

Mathias Albert

## On the modern systems theory of society and IR

Contacts and disjunctures between different kinds of theorizing

### Abstract

This contribution argues that the increasingly acknowledged importance of societal factors for understanding international relations remains unmatched by an engagement of IR theorizing with contemporary theories of society. Given that a modern systems theory of society (MST), as developed particularly by Niklas Luhmann, forms the only theory of society which takes world society as its starting point, a dialogue between it and IR theory might seem to form particularly promising endeavour. Yet, while the radically constructivist approach of MST leads to reconceptualizations of such central concepts such as ‘power’ or ‘politics’ which can be of interest to students of IR, it is nonetheless argued that IR theory and MST must necessarily operate on different orders of observation at the very moment at which international relations are observed. Yet, despite acknowledging fundamental disjunctures between different kinds of theorizing, the contribution identifies some promising points of contact.

While still barely received in Anglo-American social science, the modern systems theory of society (MST), as developed by Niklas Luhmann in particular, has emerged as one of the most widely discussed theories of society in a number of academic communities.<sup>1</sup> However, the reception of Luhmann's theory has largely been avoided by the academic field of international relations. Nonetheless, things might be ripe for a change for two reasons. *On the one hand*, the field of international relations has developed into a state where 'society' plays an increasingly important role, be it in the form of taking the role of non-governmental or other 'civil society' actors in international policy processes into account, be it in more comprehensive attempts to reconceptualize the very object studied as 'international' or 'world society'. While the attentiveness towards *theories of the state* has risen in the field in the wake of debates on an emerging 'post-Westphalian' order, it seems all but natural that the interest in the concept of 'society' should ferment interest towards sociological *theories of society* also. *On the other hand*, the observation that MST might play a particularly prominent role in this respect is driven the perception that it provides one of the most fully developed contemporary theories of society which, in addition, does not take a concept of society tied to the framework of the nation-state as its starting point, but conceives society as world society from the start.

Bringing together a comprehensive theoretical system such as the one developed by Luhmann with a more specific field of inquiry such as the study of international relations might at first seem like a futile exercise, which possibly can only be envisaged as a subsuming of the latter under the former. Yet, as I have argued at length elsewhere (see Albert, 2000) engaging with Luhmannian theorizing must not necessarily take the forms of either a wholesale adoption or rejection of this body of theory, but selective uses can and should be made (but see Schmidt, 2000: 21f). Nevertheless, seeing IR through systems theoretical lenses must neither be understood as 'applying' a systems theoretical approach to international relations. IR theory and a theory of society do not operate on a level playing field. In a sense that will be elaborated in more detail below, this also implies that MST does not provide a 'superior' view on international relations (in fact it eschews the entire notion of scientific 'progress' implied in such a notion), but merely a 'different' one. Yet it is the main argument of this contribution that in offering such a different perspective, MST can contribute to further an understanding of a number of core problems of IR theorizing. Thus, while IR theory has set its focus on the search for emerging forms of politics in a 'post-Westphalian' world (cf. Walker, 2000), while it has hotly debated the changing structures of an international system in an era of globalization (for one of many overviews: Lechner and Boli, 1999), and while it has

come to acknowledge that the changing qualities of social processes observed are better described as the development of an “international” or a “world society” rather than as internal transformations of an “international system” (cf. World Society Research Group, 2000; Buzan and Little, 2000), it arguably lacks the theoretical apparatus which would offer *one* (among possible many) comprehensive description of these multi-faceted processes. Against this background, it is possible to draw on MST since it does not seek to combine the patchworks of global change into a coherent whole, but starts from a theory of world society and conceptualizes these patchworks as the result of inner-systemic differentiation and evolution. While such a description of *inner-societal differentiations* is constructed in a fundamentally different fashion than theories of *inter-national* relations, it is through an at least rudimentary rendition of the notions of ‘politics’ and ‘power’ as points of contact that an MST perspective can be accessed from an IR point of view.

The following section will briefly sketch some shortcomings in the IR theoretical debate on globalization and argue that these shortcomings need to be remedied by adopting a view on world society which unties the very concept of society from its meaning in classical sociological approaches. The next section will then briefly elaborate the radical shift in perspective that is entailed in MST in contrast to classical theories of society, thereby also introducing some central tenets of MST, particularly its notions of politics and power. Another section will then employ these notions in order to, more generally, situate IR within a MST conceptualization of *world society*, and then, more narrowly, highlight some implications of such a view for the debates on the continued territoriality/regionalism of the modern states system and the prospects for ‘global governance’.

### ***Thinking globalization thoroughly***

If anything, the heterogeneity of the debates on globalization and, intimately connected to it, ‘global governance’ highlights that IR conceptualizations of broadly conceived processes of ‘global change’ suffer from insufficiently elaborated points of contact between the analysis of an ‘international system’ and the analysis of social change beyond the traditional purview of the field. Such a diagnosis might come as a surprise if the wealth of contributions is taken into account which point to the substantial reshaping of the discipline’s object of study (cf., for example, Smith et al., 1996; Albert et al., 2001). Thus, arguably, for the conceptually active part of the discipline the view of the international system as essentially a system of states has

already been all but relegated to a marginal view of world affairs. The international sphere is increasingly perceived to be inhabited not only by states, state-based organizations, or other public actors, but to be co-constituted by increasing numbers of so-called ‘civil society’-actors and networks, such as international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), transnational advocacy networks, or, of a more recent origin, powerful transnational protest movements (WTO-round in Seattle, MAI) (see Cutler et al., 1999; Ronit and Schneider, 2001). In addition, the legitimacy to use the state as ‘unit’ of analysis is questioned as historical-sociological studies point to the contingencies of historical state forms (Hobson, 2000) and critical studies examine the cognitive and epistemological constructs which uphold the imagery of the sovereign state as a ‘timeless’ given (Biersteker and Weber, 1996). Building on the insight that the contemporary international system is a far cry from the ordered realm as which ‘realist’ worldviews imagine it, but rather resembles a ‘fragmegrated’ or ‘bifurcated’ (Rosenau, 1997) amalgamation of actors, structures, and processes, the more optimistic projections of emerging forms of ‘global governance’ (Kaul et al., 1999) or a ‘global public policy’ (Reinicke, 1998) are supplemented by a profound skepticism as to the very possibility of political and other forms of regulation in such a complex system (Rosenau, 2000; Betts, 2000). First of all, however, what has emerged through the heterogeneous and bifurcated nature of the debates surrounding the notion of ‘globalization’ in the discipline, is a structurally embedded crisis in its own identity (cf. Dunne et al., 1998). While a questioning and transgression of disciplinary boundaries can in fact be seen to further rather than obstruct the reproduction of the discipline (cf. Lapid, 2001), dealing with globalization nonetheless puts into doubt the discipline’s *raison d’être*, i.e. the notion of an ‘international system’ as something different from the realms of politics and/or society in general. The difficulties surrounding attempts to continue to describe a complex subject matter as an ‘international system’, where the specifics of the ‘international’ become less and less visible and the ‘system’ remains non-theorized or, at best, conceptualized on the level of simple cybernetic systems (cf. Jervis, 1997: 29ff), may partly explain why the discipline has recently moved to look for new comprehensive analytic concepts to describe its subject matter. Thus, for example, the (renewed) attention which notions of ‘international’ and ‘world society’ receive by research in the English School tradition (cf. Buzan, 1993) point to the fragility which enshrines the idea of an ‘international system’ as a system of states. Nonetheless, although the notions of ‘international’ and ‘world society’ point to an increasing openness towards adapting the IR vocabulary to the complexities of global structures and processes in and beyond the state system, it seems fair to say that in this context the very concept of ‘society’

