspective (but see Billig 1995; Carbaugh 1988, 1990; Bauman & Sherzer 1996).

Discursive study of the transition of Hong Kong not only has scholarly implications for discourse studies and cultural studies, but also could, and ought to, be socially relevant to the vicissitudes of the ever shifting cultural diaspora round the globe (see also Knight & Nakano 1999). In our discursive treatment, we pay special attention to the socio-political valences of the discourse under study. Through conscious choice of data and through particular analytical methods, for example, we underline the (potential) role of western power (e.g. through mediated argumentative discourse) in the shaping and transformation of contemporary human cultures. By highlighting the discursive, pragmatic and rhetorical nature of cultures, we try to suggest the importance of understanding the goals and the consequences of uses of cultural identities, traditions and so on, on the one hand, and, on the other, the constructive potential of language and communication in managing cultural diversity and unity for the common benefit of human cultures. Before embarking on the practical data analysis, let us outline the theoretical framework encompassing notions of discourse, culture, argumentation and media as well as our methodological approach to these.

2. A discursive approach to culture

The present project is guided by a particular discourse research framework that we call Social Constructionist Discourse Studies (SCDS). SCDS is an on-going research program that moves away from the mainstream objectivist approaches to language and communication and studies the individual and social worlds as historically and culturally situated, meaning-making activity. Particularly relevant here is its particular, overarching political-philosophical stance on knowledge and inquiry, namely 'social constructionism', which may be summarized as follows.

The particular epistemological stance we adopt is set against the foundational notion in western traditional science, viz. meaning resides in the objects of experience independently of human consciousness and there are impersonal methods which can be used to represent meaning accurately, hence truth. This is usually called as 'objectivism'. In contrast, *social constructionism* takes it that all knowledge, hence internal consciousness and the external world, are constructed in and through historically and culturally situated, symbolic interaction. In particular, we would like to emphasize two important dimensions of this situated and social-interaction based nature of knowledge. Firstly, by implication,

knowledge has a *cultural* dimension. That is, every society has its own concepts, desires, values and outlooks, which render the production of knowledge gender, ethnicity and class oriented, for example. Thus, it is irrelevant, or rather a mistake, to assume a distinction between the 'objective' and the 'subjective' as such in scientific inquiry. Especially in the late modern conditions of mass hypermedia and migration, factual and evaluative knowledge becomes more dynamic and contested, both globally and locally. It is essential then for intellectual work to be critically reflexive on the cultural dimension of knowledge production and to help construct multicultural, pluralist perspectives that enhance the justice and freedom of the humanity. Secondly, by implication of the cultural dimension, knowledge is further linked with power relations and practices (Foucault 1980; Habermas 1972). Here it may be reflected that the production, circulation and consumption of knowledge are bound with powerful institutions: Science, the government, education, religion, language, etc. Moreover, facts and so truths can serve particular personal, social and institutional interests. In discourse studies, therefore, knowledge and power must be examined together and researchers, as organic intellectuals (Gramsci 1971), need not only to be critically conscious of their place in this knowledge and power dialectic but also to intervene in it as their primary function in society. Proceeding from this political-philosophical stance, we shall outline below, as a minimal theoretical and analytical preliminary, the notions of discourse, argumentation, culture, media communication and then the relevant methodological strategies.

2.1. Discourse: Constitutive of human cultural worlds

'Discourse' is used to refer to what may be loosely called 'language use': It is defined as the use of primarily linguistic symbols - text - in the cultural and historical context. This means that both text and context constitute the proper field of research. Discourse is viewed as having, among things, three essential, vitally important, interrelated properties, which have too often been neglected, or explained away, in communication and social theory but which have important implications for the study of human cultural worlds. Firstly, against the popular notion that texts and talk are more or less precise descriptions of things, events and people in the world, we wish to highlight the property of discourse as a form and embodiment of *power*. Here power is conceived of as the effect of human action whereby things get done or people are put under control and/or the resources with which to achieve such an effect. Such power may be manifested in both textual and contextual dimensions of discourse action, as in particular speech acts (e.g. promise, verbal threat, dis-agreement), the social relationship as the background context of a text and the conditions of discourse production, circulation and consumption. Now, if, in saying something, people also perform actions which bring about changes in the states of affairs and which have consequences for other discourse participants and their subsequent conduct (Austin 1962), then discourse involves *power* as its integral part (Bourdieu 1991: 170; Giddens 1984: 283). Moreover, the context of our late modern times is saturated with power: Witness that as the globalization of economy, finance and information flow accelerates, so grows the localization of social deprivation, degradation, segregation, exclusion, especially at the receiving end of globalization. Secondly, discourse is a way of positioning the speaker/writer vis à vis social others, or from another perspective a way of constructing

self-understanding or self-concept, as different from social others, through situated use of textual and/or other semiotic means. It is noteworthy that the construction of self-identity has also to do with the formation of social relationships. Discourse may present the characteristics of the individual self or in-group, i.e. from the first perspective ('I am Irish') - 'the discourse of Self' (see e.g. Antaki & Widdicombe 1998; Hall 1996) as well as, or at the same time, or thereby, those of social others (other individuals, institutions or out-groups), i.e. from a second or third person perspective ('You are Chinese', 'They are nationalists') - 'the discourse of Other' (see e.g. McHoul & Grace 1993: 31; Deleuze 1988; Rabinow 1984: 61). Discourse has another rather extraordinary property: Discourse (re)produces and so constitutes people's lived reality or experience. Wittgenstein has expressed the constitution of our human cultural life through language in this way (1968: 8e), 'to imagine a language is to imagine a form of life'. All human reality, be it society, culture, history, mind, persons, and things around us, does not exist outside, but within, the very mode of situated social practice, especially the practice of text and talk. They can all be considered as of the same order of things: As meaningful constituents of discourse, as either part of text or talk or part of the context with respect to which text or talk is produced, distributed, interpreted or deployed.

