

CO-ORDINATION PROBLEMS AMONG THE SUBSYSTEMS OF COMPLEX SOCIETIES

by

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Modern Western societies of high complexity rest on the operation of their subsystems — such as law, science, economy, public administration — on the basis of separate rationalities and on the development of the adaptability of these divergent subsystems to permanent change. Thus, while until the 19th century the stability of societies depended on the *unchanging nature* of their integral parts, the present stage of social development permits stabilization only if societies manage to co-ordinate the divergent changes of their subsystems.

In modern societies everything is contingent or, to use Niklas Luhmann's terms, "Everything is possible even in some other way."

The structure of modern societies relies on laws effective until declared null and void, on a state policy that can be altered at the next elections, on scientific truths valid until refuted, and on families based on marriages in force until the divorce decree. Social respect for the legal code in operation has to be enforced while individual details of the law are practically subject to daily interpretation; identification with the priorities of state policy is to be ensured in the presence of alternative state policies taking the form of opposition programmes; and the stability of families is maintained through the possibility of divorce at any time.

Everything can be changed. And, in fact, there are changes all the time. These changes, however, often take place on the basis of considerations contradicting to each other. In the sphere of a country's specific economic rationality considerations of lucrativeness are determinative; in the realm of law the dual value judgement of lawful or unlawful works (where "lawful" always depends on the prevailing set of laws); while in the state-political domain, considerations of whether to stay in power as ruling party or to go into opposition orientate the changes. (Luhmann 1986.b.) How can such a society survive at all with no collapse? How can a high-level complexity that rests on permanent changes be stabilized? In this paper we are discussing only co-ordination among social subsystems and, for the sake of simplification, we regard integration problems and the mechanisms for overcoming them as solved.

Reflexions on the Co-ordination of Subsystems

German sociology has been treating the co-ordination problems of social subsystems with increasing interest for the past few years. One reason may lie in the deterioration of the role of the state as the integrator of society as evident, for instance, in the rapid gains made by liberal economic policies as against earlier state interference according to the Keynesian model. Within German sociology and political science distinct "specialities" have developed which call for a critical examination of the prevalence of the judicature or the prevalence of the executive power of the state and cast a doubt from many aspects on the need that the state should have the function of governing society. (Voigt 1980, 1982.)

A markedly pessimistic view in regard to the possibility of the co-ordination of social subsystems is represented by Claus Offe in a recent study. (Offe 1986.)

The coming into existence of modern societies speaks for the logics of individual social subsystems. Offe admits. In consequence the options that exist within the individual subsystem continuously call forth a lot of possible alternatives for action, and decisions are being made in the economy, in law, in public administration, etc. on a selective basis according to the rationality considerations of each subsystem. Offe sees the essence of modernity in this "openness for options". The mechanisms of the distinct subsystems now institutionalize the permanent changes rather than the earlier rigid structures which permitted even slower changes in the life of society only through the obstacles of resistance. In other words, *everything changes, everything is changeable*.

The latter is, of course, not Offe's opinion, only of the optimists of modernization. Offe actually says that on the all-social level the new social structure is more rigid than it ever was. Its subsystems provide thousands of alternatives to society but the whole is unalterable. "Angesichts so markanter Beschränkungen der kollektiven Handlungskapazität drängt sich die Frage auf ob die Rede von der "modernen" Gesellschaft nicht eher ein illegitimer Euphemismus ist und wir stattdessen präziser von einer Gesellschaft sprechen würden, die zwar vielfältige Prozesse sektorales Optionsteigerung durchgemacht hat und nun infolgedessen über eine tatsächlich moderne Verwaltung und Kunst, moderne Militär - und Erziehungswesen verfügt nicht aber als Gesellschaft über die Optionen, wie über dieses Ensemble von Teilmodernitäten und ihren Zusammenhang disponiert werden könnte" (Offe, 1986.)

Society as a whole is not only unchangeable but in fact even the *co-ordination* of the modern details is becoming increasingly problematic. The permanent rapid changeability of the detail processes within individual subsystems inevitably influence the detail processes of other subsystems, and a society operating on the basis of subsystems that function independently of each other and often according to conflicting musts, cannot be expected to lead to the development of complementary institutions (within other subsystems) in order to deal with such effects (outside of the given

subsystem) or possibly in order to neutralize them. Offe thinks that only chaos results from the all-social "integration" of social subsystems.