remains as much undertheorized as that of the ‘system’ in notions of the ‘international system’. Put differently: while increasingly acknowledging that there is some kind of society ‘out there’ which transgresses national boundaries and might provide a rich ground for conceptualizing and envisioning a *comprehensive view* on global change, theories of international relations pay only scant attention to *theories of society*. Again, however, it might be argued that this is less due to a lack of interest in theories of society, but more due to the necessity of preserving a disciplinary identity. To put the argument in a nutshell: if there is such a thing as ‘world society’ out there, then the idea of enclosed ‘national’ societies - or better: national ‘state-society’ complexes - which logically underpin the very notion of ‘international relations’ becomes highly problematic. And arguably most uses of the concept of ‘society’ in IR accounts of ‘international’ or ‘world’ society have reacted to this need of preserving a disciplinary identity by *avoiding* the question of which notion of ‘society’ and, accordingly, which theory of society is appropriate for studying a world society. However, this avoidance must not be read as if IR scholars were not to deal with the notion of society at all. It rather manifests itself in a by and large uncritical adoption of a classical notion of ‘society’ which is intimately linked to the nation-state for the realm beyond national boundaries also.

A ‘classical notion of society’ in this case refers to sociological theories which see society as something ‘held together’ by shared norms and a collective identity - i.e. most theories from Durkheim, Simmel, and Weber up to Habermas (cf. Kneer et al., 2001). While the core question of these theories is how society is held together in the face of disintegrative tendencies inherent in processes of rationalization, modernization, and individualization, their standard answer ascribes this integrative potential to some form of community (good overviews by Cohen, 1985; Giesen, 1999). Only then do answers diverge regarding the question of what makes this community an integrated and integrating one, placing an emphasis, for example, on shared values, on a shared national and/or ethnic identity, on a shared legal/constitutional framework etc. on a shared legal/constitutional framework etc. Yet all these theories exhibit two structural flaws which inhibit their use in relation to a ‘world society’. On the one hand, they build the notion of society on historically contingent processes like the construction of a collective identity and the formation of enclosed national legal systems (‘Rechtsstaat’) which underpin the evolution of modern nation-states in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (see Schulze, 1997; Ferguson and Mansbach, 1996). On the other hand, they systematically exclude social facts from the notion of society which cannot be subsumed under its integrative umbrella. The latter move is particularly pronounced in the English

School's use of a classic notion of so society as normatively integrated realm in relation to a 'society of states', where strategic behavior that can not be constructed as rule-following behavior is relegated to the (more 'basic') realm of the 'international system' which is *not* part of society (cf. Buzan, 1993). Such a move arguably mirrors a basic problem of classic theories of society. This can be illustrated nicely by referring to some colloquial figures of speech regarding, for example, the place of criminals in society: criminals are 'excluded from' society, society must be 'shielded from' them, prisoners need to be 'reintegrated into' society - yet if a theory of society seeks to describe social processes in a comprehensive fashion, it must exactly be able to also describe, for example, criminality and more generally disintegrative tendencies within society rather than exclude them from society *per definitionem*. It is in this respect that most attempts to employ the notion of 'society' in relation to the contemporary complex, bifurcated global system remain flawed. 'World society' is conceived as something existing next to national societies, but, through a common commitment to global problems, based on the same basic dynamic of a normative integration (so Bull, 1977); an 'international society' of states is equally set apart from national societies yet build on the same theoretical foundations as the model of a national society. What is missing, in other words, is a notion and a theory of world society which sees the global system as a whole and which does not relegate non-integrated or non-integrative processes to an 'outside' of society, but includes them as phenomena to be accounted for within a theory of society. Equally, any theory of world society which takes serious the many transgressions of national boundaries which constitute globalizing processes and which have been studied in great detail in the discipline of IR must not construct world society as something existing 'next to' national societies, but must be able to account for the existence of nation-states and the persisting prominence of the semantic figure of 'national societies' *within* world society.

It is in this sense that engaging with MST is proposed here to students of international relations. MST conceives of world society to be the only society in existence today and to be the highest-order social system possible; 'international relations', be it in the form of a system of states, transnational relations, an international society etc. can therefore not be seen as something external to world society, but form a part of its internal differentiation.

### ***MST and world society, power and politics***

For MST, all social systems are constituted by a difference between system and environment and are communicative systems (cf. Luhmann, 1997a: 35).<sup>ii</sup> Communication forms the basic operation of social systems (see Luhmann, 1995a). In contrast to sender-receiver models which ascribe communicative ‘acts’ to persons, perlocutors (see, for example, Deutsch, 1966: 86ff.), etc., communication here is conceptualized as being produced and reproduced in recursive networks of communication. A recursive network defines the unity of a system. Taking up the insights on self-referentiality and autopoiesis originally developed in the natural sciences by Maturana, Varela and others, communication is thus seen as being produced within the system alone. No communication ‘enters’ a system save it being observed and selected and thus ‘produced’ within the system itself. ‘Action’ and ‘causality’ in such a view then do not form basic non-communicative processes in society, but rather are merely forms of observation and communicative ascriptions of action and causality within social systems. If social systems are constituted by communication and by communication only, then society is the highest-order social system which comprises all communication. There is no communication outside of society or between society and systems in its environment. In order to establish what society as the comprehensive system being formed by and comprising all *communication* ‘is’, it is thus not possible to draw on any form of membership or a population, a geographic feature, or for that matter, any externality not constituted by communication: the notion of ‘society’ in modern systems theory is ‘radically constructivist’ (ibid.: 35).<sup>iii</sup> The ‘full discovery of the globe as a closed sphere of meaningful communication’ (ibid.: 148), i.e. the general possibility of all communication being addressable for other communication, then means that today there can only be one society thus understood, namely *world society*.