2.2. Culture: Politically contestable

The focus of this study is on culture. But it is not in the conventional (objectivist or subjectivist) sense but, from our social constructionist view as discussed under 'discourse', is to be understood as a special constituent meaning of discourse or discursive interaction (cf. Bakhtin 1981, 1986; Cole 1996; Schweder 1990; Volosinov 1973/1986). As such we might speak of it as discursive culture or 'the discourse of culture' (DC) (Shi-xu 1995). The discursive construction of Hong Kong culture, then, is culture itself, culture-in-the-(re)making. Culture as discourse is part of what people respond to, act upon and make use of (cf. Giddens 1991: Introduction). For instance, as we shall show, Hong Kong's future is subjected to Western discourse of threats and warnings.

Culture is understood as time-and-space-specific practices and relevant settings associated with particular groups of people - 'a whole way of life' (Williams 1976). Such settings and practices are embodied largely in the process of using language; culture is a discursive formation in the Foucaultian sense. More importantly, culture, as a form of discourse, is politically contested in the sense (of 'Cultural Studies') that it is characterized by struggles round gender, race, ethnicity, class and other social categories. For this reason, people debate about cultural boundaries and characteristics and use these notions in discourse to argue, to explain, to threaten, to include, to exclude, and so on and so forth, in public or private. Inasmuch as culture is up to us, as members and discourse producers and consumers, to make, shape and transform, and since our interest is also in the (trans)formative capacity of discourse with respect to human cultures, the goals of the SCDS approach to culture are to investigate into how culture becomes part of text and talk, how it affects our, and others', lives, especially negatively, on the one hand and to explore on the other how new modes of discourse can be formulated to transform existing hegemonic forms of culture.

It may be mentioned here that saying that culture, or any other category, is

constructed and contested, as part of situated social interaction, does not mean researchers should not then use it themselves (see also Butler 1992). We need to employ it, not as a reified entity, but as an interpretive resource, not in order to close upon it, but to open it up for debate.

2.3. Argumentation: Strategic acts of power

In our analysis of constructions of Hong Kong's culture, the central empirical claim will be that culture can be argumentative in nature in that it can serve as a functional element, or building block so to speak, for argumentative discourse ('argumentation' for short). So an account of argumentation is in order here. In our view argumentation is that dimension and mode of discourse in which an argument is offered in support of a (potentially) controversial claim (Shi-xu 1997: Ch. 2; Kienpointner 1983, 1996). A claim can be a statement of fact or a call for action; argument can be a set of reasons for that claim. Our definition of argumentation above is similar to that of Van Eemeren et al (1996: 5), though they seem to put more emphasis on the rationality of argumentation, 'Argumentation is a verbal and social activity of reasoning aimed at increasing (or decreasing) the acceptability of a controversial standpoint for the listener or reader, by putting forward a constellation of propositions intended to justify (or refute) the standpoint before a rational judge.' Argumentation is rational, but, to us, only within the context of the argumentation in question and critique of it must therefore be based on that specific context. This leads to our next point.

Our argumentative analysis of Hong Kong's cultural characteristics is not just aimed at disclosing the discursive complexities, but motivated by a political concern to come with a possibly helpful critique as additional tool aimed at the same political ends as well. So the critical, evaluative thrust of argumentation studies might be usefully employed to accomplish the same methodological orientation alluded to in the forgoing section. For, '[t]he general objective of the study of argumentation', as Van Eemeren et al point out (1996: 22), 'is to develop criteria for determining the validity of argumentation in view of its points of departure and presentational layout and to implement the application of these criteria in the production, analysis and evaluation of argumentative discourse.' Thus, we shall specifically apply the notion of argumentative scheme to the argumentative discourse in question, drawing on the rich literature on argument schemes (e.g. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971; Schellens, 1985; Kienpointner 1992; Walton 1996; Grennan 1997). 'Argumentative schemes (or structures, norms)' are relationships between claims and arguments that are widely but roughly shared in a cultural-linguistic community. As minimal elements of a prototypical argument scheme we distinguish warrant, ground and conclusion (cf. Toulmin 1958), to which sometimes further elements are added, for example, premises which deal with potential 'rebuttals'. Moreover, many more specific subtypes of argument schemes have to be distinguished. But for present purposes it should be stressed that such theoretical categories are to be considered as people's resources for argumentative-discourse interaction, which they adapt, exploit and transform for situated purposes. Thus when the most abstract versions of schemes (e.g. argument ad baculum) are applied to the local circumstances, culturally repressive effects could result, as we shall show in the analytical part (see also Kienpointner & Kindt 1997: 257f).

2.4. Mass media: Mediation of text and talk

It seems generally agreed upon that the media discourse, e.g. editorials, comment articles, background stories or political speeches, is more often than not argumentative in nature. Such discourse is not simply descriptive or a merely running commentary on what has happened. It is normally designed to persuade, to undermine alternative, undesirable versions of reality, to change the perceptions of individuals, groups or institutions, and to advocate a particular course of action.

Moreover, the role of mediated communication or media discourse in the construction and transformation of culture is well established in communication media research (e.g. Bauman & Sherzer 1996; Billig 1995; Carbaugh 1988; Grodin & Lindlof 1996; Thompson 1995: Chs 4 & 7). Media discourse is a quintessential site and mode in which our own cultures and others' are formed, maintained and reshaped. Here we have in mind especially journalistic and editorial communication where descriptions, predictions, prescriptions of one's own culture and others' culture are delivered.

However, it appears that media communication theory has not paid sufficient attention to the contemporary mass media *intercultural*. That is, it has a dimension, and capacity to act as a culture to, or upon, the cultural-Other and this intercultural quality is becoming increasingly dynamic. Mediated communication nowadays, from e.g. Tony Blair's speech on the Euro, or news on public protest against the ban on British beef, to magazine holiday advertisements from exotic countries, let alone the media attention to the Chechen war, are not just intra-cultural, but intended, and received, cross-culturally. Everyday discourse such as these can be a powerful form of intercultural communication and have significant consequences on cultural development. In and through such intercultural mass communication, cultural traditions are utilized, cultural boundaries are drawn, and cultural others are threatened and so on and so forth. In this study, accordingly, special regard will be given to this intercultural framing of the media 'reports' on Hong Kong.