Something must be done, he says, lest this society coagulating into chaos from modern details should run away toward a modernization abyss that only raises increasing problems. *We need to stop* and reduce the number of options that develop within the individual subsystems and lessen the effects and needs that transcend the individual subsystem. This is the essence of Offe's zero-option. The two main aspects of the zero-option are: 1. On the international level to get out as soon as possible from the technological race imposing a pressure of modernization on individual countries and to reduce interdependence. Thus, Offe calls for leaving the European Economic Community and cites the positive features. (i. e. only low unemployment to date) of the manpower market in Austria, Sweden, Switzerland and Norway in evidence of the advantages deriving from non-participation in such an international merger. 2. On the national level as well a reduction of social interdependence is the task for reaching zero-option. Offe does not skirt the issue of cuts of benefits in the welfare state. "It must not be ignored that in many cases the material, temporal and social self-limitation of the participants may lead to restricted performance and the need to curtail certain advantages of the welfare state." (Offe, 1986) This is, however, still a fair enough price to get rid of the unceasing pressure for modernization.

Less pessimistic is Helmut Willke in regard to the all-social integration of the specific subsystems. (Willke 1978, 1979, 1983) Willke sets out from the integration problems of societies exclusively governed by the state. The faith without reservations in state interference, which characterized the practice of developed capitalist societies as well in the past 50 years or so, did not take seriously the *impermeability* that resulted from the autonomous operation of the individual subsystems of a given society. As the state became the principal co-ordinator of the social subsystems, and, working out remedies for dealing with the stresses and tensions emerging in any one of them, resorted each time to direct interference, the applied therapy has actually given rise to an even larger number of serious disfunctions, despite some occasional and partial successes.

Nonetheless, Willke thinks there are encouraging signs that promise the development of some kind of all-social integration. He regards the advance of the neocorporative institutional systems which has been noticeable in the past decades as trends which may lead to all-social integration through the *direct cooperation* of the exponents of the rationality considerations of the social subsystems instead of a centralized hierarchic coordination by the state. Let us examine Willke's ideas more closely.

Willke shares the opinion that self-orientation of the individual social subsystems on the basis of their own rationality considerations create problems for the environment, i. e. for other social subsystems. Their ever more distinct separation renders the individual subsystems indifferent toward the negative factors *from the point of view of the environment* if their

decisions are optimal on the basis of their own rational considerations. Once a certain level of complexity has been reached, reciprocal indifference is becoming dangerous even for autonomous operation. Willke suggests that the subsystems should also make a thematic catalogue of the environment. In other words, their self-reflection should also include subsystems which constitute their environment and consequently they should give up some of their options, some of their alternatives for decision suggested by their own rational considerations, if the consequences were highly detrimental to the environment. *In this way this mutual self-limitation of the subsystems creates all-social integration.* „Da aufgrund der hohen Variabilität und Spezialisierung jedes Teilsystem die Möglichkeit zur Überproduktion von Optionen hat, sobald es nur seine eigenen Kriterien, Interessen, Ziele und seine eigene Teilsystemrationalität maximiert, gleichzeitig aber jedes Subsystem bei einer Maximierungsstrategie der anderen Teile Gefahr liefe, seine relative Autonomie und funktionale Eigenständigkeit zu verlieren, ist Koexistenz, Kompatibilität und Koordination nur möglich, wenn die jeweiligen Teile sich selbst *beschränken*, ihre Optionenvielfalt *reduzieren* indem sie schon mit Rücksicht auf die Möglichkeiten der anderen Teile und des Ganzen formulieren.“ (Willke, 1979, p. 230.)

Social integration by the state is unsuitable for this type of “reflexive self-limitation”. This “getting to know each other” by the subsystems and their consequent self-limitation find their institutional place in the neocorporative bodies that are becoming recently observable. While the literature on neocorporatism describes the top interest groups, with all their activities and compromises as *quasi* political parties, Willke sees in them representatives of the rationality considerations by individual social subsystems trying to mediate *diverging considerations* of rationality rather than just different interests. (On traditional view in regard to neocorporative institutions see Alemann-Heinze 1979; von Alemann 1981.) Thus, hierarchic social integration by the state is replaced by a cooperative integration that is based on reflexive selflimitation – on the voluntary pruning cut on rationality considerations. That is what Willke calls *Entzauberung des States* (The Disenchantment of the State). Although there is no room in this study to discuss this in detail, we must note that this type of supra-state cooperative integration is supplemented by the development of ideas for a new type of legal system as expounded by the German law sociologist Günther Teubner, who was in close cooperation with Willke. He replaces the instrumental law of hierarchic state control with “reflexive” law which conveys all-social cooperative integration. (Teubner 1982, 1986; Teubner-Willke 1984). Compared to instrumental law which conveys the material provisions and prohibitions of the state governing society toward the individual social subsystems, reflexive law would set only procedural rules for the centres of decision within the various social subsystems, while the effective regulation within the individual subsystems would be elaborated largely by the local centres of self-government. Apart from prescribing procedural rules and guarantees, reflexive law tries to outline an organizational framework for correctng the ine-

qualities among the participants in the decisions within the individual subsystems.