This however quite radically shifts the focus of a theory of society. A social system which comprises all communication cannot in any meaningful way be understood in the sense of forming a unity, let alone an integrated one. The central problem for a theory of society thus shifts from the question of how society is held together to the question of how it is differentiated internally: ‘the real challenge for the theory of world society is to show how extreme inequalities can be analyzed as internal differentiation of a social system’ (Stichweh, 2000: 31f). In other words, the ‘puzzle’ to be tackled is not how something stable and seemingly given is stabilized and reproduced as an integrated whole, but how, given the complexity of communication and given that any communicative act can be accepted or rejected (and thus communication can continue or not), communication does continue and more or less stable forms evolve in society. While ‘disseminating media’ (such as writing,

print media etc.) are a precondition for successful communication, there is then still the problem of how the success of communication can be ensured, particularly the acceptance of 'uncomfortable' communication (such as an obligation to pay), given that for society as a whole this can less and less be achieved through religion and commonly shared values. In this respect, symbolically generalized media of communication assume a central role. Through the generation of media specific for function systems, such as money in the economic system, truth in the scientific system, or power in the political system, they provide a 'functional equivalent to the usual normative insurance of societal cohesion' (ibid., 316). These media *condition* the probabilities of acceptance and rejection of communication and *motivate* its acceptance, thereby increasingly replacing a morality which is unable to do so under the condition of differentiated function systems (ibid., 371). Thus, for example, in the economic system communication can only be connected to and be successful if conditioned and motivated in the medium 'money'

If a theory of society in this sense seeks to explain not some kind of homogeneity, but rather the unity of inhomogeneities (Stichweh, 2000: 14, 31) this means that world society achieves its unity only through its internal differentiation, not through any integrative moment. In contrast to stratified or segmentarily differentiated societies (emphasis on the plural), contemporary society (emphasis on the singular) is primarily differentiated functionally. Each functional subsystem of society, such as law, politics, economy, religion etc. is characterised by a specific function, a specific code, and a specific medium. Yet there is no overarching normative framework that would allow to conceive of world society as an integrated whole; it achieves its unity solely through its internal differentiation. In particular, this also means that no single function system assumes the responsibility of integrating society, a role traditionally ascribed to the political system.

Like all other social systems, the political system of world society can only be defined through its specific differentiation against its environment. This particularly means that any definition of an essence of 'the political' is excluded. Instead of an ontological question, for a difference-theoretical approach the correct question is: 'how does the political system distinguish itself? Thus, the question is not objectivist: what is the character of the political's essence?', but constructivist: how do communications produce themselves as political communications, how do they, in the actualization of recursive networkings, detect the political character of other communications when there are so many non-political communications within society? This is but another form of the question: How is an operative closure of a political system on the basis of a political implication of specific operations possible? (Luhmann, 2000a: 81)

Political communication is differentiated from other communication in society by a specific medium, a specific function, and a specific code (ibid.: 17):

The specific medium of political communication is *power*. Yet, within the given theoretical context, power needs to be conceptualized in a fundamentally different way than in most traditional theories which, one way or another, rely on some notion of (for example: structural) causality or intentionality (of those bearing power) (cf. *ibid.*, 26). In contrast, power is code-driven communication (Luhmann, 1988: 15). Power in this sense forms the symbolically generalized medium of communication for the political system. As such, political power of course is about influence, yet ‘influence is and remains dependent on the articulation of social communication. What is not communicated cannot be obeyed [...] The relation to influence lies in the symbolic use of actions, not in the facticity of them taking place’ (Luhmann, 2000a: 40). As political power, the medium relies on a form of influence based on negative sanctions, negative understood here in a double sense: in contrast to positive sanctions (usually applied in the economic system); and negative in the sense that ‘the medium which is based on them is reliant on their *non-use*’ (*ibid.*, 46). Put very simply, power is reliant on the regular non-use of sanctions. It functions only by constructing a ‘presence of the absent’, i.e. the mutual knowledge of both sides that the alternative to avoid the use of negative sanction is mutually preferred. The medium ‘power’ thus ‘*is* the presence of the excluded. Power thus needs to be symbolized, the police need to appear, the military to be visibly placed into barracks, not to ‘enforce’ power, but to prevent permanent challenges to its symbolism. Power breaks down only at the moments in which it is challenged and does not or is not able to react to it in a proper fashion: ‘Typically, it is minimal events which can spark revolutions’ (*ibid.*, 48). Not the use of means of power, i.e. physical force, but the capacity to credibly threaten with it enable the symbolic generalization of the medium and the reproduction of its forms (*ibid.*, 53).

Of course, power is not political power per se, but can become specified as the latter only on the basis of the emergence and operative closure of a political system. In accounting for the possibility of the latter, i.e. answering the question of what the specifics are which allow political communication to produce political communication and recognize other communication as political communication, Luhmann distinguishes between the function of the political and the coding of the medium power (cf. *ibid.*, 81ff). Regarding the function of the political, it is important to note that accounts which simply list various functions or derive it from some set of values only form a part of the political system’s self-description (i.e. of political theories as theories within the system), yet cannot be satisfactory from the standpoint of a theory of society which needs to account for the ‘unity of the connection between function and system. If one seeks to avoid both value-laden as well as plurifunctional

definitions, then the possibility remains to refer to the *provision of capacities for collectively binding decision*' (ibid., 84). As the system's function, this implies that all politics is decision (and be it in the form to decide not do decide); yet, it still leaves open the question of how political communication connects to other communication as political communication. For that, 'power needs to be coded in a specific fashion, namely by dividing it into a positive and a negative position of superiority and inferiority respectively' (ibid., 88).

It is important to note that on the one hand this coding is specific for the medium of the system in question, and on the other it is purely formal in the sense that it does not in any way predetermine specific thematic encodings. The former means that all operations in the political system are primarily coded in the medium of power (and thus the political does not *primarily* base itself on the symbolically generalized communication media of truth or legality, for example). The latter implies that if the basal code of power-superior/power-inferior in the political system is nowadays expressed in a coding between government and opposition, then this coding provides possible forms to express political communication by also providing the necessary negatory potential, but it does not prejudice regarding the forms a specific codification takes (in other words: the opposition can be against the government in relation to something, yet this does not in any way prejudice that it will take the same stance on a similar subject in another case – in which in fact the government might adopt the same position only to find that the opposition is positioned against it again; put more formally: 'the positive value "government" is the designative value of the system, the negative value "opposition" is its reflexive value'; Luhmann, 2000a: 99.

### ***IR as the politics of world society?***

Before inquiring into possible theoretical fertilizations emerging from a modern systems theory of (world) society for the understanding and conceptualization of international relations, it is necessary to again reflect on some fundamental issues in this respect.