2.5. Political ethnography as methodology

From our social constructionist point of view, it will be clear that positivistic standards of validity and reliability are untenable. So, we maintain that *ethical* policy should be adopted in research methodology. The particular moral criterion that we opt for is *the helpfulness* of research, as both a process and product, to the groups of people that researchers deem as already oppressed or repressed. In accordance to this adopted methodological principle, we propose to take two broad, interrelated kinds of method or methodological strategy. The first strategy is 'deconstructive' in nature: i.e. making transparent, highlighting or undermining aspects of existing discourse that are repressive, demeaning or otherwise detrimental to those groups or institutions whom discourse researchers regard as already oppressed. The second tact is 'transformational' in essence: Creating versions of reality and ways of speaking that would be potentially useful or helpful to those oppressed groups and institutions. Taken as a whole, they can be understood as interventionist and emancipatory.

Therefore, we shall not strive to present a 'balanced' or 'neutral' view when we consider the international media on the transition of Hong Kong: Given the historically evolved

colonialism and present-day globalized domination, the western discourse of its Other is a pressing issue that needs to be urgently debated (of course, this is not to say that the political opinions as expressed in the mass media of mainland China would present a completely unbiased view of the transition of Hong Kong). Similarly, we do not intend to achieve generality of conclusions, or to claim comprehensiveness of our data presented here (though it may be noted that we present here data from a reasonably large range of linguistic and geopolitical sources). Rather our aim is to highlight certain argumentative and politically consequential kinds of mass-mediated cultural discourse.

3. Culture as embedded in argumentation

3.1. 'Hong Kong's success' for rejecting alternative accounts

In this first section, we present a range of accounts of Hong Kong's economic success offered by various international media. What we want to show through our analysis is that, when Hong Kong's cultural specificity is viewed as discursive, we can see that it consists in a *certain explanation* (Antaki 1994; Buttny 1993; Scott & Lyman 1968; see also Shi-xu 1999) and that the object of the explanation is *taken-for-granted* (namely, 'exceptional economic success'). Furthermore, we shall find that the explanatory discourse is concerned with, not merely how things are or have been, but rather, more importantly, *undermining alternative accounts* of Hong Kong's uniqueness. Furthermore, through cross-cultural contrast, we reveal a deeper level of the argumentative nature of everyday cultures. Namely, when the ideologically oriented accounts of Hong Kong's success are compared across different cultural sources, we see that they contradict one another, creating thereby Hong Kong's identity as, not a certainty, but a matter of power contest. The latter feature of cultural discourse lends itself to critical analysis. That is, if the various explanations of Hong Kong's success are argumentative and some of them ideological, then comparison amongst them may be able to yield *critically relevant evaluation and new visions*. Thus, contrast will be made between ideological forms of explanation and culturally more constructive ones. The first example is a fragment of an interview with Christopher Patten, Hong Kong's last governor, carried in *Newsweek Special Issue* prior to the historic return of Hong Kong (bold type is added in the following examples to indicate the starting point of textual analysis):

Example [1]

I get thrown back again and again **to a wonderful quotation of de Tocqueville** in which he said if you want to know why a country or a city is rich and prosperous **don't** look at its forests, **don't** look at its harbour, **don't** look at other national resources, **look at its laws**. Does it have laws which encourage people and help people to thrive and excel? **And that's precisely what Hong Kong has had**. We did a pretty good job', [interview with Christopher Patten] *Newsweek Special Issue*, 05-07/97

It may be observed that here plausible causal candidates for Hong Kong's success are ruled out one by one (N.B. the don'ts anaphoras) and the one singled out is highlighted as a result. The negations here effectively invoke but undermine alternative accounts, potential or real. The construction of auto-question-and-answer ('Does it have laws which encourage...to excel? And that's precisely what Hong Kong has had'), which might be interpreted as the output of a

rhetorical strategy which renders the premises of an argument more evident (a figure called 'subiectio' in ancient rhetoric; cf. Quintilianus 1953: 9.2.14f.), has a similar effect. More importantly, the recourse to the authority of de Tocqueville most effectively warrants the preferred explanation. In this perspective, it becomes clear that it is the laws established by the British government that caused the actions that led to Hong Kong's success, though such an understanding would be based on the presupposed knowledge about the role of the British administration in the laws. It may be argued, therefore, that the reality of how Hong Kong has achieved economical success is associated with an argumentative and socio-cultural motive, viz. excluding alternative claims of the causes and thereby glorifying British colonial rule ('its laws'). This may also be evidenced by Patten's quotation in the title.

The same causal argument scheme may be observed in following examples; only different choices of the causes are made. In the following extract, the success of Hong Kong is claimed to be attributable to the efforts of local people, instead of the British.

Example [2]

[Following a description of Ho's bitter feelings about China ensuing his traumatized experience there] Ho has no special affection for Hong Kong's colonial administrators either, citing injustices and police abuses under the British. As head of the local Human Rights Commission, he may be more sensitive to such matters than others. Nevertheless **Ho attributes Hong Kong's success almost entirely to the sweat of the local inhabitants. 'What have the British done for Hong Kong people?'**A question of identity'*Asiaweek*, 23/05/97

In Ho's explanation, not only is the success of Hong Kong attributed elsewhere, viz. to the efforts of local people, but the kind of account Patten so eloquently defended as we saw above expressly rejected as well. Thus, just as in the previous example, the reality of why Hong Kong has achieved success is argumentatively organized, with special reference to the bitter feelings towards or complaints against the Chinese and the British. The argumentation here is specifically directed at the claim of the British role in Hong Kong's success, potential or real (N.B. the rhetorical question) as well as at the Chinese (see the beginning of the quote).

