Professionell gemachte systemische Organisationsberatung ist qualitative Sozialforschung im Paradigma entdeckender, gestaltender Sozialforschung. Der Satz »Der Beobachter macht die Beobachtung« hat dabei eine zweifache Bedeutung: Er verweist nicht nur darauf, dass jede Wahrnehmung erst im Filter der Wirklichkeitskonstruktion des/ der Beobachtenden entsteht. Er verweist auch darauf, dass die Wahrnehmungsakte der BeobachterInnen gleichzeitig als Interventionen in die Wirklichkeitskonstruktion der Beobachteten wirken und diese interpunktieren, beeinflussen, ja: verstören können.

Wie lassen sich in einem solchen Paradigma – in dem der Beobachter sein eigenes Messinstrument ist und seine Beobachtung den Gegenstand der Beobachtung verändert – Bedingungen kontrollieren, standardisieren? Wie kann man hier von wissenschaftlichem Vorgehen sprechen?

Man kann: Denn BeobachterInnen können ihre Wahrnehmungen nach Standards lenken und einen Kontext schaffen, der den Gütekriterien qualitativer Sozialforschung entspricht. Als Ergebnis können sie kontextbezogene, handlungsrelevante Theorien bilden, allenfalls Theorien mittlerer Reichweite.

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«Linking systemic research and practice»

International Systemic   Research Conference 2017

Heidelberg University Hospital

Why Systems Theory-Based Organizational Consultancy is Qualitative Research

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March 10, 2017, Heidelberg, Workshop

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- State of the Art of Systems Theory-Based Organizational Consultancy
- Why State of the Art Systemic Organizational Consultancy is Scientific Qualitative Research

Content of Presentation

Part 1: State of the Art of systems-Theory based Organizational Consultancy

- The Core Business of Organizational Consultancy

- Organizational Development, Process Consultation, Change Management, Systemic Consultancy – Paradigms of Organizational Consultancy

- Foundations for Organizational Consultancy – Lewin's Milestone-Concepts of Action Research, Group Dynamics, Change

- Core Methods and Role-concept of Consultant: Traditional OD and Ed Schein's Process Consultation

- Methods and Assumptions of Traditional Organizational Development

- Back to the Roots – Networks of Scientists and Ideas

- Genealogy of Systems Theory – four Paradigms

- Key notions of Systems Theory in the 1980ies and the Synthesis of Systemic Consultancy

- Key notions of Luhmann's Systems Theory in the 1990ies and the Synthesis of today's Systemic Organizational Consultancy

- Key notions of today's Systemic Organizational Consultancy: Resources and Restrictions for Understanding Systems

- Methods for making 2nd order Observations in Systems

The Core Business of Organizational Consultancy

Organizational Consultancy became prominent in the end-1980ies – market for training has boosted for almost three decades – steady growth in market for organizational consultancy – today: part of job portfolio of the Human-Relations-function.

Over the years, various labels and paradigms of organizational consultancy, with new focus and an ever growing set of methods and intervention techniques:

---------1950ies ------------------------1980ies-----1990ies-------------2000ies----------

Organizational Development

       Process Consultation

               Systemic Consultancy of Social Systems

                    Change Management

                         Systemic Organizational Consultancy

The core of the business has always been the same:

> change collective mind-sets and behavior patterns in social systems with the aims to increase their degrees of freedom, improve their performance and safeguard their viabilty.

Paradigms of Organizational Consultancy

**change collective mind-sets and behavior patterns in social systems
to increase their degrees of freedom, improve their performance and to safeguard their viabilty**

Over the years, nature of problems/challenges in organizations have changed paradigmatically, which lead to new methods and interventions and new focus in **theories about organizations.**