On the basis of Willke's "Disenchanted State" and Teubner's "reflexive law", a general thesis could be arrived at, according to which, if a system reaches a certain degree of complexity, because some of its internal elements become autonomous and split into further subsystems, it can no longer be controlled from a single point and such central direction causes a larger number of more serious disfunctions than it attempts to remedy. Any further increase of complexity in such systems is possible only if the selfgovernment of their internal subsystems is developed and these centres of self-government become linked in a cooperative framework. Thus, the hierarchic system is transformed into a cooperative one. Examining technological systems of high complexity, the Hungarian Tibor Vámos arrived at similar results in 1983 (see Vámos 1983, 1986.)

From the late 1970s on, Niklas Luhmann has adapted for sociology the concept of "autopoiesis", which gained ground earlier in general systems theory, and in recent years he has treated the autopoietic segregation of the social subsystems and their internal cycles. (On the most comprehensive level of "sociality" where "society" as the level of given system is just one along with other social systems, that is the interacting and organizational systems — Luhmann included the idea of autopoiesis already in a comprehensive work of his. Luhmann 1984.)

It was Humberto Maturana, a Chilean biologist, who worked out the autopoiesis concept by the early 1970s. Maturana set out with the rejection of functionalism because in his judgement it is *external* observation that vests the coordination of the internal processes of living organisms with functionalism. The individual nerve cells, the individual organisms get reproduced through elements deriving from their internal structures and although more comprehensive biological systems utilize them as building blocks for their own structural development, the individual elements — systems in themselves — change *basically* through their internal structure. This comprehensive system utilizes its subsystems as the carriers and producers of definite attributes according to its own structure. But the subsystems, despite this type of reduced utilization, have not become organized in order to ensure these attributes — although the external observer who examines the more comprehensive biological systems may conclude this while observing the regular "cooperation" of the parts — but perform their cyclic reproduction as determined by their internal structures. To take Maturana's thesis *ad absurdum*, it is not the whole which determines the parts; the parts determine themselves and the constellation of their attributes accidentally produced, makes possible the development and cyclic reproduction of a more comprehensive whole.

The individual subsystems are by far more autonomous than this has been supposed by biological functionalism, and there is no hierarchic interrelationship between the individual subsystems, although the external observer as a "Kommandozentrale" notes the activity of the given parts governing the rest.

The final conclusion of Maturana's autopoietic system is the underscoring of the autonomy and selfdetermination of the components of complex systems. The reproduction of these component systems is autopoietically closed; the more comprehensive system is unable to determine the internal processes of its components, the effects of the more comprehensive system reach the micro processes through the filter of the inner structure of the component system. The autopoietic system creates the new elements in the course of its reproduction with the help of already existing elements and also with the help of the structure that takes shape through the arrangement of the new elements in a cyclic process.

Here we wanted to indicate only the main trends of Luhmann's thinking in this brief outline of his ideas on the autopoietic enclosure of the economy as a component system. (Luhmann 1983, 1984 b.) When he worked out the autopoiesis of the economy, Luhmann concentrated on the reconstruction of the basic cyclic process of this system. Presupposing an ideal market economy, he found this in the process of "Zahlung" (payments). In a pure market economy any payment makes possible other payments or the possible absence of some payment renders impossible other payments and the purchase of anything includes giving up the purchase of something else. In this way any economic act has a "double effect", "I purchase this and thereby decide not to purchase something else." The linking up of payments to other payments ensures a tight control of the system, making possible for the individual economic units the calculability of future actions of the others.

In other words, the market economy is an unbroken process of payments regulated by *prices*. Prices open the internal cycle of the economy toward the environment and do this on the basis of demand. To be sure, Luhmann, although in his new concept he strongly emphasized the closed nature of the social subsystems as a result of their functional separation in the course of social revolution, makes on the other hand several attempts to deal with this closed nature. The closed economy opens up through orientation toward demand; shifts in demand are transmitted by prices and in this way prices also introduce changes taking place in the environment into the process of payments, rendering some payments impossible but, under normal economic conditions, ensuring on the whole the continuation of the cycle of payments.