If we compare this contrary account of why Hong Kong has been successful with the one provided by Patten, then it will become clear that the argumentative organization of cultural accounts is motivated by in-group interests. Whereas Patten's serves to glorify the British colonial administration of which he was the representative, Ho's defends the claim to economic achievement by the local people of which he is a member and which his organization is supposed to support. In other words, the background cultural contexts that are invoked in the texts show that the respective accounts of cultures also have a cultural stake in the communicative process.

From the variability of causal accounts of Hong Kong's economic success displayed by these two examples, we might also begin to see the cultural reality in question as existing in the mode of discourse. Indeed, as Example [3] below, taken from a German magazine, shows, Hong Kong's success is attributed to yet another kind of cause, viz. the opening of China's economy.

Example [3]

Freilich wissen die meisten Menschen in der Kolonie, wem sie das sagenhafte Wachstum der vergangenen Dekaden verdanken: den Chinesen¹⁹⁷⁹ war für uns vielleicht wichtiger als 1997", sagt Victor Fung, der als Chef des einflussreichen Hong Kong Trade Development

Council die Werbetrommel rührt. In diesem Jahr begann Chinas Wirtschaft, sich für ausländische Investoren zu öffnen. Niemand profitierte davon mehr als die Bewohner von Hong Kong. **(Most of the people in the colony know to whom they owe the fabulous growth of the past decades: To the Chinese)** 1979 was perhaps more important for us than 1997", says Victor Fung, who beats the drum as the chief of the influential Hong Kong Trade Development Council. In this year China's economy began to open for foreign investors. Nobody gained more advantage from that than the inhabitants of Hong Kong.) 'Profit statt Freiheit' ('Profit instead of freedom', ZEIT Punkte 3 [A German magazine, a special China issue; published by the editors of the German weekly *Die Zeit* (The Time)], 1997

Here the potentially questionable status of what causes the exceptional economical growth is marked but neutralized by the construction 'know to whom they owe [...]': To the Chinese.' Furthermore, the possibility of other equally or more important causes is ruled out by highlighting the fact that Hong-Kong-ers benefit the most from China ('Nobody gained more advantage from that than the inhabitants of Hong Kong').

A fuller account can be found in the published speech by Jiang Ze Min, China's president. Note that he lists many possible causes for Hong Kong's success, some of which appear in Examples [1], [2] and [3] respectively: The efforts made by Hong Kong's inhabitants, the natural resources, the legal system, and the support by mainland China, which is consistent with Jiang Ze Min's culture-specific point-of-view (of course, analysing example [4] in this way, we do not claim that president Jiang Ze Min's views on Hong Kong are (always) objective and disinterested, but only that he formulates a richer explanation of the possible causes for Hong Kong's success in the quoted passage):

Example [4]

Hong Kong's success today is, in the final analysis, **the work of the Hong Kong compatriots.** Their pioneering and enterprising spirit has filled people around the world with deep admiration.

[...]

Hong Kong's success today **is inseparable from China's development and the support of the people from the mainland.** After the founding of New China, the Chinese Government has all along given support for a socially stable and economically prosperous Hong Kong. [...] Hong Kong's success today is **also attributable to a number of other factors. Its advantageous geographical location, its free port policy of complete openness, its well-developed legal system and highly efficient team of civil servants, and its effective economic management and civic administration, have all facilitated** Hong Kong's economic development. [...] 'A shining page in the annals of the Chinese nation' [speech by Jiang Ze Min], *South China Morning Post* 02/0797

The central point we want to make here is not merely that how Hong Kong has achieved exceptional economic success, as a culture-specific fact, is a matter of argumentation and of discursive variability. Neither is it just that the various causal explanations are motivated by cultural-ideological interests, true as they are. From the SCDS perspective, we also want to take a step further and strive to be useful and helpful, at an intercultural level, by privileging certain versions against others. To that end, a contrastive discourse analysis can be employed here to examine the differences in the extent to which the various accounts promote the cultural-Self interest at the expense of cultural Others. A moment reflection would reveal that Patten's argumentative explanation serves exclusively the interest of British colonial rule whereas Jiang

Ze Min's account, as given by a non-local, gives central credit to the local people themselves and is by far the more inclusive in acknowledging the causes. Therefore we suggest that the latter be the kind to be preferred to the former kind.

There is another way of evaluating the accounts at hand that we find useful. It is in terms of argument schemes. The causal explanations we have examined seem to follow a general pattern of inference, as follows (cf. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971: 263ff.; Kienpointner 1992: 328ff; Grennan 1997: 187):

Premise 1:

If and only if consequence A has been achieved exclusively (or at least: Primarily) due to actions B, actions B are the main cause of A.

Premise 2:

A has been achieved exclusively (or at least primarily) due to B, that is, there are no other actions C that could equally achieve consequence A.

Therefore: Actions B are the main cause of A.

The structure of Patten's argumentation, for example, may be reconstructed as a context-specific variant of this general causal pattern of inference. Note that the main point of Patten's argument is not simply to provide SOME cause of Hong Kong's success, but to show that the British laws are the main cause of its booming economy. To do this, he uses an (implicit) warrant establishing a semantic equivalence ('if and only if') between 'B is the main cause of A' and 'A has been primarily achieved by B'. Moreover, he excludes other possible causes because only then his conclusion can be plausibly derived from premise 1 and 2

Premise 1:

If and only if Hong Kong's success has been achieved primarily due its (British) laws (which encouraged people and helped people to thrive and excel), the (British) laws are the main cause of Hong Kong's success.

Premise 2:

Hong Kong's success has been primarily achieved by its (British) laws, that is, the natural resources of a nation (like forests and harbors) cannot equally achieve its success.

Therefore: Its (British) laws are the main cause of Hong Kong's success.

The same underlying structure can be applied to Examples [2] and [3]. Such an argumentative strategy excludes potential alternatives as causes B, while favoring one main cause as the best reason for Hong Kong's success. The weakness of such argumentative discourse is its 'mono-causal' tendency and the problematic status of the assertion 'There are no other actions C which could equally achieve consequence A' in premise 2 (cf. again the emphatic imperatives "don't look at X" of Patten and the apodictic way in which Ho seems to attribute Hong Kong's success "almost entirely" to the sweat of the local inhabitants).