	Nature of problems/ challenges in organizations	Methods and interventions in organizational consultancy	Theory and conception of organization
Organizational Development	Rigidified by hierarchies and purportless division of labour, beaucractic „tankers" need integration (end 60ies).	Regardless of hierarchical status, employees collaborate in OD-processes to improve work environemnt and success of company. Objectives of change emerge during process.	Normative concepts of Human Relations Approach: healthy organization with culture of scientific institution where individuals collaborate independently of hierarchy. Synergy between job-satisfaction and profit-interests of organization.
Process Consultation	Coach top management teams (DEC); corporate culture as impediment and risk for evolution.	Construct trustful relationship for helping with client, that empowers him to perceive processes and events in his environment and to react adequately.	Influenced by methods of Carl Roger's client centered therapy; theory of organizational culture and culture change.
Change Management	Mid 1990ies: breaking changes in politics, economy, technology, society challenge organizations to redesign strategies, structure, and culture radically and in a planned and fast manner.	Architectures for designed change processes that coordinate problem-solving in projects with parallel processes for participation and communication – with special roles and iterative planning.	Conglomerate of concepts influenced by project management, NLP-interventions and state of the art of systemisc consultancy of the mid 1980ies.
Sytems theory based /systemic consultancy	Mergers, value management, globaliza-tion, turbo-competition, challenge organizations to monitor their business model and to professionalize their inner structures continuously.	Organizational consultancy is established as function or HR-job portfolio in organizations.	Systems theory based conception of organization which integrates the theory of social systems of sociologist Luhmann, as well as recent findings in neurobiology.

4

Foundations for Organizational Consultancy – Lewin's Milestone-Concepts of Action Research, Group Dynamics, Change
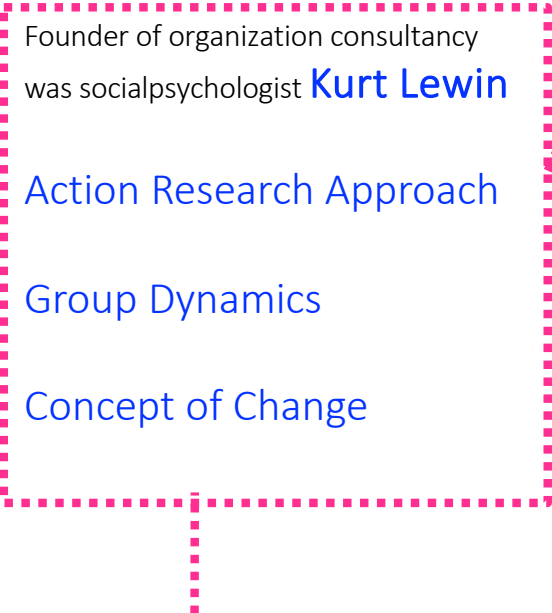
Symbolic Interactionism of the Chicago School of Sociology: When humans take action vis a vis things, they are guided by the meaning theses things bear to them; these meanings are agreed upon in processes of collective interpretation in the course of social interactions.
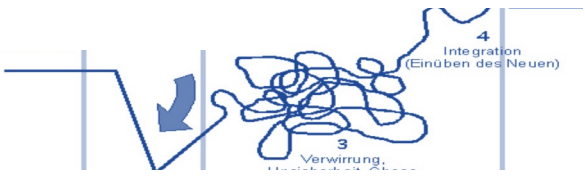
Founder of organization consultancy was socialpsychologist **Kurt Lewin**

Action Research Approach

Group Dynamics

Concept of Change

Major levers for learning and attitude change: **social feedback** and **reflecting on experience**

If you want **to change patterns of collective action purposefully,** you will have to

- **first, understand given mindsets and behavior patterns**

- **and second, organize adequate interactive processes for collective sense-making.**

⇔ essence of Action-Research-Approach: „A comparative research on the conditions and effects of various forms of social action and research leading to social action" (Lewin).