As a theory of society, modern systems theory is *not* about a different, maybe a more comprehensive subject matter if compared to IR. One could thus argue that there is no substantial barrier which prevents a transplantation of MST concept to IR, and students of IR which take an interest in 'societal' issues, structures and influences could readily borrow from MST. Yet, the difference between modern systems theory as a theory of society and most IR theories is not one of scope, but one of kind. It is different in kind regarding 'what' is

observed and 'how' it is observed. The difference in 'what' is observed necessarily follows from systems theory's radically post-ontological, radically constructivist, and a-humanist (by seeing society as constituted by communication and not by persons) and anti-regionalist (by ascribing a primacy to functional differentiation) stance. If all social systems - including the observation of these systems which, for example, as part of the operations of the scientific system are also communication and thus part of society - are constituted by communication and communication alone, then this forms a radically different way of constructing a theory from the way in which most, if not all, theories of international relations base themselves on a number of core assumptions of 'what' the international systems consists of. This particularly refers to the role played by causalities in this respect. While arguably causal explanations play a prominent role in IR theory, modern systems theory, while in no way denying the existence of causality, conceives of it as scheme of observation: 'the selection of causal factors to be taken into account and of those not to be taken into account...is done by the observers. Accordingly, one needs to observe those observers in order to assert which causes effect which effects, and today no "nature" will guarantee that there will be a consensus on this. Causal judgments are "political" judgements' (Luhmann, 1997aa: 1011).

The difference regarding 'how' the observation operates refers to the order of observation. Whereas (the academic discipline of) International Relations as part of the operation of the scientific system observes international relations, understood as operations within specific social systems which are constructed to form 'international relations', a modern systems theory of society as outlined here also observes how IR observes (and thus co-constructs) international relations. Thus understood, IR is primarily observed as a theory which partly works within the 'system' of IR.<sup>iv</sup> The difference might be illustrated in relation to the difference between a legal theory and a theory of law. A legal theory forms a part of the legal system; it is part of how the system observes itself and thus constructs the grounds of validity of legal norms. A theory of law is about the operation of the legal system within society, it includes an account of how the construction of validity within the legal system works through the self-description of the legal system through legal theories (see Luhmann, 1997b). The same could be said for the difference between political theory and a theory of politics, economic theory and a theory of economy etc. In IR, the difference becomes most clear in relation to realist theories; these do not provide theories of international relations as theories of international relations within world society, but form part of how the political system of world society (if for the time being we assume that to be coterminous with an 'international political system') observes itself, i.e. they form the everyday 'background theory' about how

international politics work within the political system. Taking such a perspective also helps to understand the seemingly bifurcated state of theoretical debate within the discipline: within IR (as an operation within the scientific system), international relations are indeed observed on at least two orders of observation: some which do observe international relations and some which observe international relations by also observing how ‘contending’ approaches observe international relations. The latter is to be found in much of the ‘critical’ and ‘postmodernist’ contributions to IR theory and partly accounts for the recurrent perception of a ‘failure’ regarding a ‘substantial’ theoretical debate between different theoretical approaches (cf. Keohane, 1988). One could indeed go so far as to say that to ask critical theoretical approaches to devise ‘substantial research programs’ is to ask them *not* to observe how IR observes international relations (and thus to commit a categorical error). The seeming bifurcation is further reinforced by the circumstance that, theoretically speaking, ‘international relations’ do not form a system at all: ‘the notion of an international system is [...] unclear since one neither knows exactly what a nation is, nor receives a demonstration of how an “inter” can be a system’ (Luhmann, 1997a: 159f, fn 218). But how can international relations be conceived in a MST framework then?

The political system forms one of society’s subsystems, functionally differentiated from other subsystems. Unlike most other function systems, *internally* the political system of world society is observed to be primarily differentiated in a segmentary fashion, i.e. segmented into territorial states (Luhmann, 2000a: 220ff). Thus, for MST the political system of world society is essentially a system of states. However, it is important to note that when MST deals with the political system, the realm usually associated with ‘international politics’ features only marginally in its observations. Indeed, when MST observes the political system, it primarily observes the politics within modern industrialized states. On a purely empirical basis, to arrive at a systems theoretical conceptualization of international relations would thus first of all require it to account for a whole range of operations within the political system of world society which up to now have been observed by IR, yet not by MST. What thus appears on the horizon is a potentially fruitful exchange between IR and MST, where the latter can provide a theoretical frame to the former, yet the former can provide a wealth of empirical addenda to the latter’s conceptualization of world society’s political system. It is under such a perspective that in the following it is proposed that a combination of MST and IR perspectives can guide our understanding of processes central to the evolution of the political system within contemporary world society: processes relating to the conceptualization of world society and its political system with respect to the importance of functional vs.

regional/territorial differentiation the one, and the possibilities of global governance emerging from these conceptualization on the other hand.

*Regionalization and functional differentiation, IR in or above the political system?*

Even though modern systems theory clearly ascribes a primacy to territoriality as the main form of differentiation within the political system, it remains rather silent as to the relations which territoriality bears to the concept of 'space'. This comes as no surprise given that territorial boundaries circumscribing states may be represented spatially, yet are conceived primarily in their function as enablers and interruptors of communication, or, more precisely: as part of the forms through which the political system observes itself. Regarding other function systems of world society (with the possible exception of the legal system), and particularly in relation to world society as a whole, regional-spatial differentiation (of which a differentiation along territorial lines forms but a specific case) forms but a secondary differentiation to functional or other, systems-specific forms of differentiation. Regarding the notion of a 'region', it is important to note that within a systems theoretical conceptualization of society *all those* ideas and concepts of regionality are of little analytical value which base definitions and delineations of regionality on some ontological attribute. In a theory of society understood as a theory of communication, only constructivist notions of 'region' provide a proper mode of relating it to media of communication (Bahrenberg and Kuhm, 1998: 202). Regions thus can, but need not be understood spatially. Space forms a medium of communication which nonetheless does not signify the boundaries of social systems. It forms a 'medium for perception and social communication, which is based on guiding distinctions of objects and places and of distance and proximity and which, as such a medium, undoubtedly loses its form-forming effect in modernity' (Stichweh, 2000: 190).

In regulating 'access' to the function system (i.e. how persons are addressed by them), spatial boundaries are replaced by rules of inclusion and exclusion which are not necessarily defined spatially (see Nassehi, 1997; Stichweh, 1997). Rather, exclusions (such as those in the economic system, manifesting themselves in poverty) are less and less clearly differentiated spatially, nor necessarily linked to, for example, political exclusion.