This is not to say that Patten (or Ho or Fung) is/are violating laws of logic. On the contrary, following the 'principle of charity' (cf. Govier 1987: 105ff.), we have reconstructed his (their) argumentation in a way which follows a logically valid pattern of inference: $[(p \leftarrow \rightarrow q; p) \rightarrow q]$. However, validity is only a necessary, not a sufficient condition for the soundness of an argument. And it is not likely that a highly complex social and historical process such as the economic success of a city can be explained with only one main cause (for the potential

weaknesses of mono-causal reasoning cf. Walton 1996: 72; Garsen 1997: 20; Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992: 164f.)

In addition, it may be reflected that all these accounts *presume* or *presuppose* a certain cultural fact, viz. Hong Kong's exceptional economic success and, in that connection, presume *that* to be something *to be explained and argued about*. In the media there have been a lot of accounts that explain more or less the same phenomenon, viz. Hong Kong's 'success'/Erfolg'. A subversive kind of question we may ask is, 'Whose success?', 'the majority, ordinary hard-working Hong Kong people's?', for example. Moreover, why are other aspects of Hong Kong not explained and argued about? Indeed, no other source than the Chinese official newspaper ('A century's exhilarating event of the Chinese nation' [editorial], *People's Daily*, 01/07/97) explains why the return of Hong Kong has become possible in the first place. Only here the possibility of the return of Hong Kong to China is made an issue.

3.2. *Hong Kong's future as object of Western threats*

In the above, we revealed that some explanations of Hong Kong's past are motivated to counter alternative claims. In this section, we want to show that the question about Hong Kong's future is monopolized by a western discourse of (implicit) threat. It will be observed that although a typical question raised round the Hong Kong's return is what Hong Kong will become, the 'answers' given by the Western media are rarely predictive. Rather, they are imperative: Hong Kong's future is turned into an object of Western desire and dictatorship. More specifically, various Western media actors use the speech acts of threat, warning, or command, sometimes coupled with promise of reward, to contain China in respect of its sovereign relation to Hong Kong - 'let Hong Kong remain Hong Kong or else we will...', as they say (see below). Put another way, the future identity of Hong Kong is not so much a question of cultural development as a measure, a tool, or 'a test case' as it is called (see below) by the western media to regiment China's behavior (focusing our critical analysis on Western media in this way, we do not want to claim that media in mainland China could not similarly be criticized for expressing (implicit) threats for political purposes).

Fallacious as it is, such threatening discourse is dressed up in argumentation. That is, what Hong Kong should become and what China is allowed to do and obliged to do with regard to Hong Kong are premised on Western wishes, Western plans and, above all, Western rules. Thus it may be said that, whereas the argumentative discourse we saw in the previous section is more of intercultural persuasion, the argumentation in which the threats are couched below is more of cross-cultural coercion. Let us give a few examples to show how this mediation of the future identity and behavior of Hong Kong and China is accomplished in various Western media.

Example [5]

[...] the most fascinating question is not how China will change Hong Kong but **how Hong Kong will change China - and the world.**

[...]

Human rights in Hong Kong are already emerging as another focal point for China-American relations, and any kind of crackdown in the territory could trigger a serious downward spiral in relations between Washington and Beijing. 'Big change is coming - to whom and how?' *International Herald Tribune*, 01/07/97

Example [6]

Will the Hong Kong handover advance or retard US-China relations depends upon two factors. First, China must ensure that 'one country, two systems' works, which means honouring the Basic Law it has endorsed to secure Hong Kong's guarantees.

[...]

But if 'one country, two systems' has this design tension, it contains its reward. [...] Once China shows the concept works in practice, then it has the perfect argument to put the incorporation of Taiwan on the agenda. 'Whose values will prevail?' *The Australian* 02/07/97.

Let us take up Example [5] from the American newspaper first. Apparently it is an inquisitive question what Hong Kong will turn into after its return to China; NB. 'the most fascinating question'. And yet, far from being a cultural development to be speculated about or predicted, Hong Kong's future is already being fashioned by external desires and concerns. First, it is pointed out to China that human rights in Hong Kong have already emerged as an issue. The paper alerts China, too, that this is becoming central to its relation with the United States. Further, it issues a more stern warning to the Chinese government's leaders (N.B. 'Beijing and Washington'): They may be given a punishment of 'a serious downward spiral in relations between Washington and Beijing' if they dare to attempt 'any kind of crackdown in the territory'. Of course one of the basic premises underlying these statements regarding the Sino-American relation, like the one in Example [6] (see also below), is that China needs a good relationship with the U.S. Thus, it may not be an exaggeration to say that 'Big change is coming - to whom and how?' (the title of the article) is a local cultural development for the American media, and the American Administration whose interest it represents, to prescribe and engineer.

The Australian text at this historic time (Example [6]) would be expected to be in the same 'natural' context of questioning about what Hong Kong will become. However, the question posed here is a pre-formulated and designed one: It is linked specifically with the 'make or break' of the Sino-American relations ('advance or retard'); in addition, it is concerned with '[w]hose values prevail?'. More importantly, the answer given to it, similar to what we saw in Example [7], is not a prediction or description, but an injunction to China. It is an injunction because it tells China what *it* must do ('must ensure'); it is an injunction also because it specifies or stipulates for China (the meaning of) what it must do ('which means'). Although this imperative is issued by different (Australian) media, it reflects the same concern or desire: Namely China does what the media requires.

Hong Kong's future identity (in that connection what China must (not) do to it) is not only an object of discursive coercion, but it may be an object for American/Western reward as well, if certain conditions are met. Thus, in this particular piece of text, what China will do and what Hong Kong will be are not just a matter for threatening and warning, but are placed in the *moral order* the media and the Western interest it represents set for them as well (N.B. 'reward' and 'Once China shows the concept works in practice, then it has the perfect argument to put the incorporation of Taiwan on the agenda'). Here it may be recalled again that it is widely understood that China needs a good relationship with Washington, not least with regard to the issue of Taiwan.