Change – like **evolution** – is a non-directional transformation process, comprising 3 stages:

Defreeze: practiced patterns of perception and interpretation erode

Move: new options, new patterns of perception and collective intepretation emerge

**Freeze:** stabilize new patterns of collective perception and behavior

Code of ethics for socialpsychological researcher:

keine Praxis ohne Theorie – actions/ interventions are to be based on prior theory-making

Keine Theorie ohne Praxis – scientific theorizing/ theories are valuable when they focus on and help actual social action

4 Integration (Einüben des Neuen)

3 Verwirrung, Unsicherheit, Chaos

pressure for adaption ....**variation** ----------- **selection** ---------**retention**

Core Methods and Role-concept of Consultant: Traditional OD and Ed Schein's Process Consultation

Beckard and McGregor, close collaborators of Lewins: **organizational development** ⇔ „organization improvement trough action research".
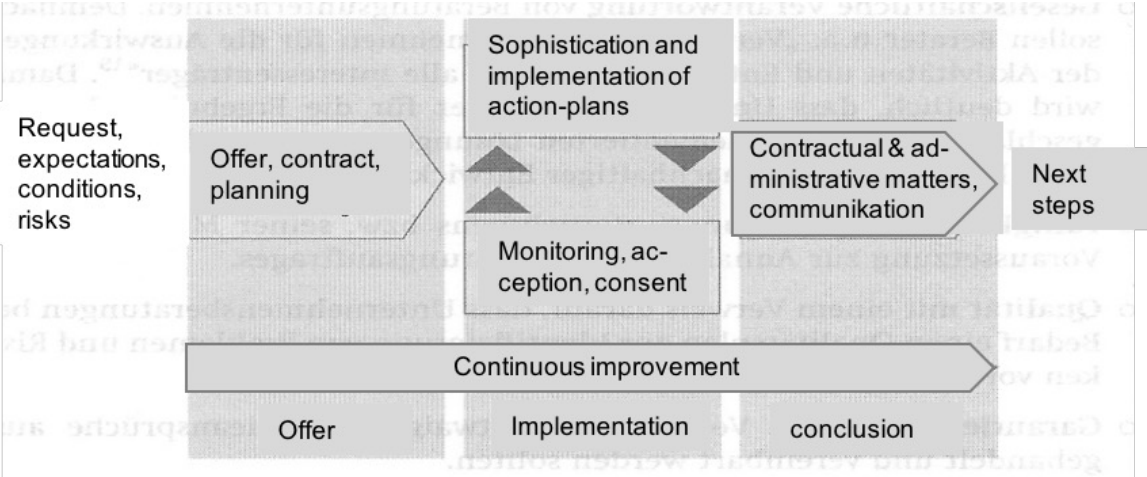
➔ **Action-Survey- Loop** for research process.
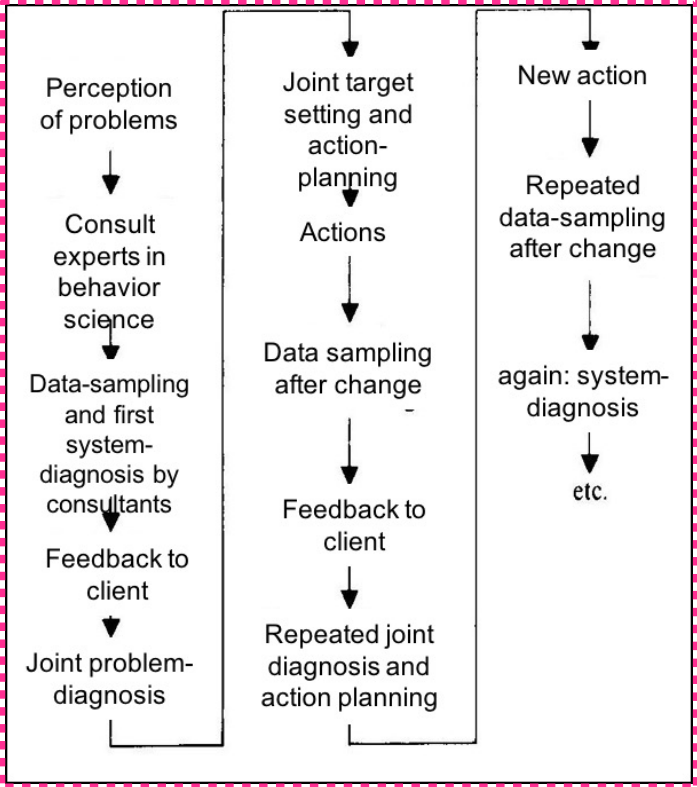
Edgar Schein: attitude and self concept of organizational consultant