In this way the economy becomes insensitive to any outside circumstance, any economically relevant action is motivated only by the terms of payment, oriented on the prices. The closed economy, being insensitive to external motivations, becomes, however, as the prices are based on demand, hypersensitive in one aspect. It takes an especially intensive cognizance of the slightest shift in demand or of events to result in such a shift, though an established signalling system (capital, security markets, merchandizing and other mechanisms) and responds to these stimuli by transforming its internal structure. "The more closed, the more open", this is how we could label Luhmann's ideas on autopoiesis. Confinement on each side and hypersensitivity in one aspects — this just about summarizes Luhmann's thinking.

How does the all-social coordination of autopoietically closed social subsystems take place? As we saw, Offe predicted an all-social chaos prevailing over the component systems, whereas Willke found a solution in the neocorporative institutional systems ("Verhandlungssysteme") realizing the cooperation among social subsystems rather than in hierarchic social integration by the state. Luhmann cautiously set himself apart from the idea of "reflexive" law which was also remote from Willke's concept on the guidance of society (Luhmann 1985), although he certainly does not share Offe's pessimism in regard to all-social chaos. The fact is that social subsystems become hypersensitive in some aspects after their separation, or, symbolically speaking, "stick out antennae" into the social environment, thus becoming aware of any changes in the social environment formed by the other subsystems. They govern *themselves* the harmony with the environment and thus in the final analysis the coordination of the social subsystems operating according to divergent considerations of rationality comes about through spontaneous rearrangement.

Thus, Luhmann is not at all sceptical in regard to the possibility of all-social coordination. The situation is, however, different if society as a whole has to react on its environment *beyond* society. A spontaneous rearrangement of the separated subsystems proves to be insufficient this time, yet there is no other way of response by a "differentiated" society, though it would be imperative to react upon dangers threatening with the upset of the biological and ecological balance, upon problems of genetic technology and some other questions. Luhmann, however, indicates that despite these dangers no satisfactory solution is possible, in other words, he is completely pessimistic in regard to ecological problems (Luhmann 1986).

Macrosocial Innovation Chains Suggest a Possibility We think that the mechanism described by Willke and Luhmann are not the only possible mechanisms in operation for the all-social coordination of distinct social subsystems. (We may regard Offe's concentration on „partial modernities" as one sided although it stresses some important problems.) It should be mentioned here that when putting forward our own ideas we rely first of all on Luhmann's papers in the 1960s and 1970s and make an attempt at reconstructing the process in which changes in the social subsystems were arranged into macrosocial innovation chains. (Cf. my earlier study, Pokol, 1985) Right in the beginning there is a difference from the original Luhmannian thesis in our approach to how to apply the paradigm of system environment to social subsystems. In his recent papers Luhmann insists that after the development of the functional and structural autonomy of a given social subsystem, all the other social subsystems become degraded into environment, in other words, each of the others constitutes a *uniformly neutral* environment for the given subsystem. On the other hand, we think that the development of such an autonomy means only the *closing down of the microprocesses* toward the rationality considerations of other subsystems, i. e. of the environment, while between the social subsystems — each of which is closed toward the others on the level of the microprocesses — there remain *bilateral* relations, in fact, as we shall see, entire chains

between the social subsystems that have become closed toward the others. In other words, all the other remaining subsystems do not provide a uniformly neutral environment for any given social subsystem, for each shows greater sensitivity toward *one* specific social subsystem. To suggest an example, the legal sphere is more sensitive toward political programmes — especially toward a new government programme — than toward changes in the domain of art; the curricula of universities are more sensitive to changes in the given branch of science than to changes in the party programmes. Thus, when Luhmann — even in his recent papers — argues that the development of autopoietic confinement is tantamount to the closing down and becoming indifferent of a given system on all sides, while becoming hypersensitive in a certain aspect, our interpretation is that sensitivity in any given aspect intensifies links toward the output of a given social subsystem.

In this reinterpretation of the paradigm of the system/environment on the level of social subsystems, not only bilateral link-ups are evident among social subsystems but also chain-like links among a number of subsystems. The individual social subsystems in these chains gain the material for changing their functional “material” (technologies, theses and norms etc.) largely from the different subsystem and do so through *selective transformation*.