It thus it seems fair to say that there is a void of space and region in MST and thus a void in relation to the diagnosed primary form of differentiation which characterizes the political system of world society. Of course, this void may be a theoretically necessary one if in MST's view of world society a primacy is assigned to functional differentiation. It is here were a theoretical and an empirical observation might possibly clash: if it could be argued that even

beyond the political system regional differentiation assumes a primacy over a functional differentiation of world society, then the empirical validity of the very concept of world society might be put into doubt and arguably be replaced by a view of the global system which starts from the premise of a continued existence of many *societies*: these may then very well interact, yet would not have led to the emergence of world society as one social system. While thus the relation between functional and regional-segmentary differentiation within world society, but also within the political system of world society, form delicate points within MST's view of the world, a number of conceptual remedies have been proposed. Bahrenberg and Kuhm (1998) argue that there might be regional differences in the mode in which functional differentiation constitutes the main form of differentiation in world society. Broadly within this line of thought, Mascareno (2000) has argued in respect to Latin America that there might be regions of world society where the operative closure of some function systems of world society has not taken place yet and in which the political and/or the economic system in particular interrupt the other systems' self-reference to a degree which obstructs their evolution into operatively closed subsystems. While such an account indeed gives some weight to regional differentiation in modern systems theory, it is at first sight not clear how such an empirically plausible observation can be reconciled with the main theoretical thesis of a functional differentiation of *world* society into operatively closed function systems.

It might of course be possible to account for the persistence of a multiplicity of 'societies' under the condition of a functional differentiation of world society by seeing the latter as a still emerging social system which itself is not yet operatively closed. Such an interpretation is suggested by Helmut Willke's (2001) proposal not to talk of a 'world society', but of 'lateral world systems'. In Willke's eyes, it is not the general possibility of communicative connectivity which is constitutive for world society, but the empirical fact of the relation to the 'world' being constitutive for communication-based social systems which make the latter form part of a world society. And while in this sense some function systems might in fact be function systems of a world society (particularly the economic system), the latter is not yet fully 'completed' in that in other function systems this relation to the world is not inscribed into their (possibly not operatively autonomous) operations as a rule.

To reiterate the conceptual ambiguity: if world society is conceived in the Luhmannian sense as being constituted by the fact that all communication can be reached by all communication, that, so to speak, the 'world' is embedded or implied in each communication, and if this world society achieves its unity only through its internal differentiation which is

primarily a functional differentiation between its subsystems, then it makes no sense to speak of societies in the plural today. Any kind of regional differentiation can only be observed to form some kind of secondary differentiation, supplementing functional differentiation, but not disrupting the operative autonomy of world society's function systems. If, on the other hand, a permanent empirical actualization of the reference to 'world', i.e. a factual connection of communication is seen to be constitutive for world society, then one might find Willke's view to be more plausible, according to which this state of affairs is only achieved in a few function systems, and particularly not in the political system. Under such a perspective, it might be legitimate to talk about an emergent world society which indeed is differentiated functionally; yet, for some function systems regional differentiation retains such a primacy, possibly even disrupting the operative closure of the respective function system of world society, so that it still might be more adequate to talk about societies in the plural.

Which of both views is adopted bears immediate consequences for the conceptualization of international relations. From the Luhmannian perspective which sees world society as an operatively closed social system, primarily differentiated functionally into operatively closed function systems, there are no international relations in any meaningful sense of the term. International relations could, at most, be seen to describe operations in the political system of world society which internally is primarily differentiated regionally/territorially. In contrast, a view as espoused by Willke would arguably leave international relations 'intact', given that world society as a social system primarily differentiated functionally is seen as a system in emergence, yet not fully established given a continued primacy of territorial differentiation.

It is exactly at this theoretical junction within MST that one can and should look at the contribution of IR. However, it is the main argument proposed below that in so doing what does emerge is not an unambiguous answer regarding these two alternatives. Quite to the contrary, IR helps to reconcile both by providing correctives to each of them. I propose to read IR as providing a corrective to the diagnosis of a primacy of regional differentiation in the political system of world society on the one hand (a), and a corrective to the view of regional and functional differentiation as constituting competing forms of differentiation on the level of world society on the other (b). Combined with these arguments, a look at the insertion of IR diagnoses of processes of global change into an MST framework will then serve to highlight the way in which two different forms of theorizing may in fact complement without, for the stated theoretical reasons, being fully compatible with each other (c).

*Correctives to MST, IR, and vice versa*

(a) **Functional differentiation within the political system of world society** Most of IR research which is not situated within the limits of a narrow realist/structural realist framework, and particularly including the majority of the globalization literature in the field, can be seen to provide a corrective to the MST perception of a continued primacy of territorial differentiation *within* the political system of world society. Of course, most IR perspectives would concur with MST that the political system of world society observes itself and thus ‘is’ as system of states. Yet, particularly the vast amount of research on international regimes in the neoliberal-institutionalist tradition combined with the newer constructivist research agenda shows that international politics can no longer be described as the mere interaction of foreign policies, but can be conceived as *functional politics* in the sense that it orients political processes to the processing of functionally defined problems - and not on the pursuit of interests ascribed to actors.<sup>v</sup> This perception is reinforced by the empirical observation of an increasing *denationalization* of the perception of the relevant problems for political action (cf. Beisheim et al., 1999), as well as by the observation of an increasing density of functionally specific regulatory regimes through processes of legalization (Goldstein et al., 2000). Although it is a difficult if not impossible task to determine a ‘threshold value’ at which a functional differentiation assumes a primacy over regional differentiation within the political system of world society, the combined insights of much post-realist IR research can be read to point to a steadily increasing importance of functional differentiation within world society. IR thus does not invalidate MST’s observation of the political system of world society as being a system of states, but rather supplements it by highlighting that the political system is a system of states *plus* a system of highly functionally oriented international institutions.<sup>vi</sup>