- **Think like an anthropologist** – explore a foreign culture
- **Proceed like a family therapist** – human beings resist to change
- **Live identity of an artist** – inspire, perturbate, provoke, initiate new perceptions, take care for aesthetics, coherence, compe-tence, write the score that empowers others to make musik.
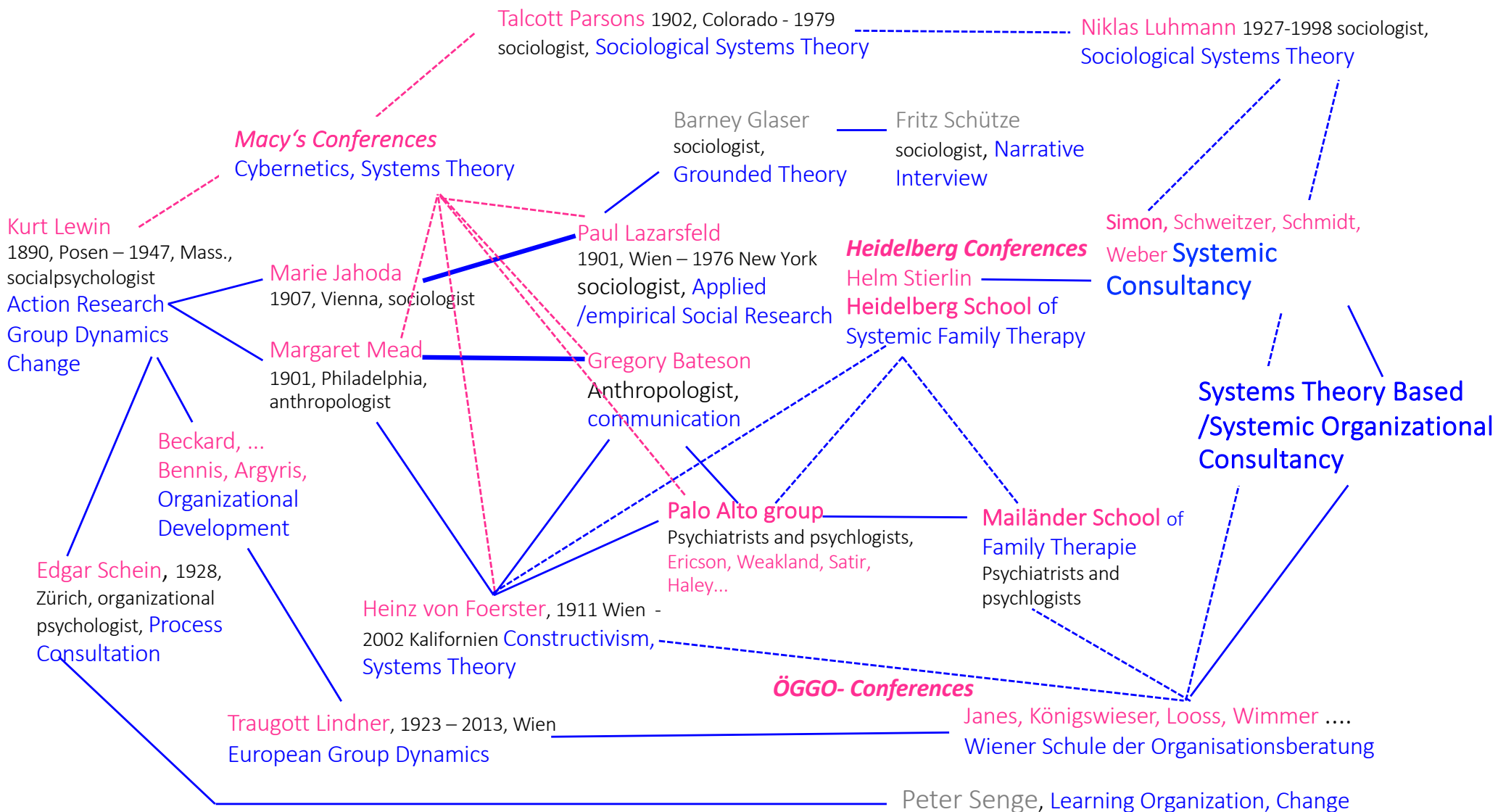
Process consultation ⇔ establish relationship of mutual trust in a basically asymmetrical helping relationship ⬅ Rogerian principles of client centered therapy as model for interaction.