In the following Austrian example, too, the course of future is laid out forcefully for the Chinese government and Hong Kong by stressing the 'international' norm as well as 'its own interest':

Example [7]

Ein Satz sollte unauslöschlich in das Gedächtnis der Beijinger Führung sowie in das von Tung Chee-hwa, des Regierungschefs der chinesischen Sonderverwaltungszone Hong Kong, eingeschrieben sein: Die Augen der Welt sind auf Hong Kong gerichtet [...]. Beijing sollte schon im eigenen Interesse Hong Kong Hong Kong sein lassen. Nicht nur, weil es die vielzitierte Gans ist, die goldene Eier legt. China wird doch, sollte man hoffen dürfen, auf die Tilgung der einen Schmach nicht eine neue folgen lassen: Die Zerstörung des wiedererlangten Territoriums. (One sentence should be irreversibly engraved on the memory of both Beijing's leaders and Tung Chee-hwa, the chief executive of the Chinese Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong: The eyes of the world are directed at Hong Kong [...]. In its own interest, Beijing should let Hong Kong remain Hong Kong. Not just because it is the much-quoted goose which lays golden eggs, but also because, after the elimination of one humiliation, China will not let a new one follow (at least, we may hope so): The destruction of the regained territory.) 'Ein Land, zwei Systeme (One country, two systems)' *Der Standard* [An Austrian newspaper], 01/07/97

Like the previous two texts, this one is also concerned, implicitly, with the question of the future of Hong Kong, with special reference to the role of China in the process. Just as in the previous examples, the future development of Hong Kong is woven into the argumentative discourse. That is, the paper strongly reminds China and Hong Kong (leaders) that they should remember the rule and expectation of 'the world': N.B. 'should be irreversibly engraved on the memory' and 'the eyes of the world are directed at Hong Kong'. Formulated in this way, this reminder also sends an explicit injunction and warning: The 'the world' - the Big Brother - is watching and you should never forget it. (In this text, the threat comes from a broader agent - 'the world', instead of 'Washington'.)

In addition, slightly different from the external 'reward' argument in Example [6], here a 'self-interest' strategy is used: That is, the argumentative discourse appeals to China's 'own stake' in Hong Kong. The text analyses for China its stake into two kinds: One positive ('the much-quoted goose which lays golden eggs') and one negative ('let a new one [humiliation] follow [...]: The destruction of the regained territory'). However, it might be pointed out that what China is persuaded to do here dovetails precisely with what 'the world' requires, namely, 'let Hong Kong remain Hong Kong', or in other words, keeping the status quo.

Through a different - argument scheme - analysis, a similar critical effect may be achieved. In the three examples just examined, we can observe what is called *ad baculum* argument in operation (see Walton 1992: 143ff and 1996: 75ff.; cf. 'pragmatic arguments' by Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971: 266ff.; see also Schellens 1985: 153ff.; Walton 1996: 75ff.). Such a scheme commands a certain course of action or policy as *the viable* choice by pointing out positive and/or negative effects (= "pragmatic argument") and combines this with a threat, which makes this special kind of causal argument potentially fallacious. There are two varieties of the pragmatic argument, which most of the time appear in everyday argumentation in a simplified form, that is, usually not all premises are (explicitly) stated (cf. Schellens 1985: 157; 174f.):

Premise1:
If action A leads to the desirable effects B, A should be done.
Premise2:

Premise1:
If action A leads to the undesirable effects B, A should not be done.
Premise2:

There are no other actions C with even more desirable effects D. Premise3: A has mainly positive effects B. A has no or few negative effects E.	There are no other actions C with even more negative effects D. Premise3: A has mainly negative effects B. A has no or few positive effects E.
Therefore: A should be done.	Therefore: A should not be done.

To show these in some detail, let us review Example [7]. The gist of the argumentative structure underlying [7] can be reconstructed as a complex combination of both 'positive' and 'negative' versions of the pragmatic argument, that is, both positive and negative effects are taken into account. Therefore, the conclusion can be formulated both in a positive and in a negative version: 'A should be done' ('China should let Hong Kong remain Hong Kong') or the logically equivalent formulation 'Not-A should not be done' ('China should not abolish the autonomy of Hong Kong'):

If the eyes of the world are directed at Hong Kong, in its own interest, Beijing (and Tung Chee Hwa) should let Hong Kong remain Hong Kong.

If the continuation of Hong Kong's autonomy has positive effects for China, that is, if an autonomous Hong Kong is like the much-quoted goose that lays golden eggs, China should let Hong Kong remain Hong Kong.

If China's abolition of Hong Kong's autonomy has negative effects, that is, it could lead to a new humiliation, viz, the destruction of the regained territory, China should not abolish Hong Kong's autonomy.

The eyes of the world are directed at Hong Kong.

The continuation of Hong Kong's autonomy has positive effects for China, that is, an autonomous Hong Kong is the much-quoted goose that lays golden eggs.

China's abolition of Hong Kong's autonomy has negative effects: It could lead to a new humiliation

Therefore: China should let Hong Kong remain Hong Kong = China should not abolish its autonomy.

The argument here uses both negative and positive effects of particular actions in order to reach the positive conclusion that China/Beijing (and Tung Chee Hwa) should leave Hong Kong's political status as it is, and at the same time the logically equivalent negative conclusion that China should not abolish Hong Kong's autonomy. At first sight, the remaining premises ('If the eyes of the world...'; 'The eyes of the world...') are not clearly connected with a positive or negative outcome of China's decisions concerning Hong Kong. But the premise 'The eyes of the world are directed at Hong Kong' implicitly conveys a negative consequence of the abolition of Hong Kong's autonomy, hence *threat*. If China would not take care of the world's opinion, this would lead to negative effects for China, that is, 'the world' could/would take action against China.