(b) **Regional differentiation of world society on the system level of organization** While an ‘IR-based’ diagnosis of an increasing importance of functional differentiation *within* the political system of world society does not immediately allow to judge whether the ‘global system’ forms a functionally differentiated world society or a world society ‘in emergence’, in which regional differentiation into many societies still assumes primacy, it may be used to reveal the stark opposition between a regional and functional form of differentiation on the level of world society to be a misleading one. The argument here is that it is in fact possible to reconcile the Luhmannian description of world society as an operationally closed system of communication (by all communication being addressable by all communication) with strong elements of regional differentiation by conceiving of regional differentiation as being played out less on the level of world society, but on an intermediate system level of organizations (on organizations in MST in general, see Luhmann, 2000b). Building on the literature on the

process of international organization, the general argument could be made that who or what is addressed by the function systems of world society - and 'being addressed' in this sense means being included, if only in the form of a 'problem' into the function systems' purview - is an operation increasingly mediated through inter-, as well as supra- and transnational organizations. In that context, then, it is important to note that regional organizations - in the sense that either their membership or their organizational environment is relatively limited in regional-geographic terms - proliferate and 'deepen' (in terms of their organizational density) in world society (see Hawdon, 1996; Hout 1999; theoretically: Albert and Hilkermeier, 2001). In addition to more traditional analyses of these processes in relation to regional intergovernmental organizations, such as the EU, MERCOSUR, ASEAN, etc., it is particularly important to note that such a proliferation and increasing density of regional organization(s) does not refer to state-based regional organizations alone, which could be read so as to imply an importance of regional differentiation in the political system alone (a hardly remarkable insight given that modern systems theory still diagnoses a primacy of regional-segmentary differentiation within that function system anyhow). Rather, particularly the research into new forms of 'regionality', not only in IR/political science, but also in the field of political geography, has shown that new forms of regionality (as a form of observation) are usually not based on state-based organizations alone, but quite to the contrary emerge out of a multiplicity of regional organizations of a governmental and non-governmental kind. The Baltic Sea area is probably the region most intensively studied under such a perspective combining empirical and conceptual research in order describe newly emerging regional forms of constructing political space. (cf. Joenniemi, 1997). Seen under such a perspective, it becomes possible to account for an in fact still increasing importance of regional differentiation across function systems through the process of international organization broadly understood, without such a process interrupting the self-reference of world society's function systems and thus the primacy of functional differentiation within world society.

(c) **Comprehensive conceptualizations of IR, power and governance** If IR contributions provide possible correctives to an MST view on world society and its political system, why then, it might be legitimate to ask, not leave it at this and assume the IR-MST relation to form an intellectual one-way street? Why go further and seek to embed an observation of IR in an MST observation? What is the 'value added'?

First of all, and going back to the points raised above regarding the need to 'think globalization thoroughly', MST offers a well-developed theoretical framework which allows to insert processes observed by IR into a meaningful whole (without thereby requiring any

notion of an ‘integrated whole’ for that purpose). Thus, for example, the notion of operatively autonomous function systems helps to conceptualize, for example, the relation between the political and the economic system of world society, as well as the synchronicity of processes of regional differentiation (through international organization and in the system of states) and functional differentiation (through international institutionalization) within the political system, *without* having to resort to theoretically shaky ideas such as a simultaneity of contradictory tendencies or the notion of a dialectic as driving social changes (cf. Heine and Teschke, 1996). What MST and its building on the notion of a ‘world society’ requires and offers is to see these seemingly divergent or even contradictory trends as developments which can and must be accounted for within a theory of world society without leading to theoretical stopgaps or dead-ends. State collapses and new state formations, the simultaneous occurrence of globalization/denationalization and regionalization, the dynamics of international cooperation through institutionalization and international conflict must not be collapsed analytically into a complex muddle of a chaotic and bifurcated international system, but can be described more aptly in instances of world societal differentiation, i.e. the differentiation into functional subsystems and the interplay of functional and regional forms of differentiation on various system levels (function system-organization) as well as within the single function systems.

Rather than conflating the operations of the political and of the economic system into an ‘international political economy’ (which, in systems theoretical terms forms but a form of observation within the scientific system) or juxtapose economics and politics as spheres of contending ‘interests’, a focus on the operative autonomy of politics and economics as self-referential systems allows to gain a sharper focus on the *limits* of politics under the condition of economic communication being produced by an observation within the economic system alone. By, on the level of world society’s function systems, unambiguously identifying international politics to form operations within the political system of world society, MST offers a sharper focus on the functioning of international politics through the medium of power, if the latter is relieved from forming a medium in other systems and seen as specific for the political system, and helps to get a clearer understanding of the possibilities, but particularly the limits of politics in world society, specifically the prospects of ‘global governance’. While MST does in no way deny that political regulation does continually take place and has effects, it offers a strong theoretical argument regarding the impossibility of regulating the operations of one function system (e.g. economics) by another (i.e. politics) if regulation is seen as an activity in which certain ends are to be achieved causally by certain

means (Luhmann, 1989). All regulation of the operations of function systems is self-regulation; a political action is only observed by the economic system on the basis of its own operational code, i.e. monetary value. The only question is then whether a complex strategy of regulation can condition how the economic system observer political communication. While in fact there are attempts to devise a theory of regulating complex social systems on an MST basis (Willke, 1998; Görlitz and Burth, 1998), MST first of all points to the extremely high demands required for successful political regulation. From a theoretical point of view, then, attempts to formulate theories and comprehensive strategies of 'global governance' and/or 'global public policy' must seem like futile *theoretical* exercises and rather can be observed as forms and programs of observation within the political system. A similar sharpening of the analytic focus regarding a notion central to, yet notoriously undertheorized in IR can arguably be seen to emerge from MST's conceptualization of 'power' as a symbolically generalized medium of communication and form of observation within the political system of world society (Luhmann, 2000a: 27ff). In fundamental difference to most concepts of power as employed in IR MST points out that power can not be understood as a capability of something or someone, but needs to be conceived as code-driven communication (Luhmann, 1988: 15). For power to function as such a medium, i.e. to ensure the connectivity of communication, it needs to be credible. This credibility of power depends on its symbolization and the exceptionality of the use of negative sanctions. Thus, for example, from a systems theoretical point of view one might suspect that what IR realists observe to constitute the core of state power, i.e. military capabilities, would primarily serve the function of symbolizing power. Yet, in order to successfully operate as a medium of communication (so that the system can observe, for example, that there is a 'unilateral' moment in contemporary world politics based on the US's military capabilities; cf. Albert, 2001b), this power must not be utilized too frequently. In this sense, a constant deployment of force, a regular resort to military intervention interrupts the functioning of the political system's symbolically generalized medium of communication. War is not the continuation of politics but with other means, it is a potential disruption of the political system's autopoiesis.

Equally, the political system's operative closure could not be ensured without reference to a binary code. The difference between government and opposition provides a coding required to ensure the function of providing the capacities for collectively binding decisions:

The code fulfills all attributes of a preference coding. One rather participates in the government than in the opposition. Only the government can fill those positions on which collectively binding decision is possible. The opposition can but lament, criticize, articulate demands, and, in general: reflect the contingency of all political decisions. The positive value 'government' is the system's designative value, the negative value 'opposition' is the systems reflexive value (Luhmann, 2000a: 99).

