**Call for papers**

**Temporalities**

**Observed with Sociological Theories of Self-Referential Systems**

Time: September the 17th– 22th, 2012

Place: International University Centre of post-graduate studies (IUC), Dubrovnik, Croatia; http://www.iuc.hr/

**Address: Don Frana Bulicá 4**

**HR – 20000 Dubrovnik, Croatia**

**Frame**

Systems theory has had a tremendous impact in social science since the 1950s. During the last decades, however, systems theory has been completely transformed. Especially the German sociologist Niklas Luhmann’s systems theory has transformed social theory and studies. Luhmann’s “Grand Theory” got its final form with his principal work *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft 1 – 2* in 1997, though additional books, articles and interviews have been published. Whatever one thinks about the exact form of his analysis, sociological theory has been transformed by the “Luhmann effect”.

Although Luhmann’s general theory is very abstract and distanced whenever he does not enter his own analyses of semantic differentiations, there is a strong drive towards analyses of empirical studies that use Luhmann’s insights. The very abstract character of the general theory apparently has a fruitful effect. What is often seen as normal and natural objects are observed as improbable, and new questions can be posed as to how they emerge, how they are codified, which forms their communication get etc. In fact, Luhmann’s theory about modern society and its emergence is quite a grounded theory based on extensive studies of social semantics in history as well as in an impressive scale of disciplines. All kinds of matters from pedagogic, art and religion to social research, organisation, law, politics and international conflicts are subjects for system research strategies.

As the theory is empirically open, new semantics, different codes, and changing forms turn out to change and develop structures at higher levels. The social dimensions of communication as well as structural couplings in-between differentiated material dimensions have often been addressed. This conference will try to address the empirical use of luhmannian systems theory with a certain focus on time-dimensions. One aspect is the speed of societal forms, their acceleration or deceleration. Another is the analysis of past, present and future including the themes of risk and trust. Very important in Luhmann’s approach is the synchronisation of forms and systems. Topics for the conference include themes as diverse as decisions of decisions, credit and credibility as well, moral will-binding, nova and innovation, involution and evolution, form and reform, constitution and revolution aesthetic fashion, shifts of paradigm, or acceleration and slow down in wars. We invite you to look at your field of study under the angle of the temporal dimension and discuss it with your fellow colleagues.

The conference has been hold three times before in Dubrovnik, in 2007, 2009 and 2011 and will continue this ongoing work and gather scholars who work with methodological clarifications as well as empirical studies. Studies comparing system analysis with other forms of analysis are welcome (Foucauldian, Bourdieuian or analysis of discourse and discourse-ethics).

The language will be English. The form is that of work-shops.

**The theme: The temporal dimension**

The aim of the conference is to take a methodological stance on the theme of temporalities as a broad range of research from micro to macro, from art to law, ecology or organisation etc. Various disciplines seem to be interested in this subject as well as methodological devices about what to do. The analysis of temporal dimensions is a fruitful meeting point for a wide range of scholars from various disciplines.

Temporal studies normally concern two levels of analyses

* subjectively experienced time
* objectively measured time

However with Luhmann’s temporal theory the present time is simultaneously subjective and objective.

Hence a number of overall themes emerge:

* How do different functional systems operate with time-bindings and time-horizons?
* How do risks operate as observations of futures from present situations?
* What is change and how does change changes?
* What was the future?
* What are stress, speed, acceleration and slow-down, distress and deceleration? And how do such modalities operate in different functional systems, organisational systems, interaction systems and networks?
* What does it imply to synchronise and establish structural couplings between opposed temporalities

Empirical research

* Many researchers work with a more or less implicit or explicit time-dimension in their research. We urge you to focus on it. What does it mean theoretically? What are the empirical findings?

**Deadlines**

Abstracts for papers shall be submitted not later than June the 15th, 2012.

Course directors:

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**Organisational background**

Every year international conferences about the use of Luhmann’s system theory have been held in Munich, Copenhagen, Tromsö, Luzern, Luxembourg, Stuttgart, Berlin, Montreal. The Scandinavian and British internetwork has developed fruitful discussions, in which German and Dutch scholars have also contributed and French, US, Italian and Canadian researchers begin to participate as well. 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. Increasing groups of scholars in France, Italy and United States have participated. Some of the current debates take place at the following web-sites:

(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 bombarded 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 Sprachhistorie*, 1983; *Epochenschwellen und Epochenstrukturen im Diskurs der Literatur- und Sprachhistorie*, 1985; *Sti*l, 1986; *Materialität der Kommunikation*, 1988, *Paradoxien, Dissonanzen, Zusammenbrüche*, 1991). Quite a number of those studies were dedicated semantic history and contributions to a system theory of art.

Today, the Centre has been completely restored as well as its spirit. The centre has nice internet facilities and a number of rooms for study and possibilities for a accommodation. See [www.iuc.hr](http://www.iuc.hr) . The centre only demands a fee of 40 Euro from each participant.

The Centre is located very close to the famous late medieval city of Dubrovnik, i.e. about 300 meters in the direction North-West to the central medieval gate. 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 kilometre from the Centre; the hotels have reduced prices for IUC participants). Or you can stay in one of the extremely many private accommodations (Room or “Sobe”) which are very cheep and can be found everywhere. When the airport bus stops, people will come and offer you private accommodation. The IUC also provides cheap accommodation in the building itself. Restaurants and cafés are everywhere. The weather in April: normally sunny and 15-25 C° though rain is not impossible.

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