If we have in mind today's Western European societies, we can reconstruct the changes in their major social subsystems by examining two macrosocial innovation chains. Public administration, law, the state and government, the party system, the ideological sphere and the sphere of the arts and social sciences become coordinated in a *long* innovation chain and the economic sphere is linked, partly detached from this, in a *short* innovation chain with the consumption pattern of a given society and on the other side, with the technological sphere and the natural sciences. To the long innovation chain the changes are transmitted initially by the periodical parliamentary *elections* (head of state etc.) which occur in response to the alterations in certain social subsystems that have been induced from within each; and to the short innovation chain of the economy the changes are induced through the changes in the *market*.

To sketch a model, within the long innovation chain the parliamentary and other elections within the state system set off innovation waves in two directions whenever there is a radical change in the government party after the election returns. With a radical change in the governing party, the state and political sphere is renewed and subsequent to this the new government and the new majority in parliament replaces the parts of the effective law that are contrary to the new political priorities. It is through altering the law that renewal reaches the subsystem of public administration which then after some reluctance and some reinterpretations reshapes its operation as reprogrammed by the new legal provisions and intervenes in the various social subsystems with new therapies for reducing and solving the social tensions that triggered off the change in government.

The parliamentary elections that bring a radical change in the governing party set off waves of renewal in another direction as well. Defeat in the election for new state bodies is interpreted by the former government party and each party that suffered heavy losses at the polls as a challenge for self-examination and renewal. The party politicians and ideologists in these suddenly minority parties are prompted in most cases to bring about through internal party elections a renewal of the given party — its leaders and programme. Thus, as the modern state received its build-in innovation mechanism through elections (see Luhmann 1965, 1972), so the modern political parties built on internal party elections. Of course, the renewal of the parties is also possible without a parliamentary defeat but the general rule is that only such a setback will really compel the parties to make more radical changes. Of course, there will always be parties which survive astonishingly heavy losses of votes, but it involves the danger of their being simply ousted from the political scene and becoming a small marginal "sect" in possession of a very low percentage of the votes. Changes in the party political sphere send off ripples toward the ideological sphere as well.

Although in recent decades it is no longer only the political parties which are the guardians — shapers and reshapers — of a given ideology/ (with their party press, schools and pamphlets) as it was the case during the first decades of this century, the role of the parties is still strong in regard to ideologies. The renewal of any party provides a stimulus to alter the ideological tenets conveyed to the masses, the ideological apparatus of a renewed party utters, tones down or stresses certain ideological theses (arguments, contexts and notions). On the other hand, this ideological renewal opens up the given ideology for the arguments, interrelationships and findings accumulated in the newer branches of the social sciences. Some of the thousands of scientific assertions and arguments conflicting with each other, will be transformed into ideological theses — that is if they are suitable for the defense of a given ideology or some of its positions and for the refutation of opposing ideologies. This, of course, involves a peculiar metamorphosis: new stresses develop, there is no longer any scientific validity to exist until refutation, and the new thesis becomes "the truth" as conveyed by ardent ideologists. The same kind of selective reception and transformed utilization is characteristic of the process of the transformation of the ideological theses into party programmes and the conversion of government programmes into legal rules (we are not thinking here of the cases when this programme automatically becomes *law*), and the transformation of legal norm into administrative practice.

To sum up, it is possible to reconstruct an innovation chain between the above mentioned social subsystems where the waves of renewal are set off by the renewal of the state and government sphere and provide impulses for a change in two ways. The periodical parliamentary and other state elections invest the innovation processes with a *cyclic character*. Following this, if the therapy applied by the new government party was unsuccessful, there is an additional change in government subsequent to

another election. In this case the new party programmes which promise success are provided (thanks to the feedback) by the renewal of the losing party. This macrosocial innovation chain is like a model and has been sketched as an ideal type: actually, of course, the western societies also experience a thousand and one hitches and explosive changes. Nonetheless, this chain arrangement through the changes of the social subsystems may have been instrumental in the fact that they have been able to preserve in relative stability and without any explosion their highly complex structure built on continuous change, for more than forty years since World War II.

To come back to Willke's concept of "self-limitation", we think that for the individual social subsystems the major aspiration should be not so much to reduce their alternatives for action when they have come to know the rationality considerations of the other subsystems, but to ensure that the subsequent selection of the alternatives, decision mechanisms and options worked out in the chains of social subsystems should work well. (Of course the reduction of options may also be important for the coordination of social subsystems.) Such mechanisms are still functioning. Any social subsystem that has established its autonomy develops its own internal mechanisms for selection which render it insensitive to some of the options flowing in from the subsystems linked to it and screen these options while they admit some of them through transformed reception and thus alter their own internal structure and their own internal priority systems.