The systems creates indeterminacies necessary for its operative closure through political elections. While of course there is neither a 'government' or an 'opposition', nor do political elections take place in the political system of world society, the MST vocabulary allows to observe and re-conceive developments in this system under such a perspective by asking for functional equivalents. Particularly by combining, on the one hand, the 'IR-inspired' observation made above, that a primacy of territorial differentiation within the political system of world society is waning against an increasing functional differentiation with the observation, on the other hand, that no government/opposition distinction is emerging on a system-wide level, it becomes possible to reconstruct the the East-West conflict as having served that central function for the operative closure of the political system of world society. While it is less clear at present as to whether or which code has replaced it, one might suspect that we are in midst of a phase of system-wide irritations and selections, which have as yet not led to discernable evolutionary restabilizations. Yet it is important to bear in mind that these selections and restabilizations are an evolutionary process taking place within the political system of world society and can in no way be introduced from the outside (by diagnosing the existence or emergence of old or new binary codes, such as a 'clash of civilizations').

### *Thinking IR theory sociologically*

Observing IR from the standpoint of MST and vice versa extends a double invitation: an invitation to think IR theory sociologically, and an invitation for MST to observe developments in the political system as described by the discipline of International Relations. Yet, IR theory and a theory of (world) society are and remain two different things, an observation of the political system of world society on the one, and an observation of world society on the other hand. It should be made clear, however, that against the radically constructivist and post-ontological background of MST, different 'orders' of observation do not provide 'better' account or penetrate more deeply into an 'essence' as others. MST forms a second-order observation of IR if it also observes how IR observes international relations. If IR observes how MST observes international relations, it adopts a mode of second-order observation in relation to MST. The present contribution forms a second-order observation in relation to IR and MST. But only on the basis of ontological worldviews and empiricist epistemologies, associated with a modernist ideology of scientific progress can this appear to be an unsatisfactory state of affairs. The sociological view proposed by MST would simply

assert that a permanent drawing of distinctions and second-order observations are a precondition for the continued operation of self-referential social systems and thus in fact are the driving force of the scientific system's evolution.

However, despite its difficulty and seeming inaccessibility which, from a more 'conventional' IR point of view, MST might be seen to share, for example, with much of the poststructural critique that became prominent in the discipline since the 1990s, MST's radical constructivism also provides points of contact with IR which seem less obvious in other, purely 'metatheoretical' approaches. MST's radical constructivism asserts that all communication, including scientific communication is part of, in fact co-constitutes (world) society and thus partakes in the endless movement of self-referentiality and observation. It thus transcends the boundaries between the empirical, the theoretical, and the metatheoretical. 'International politics' can thus be observed not as an empirical realm in need of some 'external' theoretical explanation which can then in turn be examined through the lenses of metatheory. Rather, 'international politics' can be observed as operations within the political system which as such reproduces this function system's self-referentiality which as such contributes to the operation and evolution of society and the modes of knowing which are - as communication within society - intrinsic to it. Vice versa, MST provides a rich vocabulary through which international politics can be observed in and re-placed in conceptual frameworks which may seem unusual to the IR scholar at first, but bear potentially rich fruit when it comes to assess, for example, the limits and possibilities of politics in a global system. In doing so, MST provides *a* comprehensive view of the world which IR can profitably relate itself to, given the arguable lack of any such comprehensive theoretical framework in contemporary IR theory. Almost needless to say - but still clashing with a still widely embedded positivism in IR - MST's radically constructivist however stance prevents it from proposing itself as *the* comprehensive view.

---

NOTES

<sup>i</sup> While its reception in sociology and, partly, political science seems to be particularly strong in German-speaking, Scandinavian and Latin American countries, as well as in Italy, modern systems theory in the US seems to have left its mark only in some branches of literary criticism.

<sup>ii</sup> The reception of Luhmann in Anglo-American countries is still made difficult by the relative scarcity of translations of Luhmann's work into English. From the main monographs, only *Social Systems* (Luhmann, 1995b) is translated; for a comprehensive bibliography of literature by and on Luhmann, see <http://start.at/LuhmannKreis>.

<sup>iii</sup> All translations in this text are my own.

<sup>iv</sup> Ole Wæver proposed that one could thus say that 'IR=Observing ir'; see also Albert, 2001a.

<sup>v</sup> For exemplary overviews of the regime and the constructivist agendas, see Hasenclever et al., 1997; Fierke/Jørgensen, 2001.

<sup>vi</sup> Plus, one may add, a 'world public opinion' which is constituted by political discourses referring to it frequently (cf. Jaeger, 2001).

## References

- Albert, Mathias (2001a) 'What systems theory can tell us about constructivism', in Karin Fierke and Knud-Erik Jørgensen (eds), *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*. New York: M.E. Sharpe: 93-114.
- Albert, Mathias (2001b) 'Hegemonie und Multipolarität', in Claus Leggewie and Richard Münch (eds), *Politik im 21. Jahrhundert*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp (forthcoming).
- Albert, Mathias (2000) *Zur Politik der Weltgesellschaft. Identität und Recht im Kontext globaler Vergesellschaftung*. Darmstadt (ms.).
- Albert, Mathias and Lothar Brock and Klaus Dieter Wolf (eds) (2000) *Civilizing World Politics. Society and Community Beyond the State*. Lanham, Md: Rowman and Littlefield.
- Albert, Mathias and Lena Hilkermeier (2001) 'Between systems theory and neo-institutionalism. Studying regional organizations in world society'. Paper for the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association, Anaheim, Cal., 18-21 August.
- Albert, Mathias, David Jacobson and Yosef Lapid (eds) (2001), *Identities, Borders, Orders. Rethinking International Relations Theory*. Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press (in print).
- Bahrenberg, Gerhard and Klaus Kuhm (1998) 'Weltgesellschaft und Region - eine systemtheoretische Perspektive', *Geographische Zeitschrift* 86 (4): 193-209.
- Beisheim, Marianne, Sabine Dreher, Gregor Walter, Bernhard Zangl and Michael Zürn, (1999) *Im Zeitalter der Globalisierung? Thesen und Daten zur gesellschaftlichen und politischen Denationalisierung*. Baden-Baden: Nomos.
- Betts, Richard K. (2000): 'Is strategy impossible?', *International Security* 2 (2): 5-50.
- Biersteker, Thomas J. and Cynthia Weber (eds) (1996) *State Sovereignty as Social Construct*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bull, Hedley (1977) *The Anarchical Society*. London: Macmillan.
- Buzan, Barry (1993) 'From international system to international society: structural realism and regime theory meet the English School'. *International Organization* 47 (3): 328-350.
- Buzan, Barry and Richard Little (2000) *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Cohen, Anthony P. (1985) *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. Chichester/London: Ellis Horwood and Tavistock.
- Cutler, A. Claire and Virginia Haufler and Tony Porter (eds) (1999) *Private Authority and International Affairs*. Albany: State University of New York Press.
- Deutsch, Karl W. (1966) *Nationalism and Social Communication. An Inquiry Into the Foundations of Nationality*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.
- Dunne, Tim and Michael Cox and Ken Booth (1998) *The Eighty Years Crisis 1919-1999*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (*Review of International Studies* 24, Special Issue).
- Ferguson, Yale and Richard Mansbach (1996) *Politics: Authority, Identities, and Change*. Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press.
- Fierke, Karin and Knud-Erik Jørgensen (eds) (2001) *Constructing International Relations: The Next Generation*. New York: M.E. Sharpe
- Giesen, Bernhard (1999) *Kollektive Identität. Die Intellektuellen und die Nation 2*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
- Goldstein, Judith, Miles Kahler, Robert O. Keohane and Anne-Marie Slaughter (eds) (2000), *Legalization and World Politics (International Organization 54, Special Issue)*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- Görlitz, Axel and Hans-Peter Burth (1998) *Politische Steuerung. Ein Studienbuch*. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.
- Hasenclever, Andreas and Peter Mayer and Volker Rittberger (1997) *Theories of International Regimes*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hawdon, James (1996): *Emerging Organizational Forms: The Proliferation of Regional Intergovernmental Organizations in the Modern World-System*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