⇔ model for todays European Norm EN 16114 for Consultancy Services.

Back to the Roots – Networks of Scientists and Ideas

Talcott Parsons 1902, Colorado - 1979 sociologist, Sociological Systems Theory

Niklas Luhmann 1927-1998 sociologist, Sociological Systems Theory

Macy's Conferences
Cybernetics, Systems Theory

Barney Glaser sociologist, Grounded Theory

Fritz Schütze sociologist, Narrative Interview

Kurt Lewin
1890, Posen – 1947, Mass., socialpsychologist
Action Research
Group Dynamics
Change

Marie Jahoda
1907, Vienna, sociologist

Paul Lazarsfeld
1901, Wien – 1976 New York
sociologist, Applied /empirical Social Research

Heidelberg Conferences
Helm Stierlin
Heidelberg School of Systemic Family Therapy

Simon, Schweitzer, Schmidt, Weber Systemic Consultancy

Margaret Mead
1901, Philadelphia, anthropologist

Gregory Bateson
Anthropologist, communication

Beckard, …
Bennis, Argyris,
Organizational
Development

Systems Theory Based /Systemic Organizational Consultancy

Edgar Schein, 1928, Zürich, organizational psychologist, Process Consultation

Palo Alto group
Psychiatrists and psychlogists,
Ericson, Weakland, Satir, Haley…

Mailänder School of Family Therapie
Psychiatrists and psychlogists

Heinz von Foerster, 1911 Wien - 2002 Kalifornien Constructivism, Systems Theory

ÖGGO- Conferences

Traugott Lindner, 1923 – 2013, Wien
European Group Dynamics

Janes, Königswieser, Looss, Wimmer ….
Wiener Schule der Organisationsberatung

Peter Senge, Learning Organization, Change

Joana Krizanits: Why Systems Theory Based Organizational Consultancy is qualitative Research ©

7

Genealogy of Systems Theory – four Paradigms

In the mid-1940ies, Ludwig von Bertalanffy's Book „General Systems Theory" marked the origin of system theory, which set out to find common principles – such as complexity, feedback, self-organization – in phycical, biological and social systems. The Macy's conferences sparked off research on systems theory – termed cybernetics in the initial phase– by bringing together a number of renowned scientists from anthropology, sociology, psychiatry, mathematics, physics, biology and philosophy.

The following paradigmatic shifts in systems theory can be traced back:

1945 -end 60ies System Theory of Technical Systems: Question: Why can systems perform with stable output in spite of varying conditions in environment? Focus on elements that communicate via closed feedback loops, by means of whch new system behavior qualities emerge ⇔ dynamic systems with self-organization. ➔ Haken: Synergetics, Beer: viable systems model) to design orgranizations; idiograhic systems models e.g. Jay Forrester, Club of Rome: Limits of Growth.

1970 -1990 Systems Theory of Complex Systems: recurrant, self-referring operations, after periods of apparently steady behavior, sudden occurence of turbulance and chaos in system behavior; then, new systems behavior patterns emerge ⇔ non-linear complex systems with order transition ➔ Peter Senge, disciple of Jay Forresters, transfers rules to learning organization (archetypes).

1980 -1990 Constructivismus und 2nd order Cybernetics: Quanten Physics: whether electrons are perceived as atoms or as waves is dependent on experimental set-up for scientific observation. ⇔ observer plays active part in system, he fabricates/ constructs his observations. ➔ to understand systems ⇔ make 2nd order observations, be **2nd order observer**.

1980 -1990 Autopoietic Systems, 1984-1999 Social Systems Theory: Living systems reproduce their elements and structures by means of their elements and structures under conditions of operational closure; living systems cannot be instructed to behaviors which are not in line with their inner structures; structural coupling ➔ evolutionary drift with environments. Luhmann: organizations are living systems, they organize their autopoiesis via communication; ➔ body of theory to understand organizations as living systems.