Of course, it cannot objectively be proved that a threat is actually conveyed because it is only conversationally implied and not entailed by the explicit argumentation: However, this cancellability is a typical property of implicit threats and other indirect speech acts (cf. Grice 1975; Sadock 1978: 292; Walton 1992: 181) and makes them suitable means for reaching communicative goals without exposing the speaker's/writer's point of view too much. So there

is at least some plausibility for the interpretation given above (Similar implicit threats can be found in other ad baculum arguments in the earlier examples: N.B. 'trigger a serious downward spiral' in Example [5] and 'advance or retard US-China relations?' and 'must ensure' in Example [6]).

The implicit threat, however, is not the only feature that makes such argumentation problematic (Walton 1992: 180ff.). As no other possible courses of action are provided (cf. premises 2 of the general and more complete pattern of the pragmatic argument), the discourse comes close to fallacies creating false dilemmas (e.g. 'In its own interest, Beijing should [...]'; see Kienpointner 1993: 426; Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971: 238f. for 'black and white fallacy'). Again, this is not to say that the argumentation in Example [7] is invalid in the sense of formal logic; on the contrary, its internal structure has been reconstructed as a series of three instances of the formally valid Modus ponens-scheme: [(p \rightarrow q; p) \rightarrow q].

3.3. *Hong Kong's identities as grounds for doings and beings*

In the final section we will show that culture can be yet another different type of meaningful unit of argumentative discourse from the ones we saw in 3.1 and 3.2. There, in 3.1, variable versions of Hong Kong's past are used as a rhetorical device for rejecting alternative claims. In 3.2, Hong Kong's future is the object of specific discursive actions, viz. cross-cultural threats and warnings. In both cases, Hong Kong becomes part of the *desired conclusion* of argumentative discourse. Below, it will be seen that cultural identities are employed as meaningful, evaluative categories and thereby as grounds for advocating desired 'doings' or 'beings' (see also Edwards 1991; Shi-xu 1996). It will be observed that selection, categorization and definition of cultural elements are being made and, because of their presupposed values, the cultural categories become part of an argument in favor of particular desired actions and identities. Put another way, because such categorizations and notions are assigned, or assumed to have, certain values they are able to act as basis for certain preferred claims in argumentative discourse. Let us examine how Tong Chi Hua uses and utilizes the notion of *Hong Kong as 'Chinese'* in his speech on assuming the office of Chief Executive of Chinese Special Administrative Region Hong Kong:

Example [8]

Most of the people of Hong Kong are Chinese, some are not. For a long time, Hong Kong has embraced the Eastern and Western cultures. We will continue to encourage diversity in our society, but we must also reaffirm and respect the fine traditional Chinese values, including filial piety, love for the family, modesty and integrity, and the desire for continuous improvement. We value plurality, but discourage open confrontation; we strive for liberty but not at the expense of the rule of law; we respect minority views but also shoulder collective responsibility. 'Reunion assures better future for us all', *South China Morning Post*, 02/07/97

Here on the one hand some people and some things are categorized as 'Chinese'; on the other hand other things are implicitly or explicitly expressed as 'Eastern' or 'Western'. However, 'Chinese', 'Eastern', 'Western' are more than just labels. For one thing, they are assigned values and significance by the verbal context (N.B. 'virtues', 'knowledge and

experiences', 'the best'). For another, more importantly, the 'Chinese', 'of the West' and 'of the East', and so on, because of the evaluative meanings given to them, are used to form the rationale for desired actions and identities. In particular, it may be noted that Tong Chi Hua, on assuming his duty as the Chief Executive of Chinese Special Administrative Region Hong Kong, points out that '[m]ost of the people of Hong Kong *are* Chinese' (emphasis ours) and uses that as the starting point for advocating actions and identities Chinese/Eastern in future Hong Kong. Note the emphasis on the doings and beings afforded by the three uses of the conjunction 'but': N.B. 'but we must also reaffirm and respect the fine traditional Chinese values'. Sometimes such categorizations of 'Hong Kong as Chinese' are simply assumed so that they function implicitly as grounds for making one's exhortations, as in '[w]e need to preserve [...] Chinese virtues while assimilating the knowledge and experiences of the West. [...] Combining the best of the East and West makes our society that [sic] much stronger' ('Masters of our own house', *Newsweek Special Issue*, 05-07/97).

The fact that cultural categorizations and the in-built evaluations therein can be used as grounds for advancing one's preferred positions can be highlighted by a contrary categorization of Hong Kong - for a different purpose by the former British governor of Hong Kong. Here Hong Kong is said to have a different character or identity:

Example [9]

Christopher Patten: [...] **It [Hong Kong...] is a very international city.** And I think that anything which detracts from that in the future would be very damaging. 'We did a pretty good job', *Newsweek Special Issue*, 05-07/97

In this instance, Hong Kong is called, not Chinese, but 'very international'. Moreover, that quality is considered as valuable, which is indicated or confirmed subsequently by implying other kinds of identity as negative for Hong Kong (note 'very damaging') (these statements also follow a passing account of his daughter in Hong Kong as having many international friends). In this way, this characterization of Hong Kong as 'international' justifies the subsequent warning against other kinds of identity.

To further highlight the meaningful, pragmatic and argumentative nature of cultural identity, let us give an example of the same cultural categorization applied to Hong Kong - 'Chinese' - that carries with it a different evaluative significance and accordingly serves a different argumentative purpose than we saw in Example [8].

Example [10]

'Why must we pay such a price **to be Chinese?**' asked Martin Lee, leader of the Democratic Party.

'We are proud **to be Chinese**, more proud than ever before. But why is it that our leaders in China will not give us more democracy, but take away the modest democracy we have fought so hard to win from the British government.' 'Last hurrah and empire that covered a quarter of the globe closes down', *The Guardian*, 01/07/97

In this Guardian-quoted speech from Hong Kong's leader of the Democratic Party, Hong Kong people are categorized as 'Chinese'. Apparently it is given a positive quality (' We are proud to be Chinese, more proud than every before'). But there is a big 'but': 'But why is it [...]'. That is, according to Mr. Martin Lee, to be Chinese involves negative consequences.

