

Call for papers

Developments of Professions

- Observed with Niklas Luhmann's Systems Theory

Place: International University Centre (IUC), Dubrovnik, Croatia

Address: Don Frana Bulić 4

HR – 20000 Dubrovnik, Croatia

Dates: September 20th – 22nd, 2017 (with optional informal get-togethers on 18-19 September)

Theme:

Social Systems theory after Luhmann

Systems theory has had a tremendous impact in social science since the 1950s. During the last decades, however, systems theory has been completely transformed. In particular, German sociologist Niklas Luhmann's system theory has changed what social studies are and how they are conducted. Luhmann's "Grand Theory" got its final form with his principal work *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft 1 – 2 (Theory of Society, Vol. 1-2)*, Stanford University Press 2012 and 2013) in 1997. Moreover, additional books, articles and interviews have been published, including more than twenty books now in English. Whatever one thinks about the exact form of his analysis, sociological theory has to some extent been transformed by the "Luhmann effect".

Albeit Luhmann's general theory hitherto has seemed very abstract and distant, there is a strong drive towards analyses in empirical studies that make use of Luhmann's insights. This is evident in his seminal publication *Social Theory*. Luhmann's systems theory is more an abductive applied theory than a deductively developed theory. Yet it seems that its very abstract character has a fruitful effect.

A recent Dubrovnik conference in problem-oriented social systems theory concerned structural couplings between systems and resulted in the publication by Alberto Febbrajo and Gorm Harste (eds.). *Law and Intersystemic Communication. Understanding 'Structural Coupling'*, London: Ashgate 2013.

Developments in Professions

Professions developed as structural couplings between functional systems, organizational systems, and individualized persons. This gave a strong and even authorized position to some of the first professions such as priests, lawyers and judges, university teachers, officers, doctors and civil servants with the prince at the top. Their authorization even promised them to swear to some form of devoted obedience. Some of the classical functional systems developed with this attachment to organization and to particular persons. Developments in private companies followed and still more professions too. University degrees became requirements, but other degrees and still more educations emerged in the shadows of the classic model.

Some cities, states, and regions became more dominated by professions. Protestants and Catholics competed. Professionalization, discipline and the reverse side, individualization, became a first class modernization factor. The idea of professionalization became a generalized form to be useful with the enlightenment of society. The standard professions developed their self-organization often linked to bureaucracies and froze the form of modern society. Their subdivisions, in law, medicine, civil engineering, military disciplines, at universities and even in sport stabilized the development of modern society.

However, as soon as such structures emerged with its self-referential form, the more particular problems were to be solved in dissent and conflict between the professions. Often to their surprise individuals can observe into which communication disagreement their professions may lead them. And the obvious response is, of course, to develop new subdisciplines, new hybrids, and even semi-professional skills in-between practice and theoretical educational traditions.

Work became networking and project-development. Deduction and inductions retired from abductive training and skills. Professionalization entered the daily life and vice versa. At the same time, persons, clients, situations, problems had to be patient squeezed in-between all the mutually conflicting professions with their essentially contested concepts and codes of communication. Semi-professional outsourcing and privatizations is invited to solve the problems, which so often dissolve into snow-balled increasing problems and non-solutions packed into a blurred new speak language when no-one take responsibility.

Luhmannian systems theory pose questions to such developments beyond the classical frameworks from Émile Durkheim, Max Weber and Parsons, but also in a difference to sociologies of knowledge known from Pierre Bourdieu's framework.

Scholars are invited to describe their research and their particular observations of professional problems, of theoretical oppositions and similarities, of empirical differences from system to system, field to field, and from communes, states, international cooperation, or network operations.

Systems theory is empirically open. New semantics, different codes, and changing forms turn out to change and develop structures at different and opposed levels. A main topic in many studies is about conflicts between differentiated professions. Yet the question of the present conference is: How do systems challenge other systems, and how do systems invite conflict between professions? Narratives develop according to professional conflicts in communication forms, but also between

communication and in-communication. Risks and blind spots are well known, yet still, they develop.

The conference opens for theoretical and empirical studies in politics, aesthetics, sociology, theology, history, economics, health, psychology, ecology and organization. They call for abductive research.

The conference will approach professions from Luhmann's theory of social systems and gather scholars who work with theoretical and methodological clarifications as well as empirical studies. Studies that compare system analysis with other forms of analysis are welcome (Foucauldian, Bourdieuan or analysis of discourse or ANT).

The conference language is English (papers in German are accepted since most participants read German but their presentation should be held in English).

Deadline for **abstracts** to the programme is August 20th, 2017. Short **abstracts** (10-20 lines) should be sent to the programme coordinator (Gorm Harste, Department of Political Science, Aarhus University, Denmark, gha@ps.au.dk). It is not obligatory to send an abstract, or to present a paper, in order to participate in the conference; however in any case, all participants are requested to send a mail well before September the 1st to announce their participation. A list of participants will be distributed, and papers (or outlines of papers) should be sent to the coordinator and eventually to the distributed list no later than September 10th.

Organizational background

Every year conferences about the use of Luhmann's system theory have been held in, for example, Munich, Copenhagen, Tromsø, Stuttgart, Montreal, Boston, London or Stockholm. The Scandinavian and British network has developed fruitful discussions to which German, French, Italian, Canadian and Dutch scholars have also contributed. Translations of Luhmann's books are still more numerous, introductions and theoretical contributions are flourishing. The same seems to be the case with empirical studies applying system theory in comparative studies, case studies, historical studies or in concrete practice. Some of the current debates take place at the following websites:

(http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/luhmann_danish/)

(<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/sociocybernetics/>).

In the 1980s, Hans-Ulrich Gumbrecht and Ludwig Pfeiffer organised a number of great conferences at the Inter-University Centre of post-graduate studies (IUC) in Dubrovnik in the former Yugoslavia, now Croatia. Since 1981, Luhmann attended these conferences. Unfortunately, the Centre was bombed in 1991 and for some years the conferences could not take place. The contributions from those conferences were published in a series of five rather big volumes at the important Suhrkamp Verlag (*Der Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachgeschichte*, 1983; *Epochenschwellen und Epochenstrukturen im Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachgeschichte*, 1985; *Stil*, 1986; *Materialität der Kommunikation*, 1988, *Paradoxien, Dissonanzen, Zusammenbrüche*, 1991).

Quite a number of those studies were dedicated to semantic history and contributions to a system theory of art.

Today, the Centre has been completely restored physically as well as in spirit. The center has nice internet facilities and a number of rooms for study and possibilities for accommodation. See www.iuc.hr . The center only demands a fee of 40 Euro from each participant.

The Centre is located very close to the famous medieval city of Dubrovnik, about 300 meters northwest. You can find accommodation in one of the many hotels in Dubrovnik (Hotel Imperial is the closest to the Centre, but expensive, Hotel Lero is cheaper, and about 1½ kilometer (1 mile) from the Centre. Remember to inform the hotels that you are a participant in an IUC-conference since this will offer you 45 % price reduction. Another form is one of the popular many private accommodations (Room or “Sobe”) which are very cheap and can be found everywhere. For a reasonable price, a well functioning accommodation is possible at the top roof of the IUC building. When the airport bus stops at the old city main gate, people will come and offer you private accommodation. Restaurants and cafés are everywhere. The weather in September is normally sunny and 20-30 C, though rain is not impossible.

The Dubrovnik airport is situated about 20 kilometres South of Dubrovnik. Travel by car and ferryboat is somewhat more complicated, though beautiful.

Course directors:

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