Key notions of Systems Theory in the 1980ies and the Synthesis in Systemic Consultancy

Organization Theory: Every system plays ist own chore

Identify system, draw system boundaries

Law of requisite variety and complexity gradient.

Organizations are complex, non-trivial „machines".

Functional patterns in system change with time.

Recurrant, self-referential operations.

Bounded rationality, systems rationality.

Always increase number of options for action.

System behavior is contingent on context.

You cannot intentionally instruct a system to behave.

Intervene to pertubate behavioral patterns.

Enhance structural coupling and evolutionary drift.

Methods for making 2nd order observations

observe patterns in perception, interpretation and behavior of system members, describe, how system construes its idiosyncratic reality ⇔ 1^{rst} order obsrevations..

Look for functionality and effects of behavioral patterns.

Assure multiperspectivity and diversity of opinions. Oscillate between opposing views.

Methods for intervention

Systemic questioning:
- Questions to elicit observations
- Questions to explore diversity of perspectives
- Circular questions
- Questions that ask for judgements on a scale
- Solution centered investigation
- Paradoxical questions and suggestions
- Ask for metaphores and analogies

Hypotheses- and theory-constructing: construe functionality of behavior patterns and coherence of vayring patterns in system rationality

Feedback hypotheses to client.

Code of systemic attitudes for consultants

Follow your curiosity, your zest to explore and understand.

Give appreciation for good practice and achievements in system.

Be confident, believe in systems ability for self-organization.

Focus on resources, be solution-oriented.

Be nonbiased and undesigned.

Show a proper mixture of professional distance, empathy and presence of mind.

Strive for independent thinking and disrespect conventional judgement.

Develop competence to tolerate tension from ambivalence, contradictions, lack of knowledge.

Adopt serenity and humor.

Adopt attitude of humbleness, not hybris.

Be aware of /reflect on your own reactions to emotions and conflicts.

Be affectionate and well-meaning towards yourself and mistakes you may make.

9

Key notions of Luhmann's Systems Theory in the 1990ies and the Synthesis of today's Systemic Organizational Consultancy

Sociologist Niklas Luhmann transferred the concept of living system with an intrinsic mode of autopoiesis to social systems (organisations) and psychic systems (persons) and developed a comrehensive theory.

Luhmann's living systems
that each operate in an
idiosyncratic mode of autopoiesis
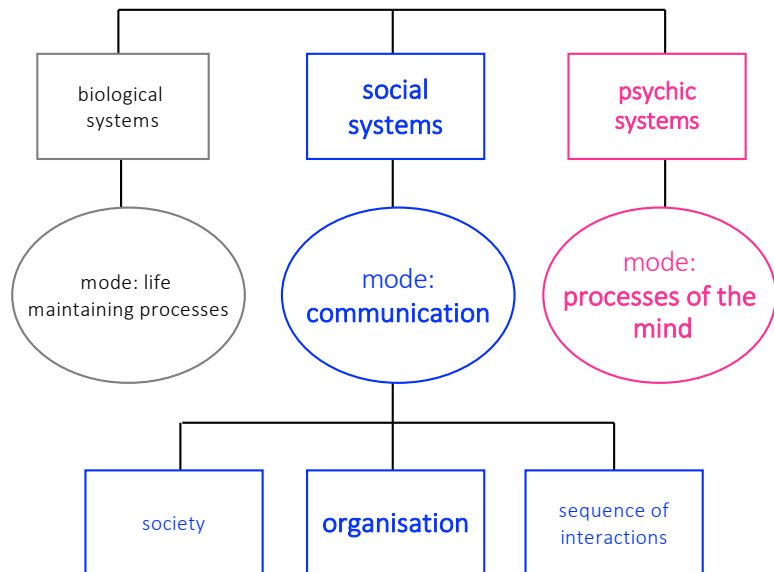
Some highlights of Luhmann's theory on organizations:

Pluralistic Society has variety of specialized functional systems to observe events /decisions in society. Each functional system employs binary code to define own identity-boundary and scope of observations (economy: to have/not have money, health system: health/disease, science: true/false ...). Organizations are the backbone of developed society; they enable functional systems to operate and make deisions.