For 'our leaders in China' will take away 'democracy' from 'us'. In addition, he explicitly describes Chinese identity to be 'such a price' to pay (note also the rhetorical question). Therefore, the 'Chinese' here is a particular way of categorization - notwithstanding 'proud to be Chinese' - that is motivated to oppose the rule from the Chinese government.

The examples we examined above may again be looked at from a different perspective - the underlying argumentative scheme - and a similar critical effect might be achieved. It may be seen that Examples [8], [9] and [10] implicitly follow a general part-whole scheme, though in different manifestations. This scheme relies on a warrant which prescribes the norms of a community or culture (= the whole) as a guideline for the behavior of individuals or members of social groups (= the parts) belonging to that community or culture (cf. Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1983: 115ff. on the "lieu de quantité"/"locus of quantity"). This may be formulated as something like:

Premise1:

If all or most members of culture B have properties C, they should act according to C.

Premise2:

If all or most members of culture B' have properties C', they should act according to C'.

Premise3:

All/most members of group A belong to culture B and have properties C.

Therefore: The members of group A should act according to C.

When this scheme is applied to specific controversial issues, it may vary between ends. On the one hand, if culture B is conceived of as a homogeneous entity having properties C, then members of other cultures B', B'', B''' cannot be expected to share properties C or act according to C. If, on the other hand, culture B, B', B''' are seen as complementary entities, then members of B (in our case, the people of Hong Kong) can be expected to act alternatively according to properties C of B (i.e. Chinese culture) and properties C' of B' (i.e. Western culture), though there may occur problems of compatibility. For instance, Example [8] can be reconstructed as following the latter kind of variant:

If all members of Chinese culture (= B) share some basic values C (e.g. filial piety, love for the family, modesty, integrity), they should act according to these values. If all members of Western culture (= B') share certain values C' (e.g. encouragement of diversity, plurality, liberty) they should act according to these values.

Most inhabitants of Hong Kong (= A) belong to Chinese culture (= B), but also embrace certain values of Western culture (= B').

Therefore: Hong Kong-ers (= A) should preserve basic Chinese values (= C) while adopting certain Western values (= C').

The use of this variant, as such, may be considered as reflecting a more positive attitude towards the issue of culture and cultural differences in Hong Kong. Because it assumes the compatibility between cultures and merits of every culture, the use of this variant scheme also achieves persuasiveness for each culture that is represented, though, it might be noted,

in the actual text above, premium is put on Chinese culture.

Ex-governor Patten's discourse ([9]) marks the other end of the continuum: If B is considered to be an indivisible whole composed of different cultures, there is no use of stressing the Chinese character of Hong Kong. Here we should like to point out the potential weakness of this argument scheme in respect of contextual application, namely, the whole (i.e. a culture) may not be homogeneous but more than the sum of its parts and the parts can have properties which are untypical for the whole (Perelman and Olbrechts-Tyteca 1971: 234ff., 321ff.; Kienpointner 1992: 274ff.; Grennan 1997: 166, 186; for potentially fallacious part-whole inferences see Van Eemeren & Grootendorst 1992: 174ff.). Patten's choice of this variant serves effectively to deny the genuinely Chinese properties of the people of Hong Kong.

4. Conclusion

We began this study from our premise of a SCDS perspective on culture. There, we viewed culture as, rather than an external entity, a meaningful part of social discourse practice and as embodied in the concepts, categories and other meaning-making processes of discourse and discourse context - hence the *discourse of culture*. However, whilst the role of discourse in the construction of culture(s) is now well recognized in cultural, media, linguistic and communication studies, the detailed discursive complexities and dynamics of cultural (re)production, remain to be explored. Since the discourse of culture is largely contentious and ideological, we surmised that argumentation would be required for the demarcation, definition, maintenance and transformation of cultures. It would be interesting then to investigate how the interconnections between culture and discourse may be accomplished through argumentation.

We applied this SCDS discourse approach to the particular case of cultural construction of the Hong Kong transition in the international media. Three sets of data analysis were presented. First, we showed that the reality of how Hong Kong achieved economic success is in an important sense a competing claim by a culturally and institutionally embedded media actor, a claim that is aimed at undermining alternative and undesirable accounts. In that connection we also suggested that culture-specific reality exists precisely in the ideologically motivated and hence competing ways of explanation. In other words, it is the argumentative variability (other than epistemological certainty) that characterizes the 'real' cause and effect of Hong Kong's economic past. Secondly, we made it explicit that the future of Hong Kong, and China is not just an external and dispassionate cultural reality to be predicted or speculated about, but an object of argumentatively loaded - threatening - acts of Western discourse. Thereby we also revealed that the future conduct and development of Hong Kong and China are inextricably bound up with the desires and wishes of the powerful Western media (and the institutions they represent). Thirdly, we observed that 'Hong Kong', 'Chinese', 'international city', and the like are not any more real than categories of culture in discourse, nor are they neutral characterizations. Through background assumptions or discursive invocations, they become imbued with value and significance, which media actors select and utilize as reasons for desired identities or behaviors.

Finally, it may be observed that the design and outcomes of this study have been

oriented by a concern, over and above the argumentative nature and complexities of cultures, to be socially critical and useful--a methodological principle of SCDS, discursive approach to culture. Though the attempts made here are only modestly successful, it might, for the sake of further research, be worthwhile to mention a few examples here. For one, we compared the argumentative constructions of Hong Kong's economic success; we showed that some constructions are more ideological than others and suggested what a mutually more acceptable and useful one can be like. For another, we highlighted the dominant and repressive ways of arguing by the Western media about what future Hong Kong should be like. In that connection, our attention to the inter-cultural dimension of mass communication revealed that written media discourse about other cultures involves cultural power, power interest and power consequences. In conclusion, it may be suggested that, if argumentative discourse is in a dialectic and dynamic relationship to culture, as our study shows, then genuine argumentation should be encouraged, not suppressed, for world cultures to co-exist, co-operate and prosper.

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