The problem is constituted by the fact that in the case of such link-ups one social subsystem is able to limit the autonomy of another one to such an extent that the introduction of the new priorities may actually occur *without* selection and transformation. This is the situation, for instance, in the case of instrumentalized law, that is, when political priorities are concerted into legal provisions without regard to the internal logic of the legal sphere.

What we have said so far apply to developed western societies. Since they have attained a certain degree of complexity, the East European socialist societies have shown some similar problems in their efforts for all-social coordination. In them the social-guidance role of the state has become stronger than in western countries, thus a phase of further development may bring increased tensions also in this respect. It constitutes, however, a more serious and more actual problem that the autonomous rationality of the individual social subsystems had a very one-sided development. Concentrating on accelerated industrialization, Stalinist modernization broke the autonomous mechanisms of law, science, economy, art and professional public administration during the years of early socialism.

For us here in Eastern Europe the task is to reinstitutionalize the separate rationality considerations of the individual social subsystems and to transform direct state and government interference into guidance through law. Beyond a certain degree of complexity, however, it will become the order of the day to rethink the need for the centralized guidance of society — however democratic that state guidance is.

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ВОЗНИКАЮЩИЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ ПОДУСТРОЙСТВ КОМПЛЕКСНЫХ ОБЩЕСТВ

БАЛА ПОКОЛ

Автор исходит с того, что некоторые современные подустройства западных обществ (права, наука, искусство, экономика, государственное управление и т. д. . .) все более будут функционально отделяться друг от друга и действия внутри подустройств ориентированы самостоятельными оценочными точками зрения.

Параллельно с этим отделением, отделением структуры подустройств современных обществ станут всё более переменяемым: законодательства могут быть аннулированы и заменены с новыми; государственная политика может быть заменена в парламентарных выборах; истины науки станут permanently опровержимым; современная мелькая семья обоснована на законном браке смениться разводом и заключением нового брака.

Всё они будут всё более переменяемы, но перемены будут управляемы в отдельных общественных подустройствах отличающимися оценочным точками зрения.

Как согласуются такие отличающие перемены на уровне всего общества? — Очерк обозревает теоретические ответы немецкой социологии (по проблеме) во первых ответа Никласа Лумана, Гельмута Уильке, Гюнтера Тайбнера и Клауса Оффэ), излагает собственную гипотезу также.

Её сущность предположение инновационных рядов макросоциального уровня между общественными подустройствами.

PROBLEME DER KOORDINATION DER SUBSYSTEME DER KOMPLEXEN GESELLSCHAFTEN

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Der Ausgangspunkt des Verfassers ist die Ausdifferenzierungen der einzelnen gesellschaftlichen Subsysteme in den modernen westlichen Gesellschaften. Im Laufe dieser Ausdifferenzierungen koppeln die Institutionen der Wirtschaft, der Wissenschaft, des Rechts, der politischen Bereichs sich voneinander ab, und innerhalb der einzelnen Subsysteme sind die Handlungen und Tätigkeiten durch autonomen Wertgesichtspunkten orientiert. Parallel zu dieser Ausdifferenzierungen werden die Strukturen der Subsysteme moderner Gesellschaften immer mehr veränderbar: die Rechtsvorschriften können ausser Kraft gesetzt und durch parlamentarischen Wahlen ausgetauscht werden: die wissenschaftlichen Wahrheiten werden permanent widerlegbar: die auf Ehe gegründete moderne Familie kann durch Ehescheidung und durch neue Eheschliessung konsolidiert verändert werden. Immer mehr kann alles in der modernen Gesellschaft verändert werden, aber diese Veränderungen innerhalb der einzelnen gesellschaftlichen Subsysteme sind durch verschiedene Wertgesichtspunkte orientiert. Wie können die divergierenden Veränderungen in gesamtgesellschaftlichen Ebene koordiniert werden? Die Studie analysiert die wichtigsten Antworten zu diesem Problem, die in er neueren deutschen Soziologie aufgefunden werden können. In erster Linie beschäftigt die Studie sich mit der Antwort von Niklas Luhmann, Helmut Wilke, Günther Teubner und Claus Offe. In der zweiten Teil der Studie skizziert der Verfasser seine eigene theoretische Hypothese zu der Lösung der Koordinationsprobleme der komplexen westlichen Gesellschaften. Im Kern dieser Hypothese stehen die makrogesellschaftlichen Innovationszusammenhänge zwischen der einzelnen Subsysteme.