- Heine, Christian and Benno Teschke, 1996 'Sleeping beauty and the dialectical awakening: on the potential of dialectic for international relations'. *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 25 (2): 399-423.
- Hobson, John M. (2000) *The State and International Relations*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hout, Will (1999) 'Theories of international relations and the new regionalism', in Jean Grugel and Wil Hout (eds), *Regionalism Across the North-South Divide: State Strategies in the Semi-Periphery*. London: Routledge.
- Jaeger, Hand-Martin (2001), "'World opinion' and the transformation of international governance. Social structure and semantics of the international public sphere'. Paper presented at the workshop on 'Politics and world society' at the Luhmann Congress of the Political Theory-Section of the German Political Science Association, Berlin, 29-31 March.
- Jervis, Robert (1997) *System Effects. Complexity and Political Science*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Joenniemi, Pertti (ed) (1997) *Neo-Nationalism or Regionality. The Restructuring of Political Space Around the Baltic Rim*. Stockhol: NordREFO.
- Kaul, Inge, Isabelle Grunberg, Isabelle and Marc A. Stern (eds) (1999) *Global Public Goods. International Cooperation in the 21st Century*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Keohane, Robert O. (1988): 'International institutions: two approaches', *International Studies Quarterly* 32, 379-391.
- Kneer, Georg, Armin Nassehi and Markus Schroer (2001), *Klassische Gesellschaftsbegriffe der Soziologie*. Stuttgart: utb.
- Lapid, Yosef 2001: 'Identities, borders, orders: nudging IR theory in a new direction', in Mathias Albert and David Jacobson and Yosef Lapid (eds), *Identities, Borders, Orders. Rethinking International Relations Theory*. Minneapolis, Minn: University of Minnesota Press (in print).
- Lechner, Frank and John Boli (1999) *The Globalization Reader*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Luhmann, Niklas (1988) *Macht*. Stuttgart: Lucius und Lucius (2<sup>nd</sup>. ed.)
- Luhmann, Niklas (1989) 'Politische Steuerung: Ein Diskussionsbeitrag'. *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* 30 (1), 4-9.
- Luhmann, Niklas (1995a) 'Was ist Kommunikation?' in Niklas Luhmann, *Soziologische Aufklärung 6. Die Soziologie und der Mensch*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag: 113-124.
- Luhmann, Niklas (1995b) *Social Systems*. Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press.
- Luhmann, Niklas (1997a) *Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft* (2 vols.). Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
- Luhmann, Niklas (1997b) *Das Recht der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed..
- Luhmann, Niklas (2000a) *Die Politik der Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
- Luhmann, Niklas (2000b) *Organisation und Entscheidung*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.
- Mascareno, Aldo (2000) *Funktionale Differenzierung und Steuerungsprobleme in Lateinamerika, Entstehung, Entwicklung und Auflösung der konzentrisch orientieren Ordnung*. Bielefeld (doctoral thesis)
- Nassehi, Armin (1997) 'Inklusion, Exklusion - Integration, Desintegration. Die Theorie funktionaler Differenzierung und die Desintegrationsthese', in Wilhelm Heitmeyer (ed), *Was hält die Gesellschaft zusammen?:* 113-148.
- Reinicke, Wolfgang H. (1998) *Global Public Policy. Governing Without Government?* Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.
- Ronit, Karsten and Volker Schneider (eds) (2001). *Private Organizations in Global Politics*. London. Routledge.
- Rosenau, James N. (1997) *Along the Domestic-Foreign Frontier. Exploring Governance in a Turbulent World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosenau, James N. (2000) 'Normative and complexity theories: complementary approaches to world affairs, in Paul Wapner and Lester Edwin J. Ruiz (eds), *Principled World Politics. The Challenge of Normative International Relations*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield: 35-49.
- Schmidt, Johannes F.K. (2000) 'Die Differenz der Beobachtung', in: Henk de Berg and Johannes Schmidt (eds), *Rezeption und Reflektion. Zur Resonanz der Systemtheorie Niklas Luhmanns außerhalb der Soziologie*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
- Schulze, Hagen (1994) *Staat und Nation in der europäischen Geschichte*. München: C.H. Beck.

- Smith, Steve and Ken Booth and Marysia Zalewski (eds.) 1996: *International Theory: Positivism and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Stichweh, Rudolf 1997: 'Inklusion/Exklusion und die Theorie der Weltgesellschaft', in Karl-Siegbert Rehberg (ed), *Differenz und Integration. Die Zukunft moderner Gesellschaften*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag: 601-607.
- Stichweh, Rudolf (2000) *Die Weltgesellschaft. Soziologische Analysen*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp.
- Walker, R. B. J. (2000) 'Both globalization and sovereignty: re-imagining the political', in Paul Wapner and Lester Edwin J. Ruiz (eds), *Principled World Politics. The Challenge of Normative International Relations*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield: 23-34.
- Willke, Helmut (1993) *Systemtheorie*. Stuttgart: Fischer (4<sup>th</sup> ed.).
- Willke, Helmut (1998) *Systemtheorie III: Steuerungstheorie*. Stuttgart: Lucius und Lucius (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)
- Willke, Helmut (2001) *Atopia. Studien zur atopischen Gesellschaft*. Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp
- World Society Reserach Group (2000) 'Introduction: world society', in Mathias Albert and Lothar Brock and Klaus Dieter Wolf (eds), *Civilizing World Politics. Society and Community Beyond the State*. Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield: 1-17.