Social systems effectuate their autopoiesis by comunication; they are built of chains of communications. A person is environment to an organisation. A person is defined as the psychic system, that effectuates its own autopoiesis by processes of the mind.

In its operations, every living system is restricted to its own mode of autopoiesis; organizations cannot think, feel or have consciousness; persons cannot communicate. Social systems and persons are structurally coupled via sense/meaning.

Communication is anteractive process that has two aspects: selecting decoding meaning suitable to form a message and selecting/ perceiving the mere action of sending a message. Communication is highly contingent; to increase probability of reciprocal connection it needs intermediating structures. Sense/meaning and language are most powerful intermediating structures for communication. Other such structures are money, power, love. Sense/meaning refers to three dimensions: content-, social-, time-dimension.

Temporalization: at any moment, system behavior is path-dependant, ⇔ behavior patterns = formed by prior events/ decisions; social systems operate in present-time.

Since organizations operate in a self-referential, recursive manner, they rely on self-observation and external observation for structural coupling with environments and evolutionary drift.

Decision-making absorbs contingency and uncertainty; decisions are special instances of communication. Decicion-making follows preset criteria for decision-making such as programs, organizational structures and personality-styles.

Key notions of today's Systemic Organizational Consultancy: Restrictions to and Resources for Understanding Systems

Challenges for making 2nd order observations:

Luhmann: psychic systems = operationally closed around their internal structures. Ladder of inference (Senge et al): closed circuits within + between distictive layers of reality construction

➔ **How can an observer escape the mecanisms of self reference and recursivenes in his own reality-construction** when making 2nd order observations on a system?

.

Self-referential, recursive loops between layers of reality construction
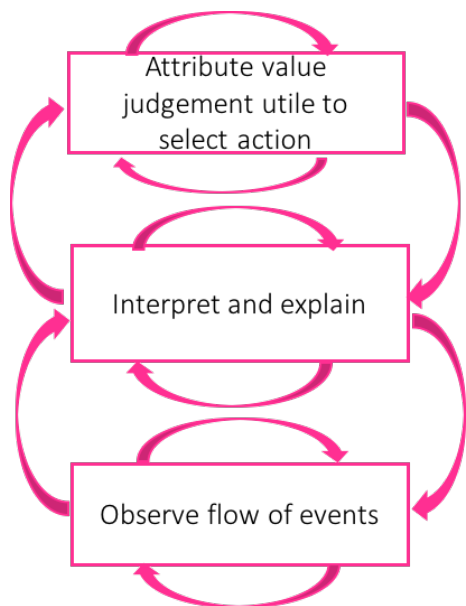
Findings from neurobiology and hypnotherapy since 1980ies:

„Mirror neurones" ➔interconnect with each other on level of inexplicit psychic processes ⇔ physical substrate for empathy. ⇔ additional source of information on, how humans construe their respective realities.

Findings in neurobiology and hypnotherapie ➔ our cognitive performance is heavily influenced by an unconscious memory of experiences and emotions. ➔ tap the resources of this unconscious, emotional memory as source of intelligence for understanding systems.

Both, cortex and unconscious memory, help us to process our experience, both are creative instances that combine prior information to gain innovative insight. They differ in their respective modes of functioning; bable fish that translates = images, analogies.

cortex		unconscious emotional memory
linear, sequential processing	mode of functioning	parallel processing
limited to hours in state of vigilence	performance	permanent activity, even during hours of sleep
sequence of thoughts or emotions	elements	multiple parallel scenarios
slow	speed of activity	fast: multiple scenarios are fabricated within 200 milliseconds after stimulus impact
conscious, can be expressed in language and passed on to others	awareness	unconscious, noticeable to individual only via "somatic markers"
true : false	processing experience	like : dislike

Methods for making 2nd Order Observations in Social Systems

How can an observer escape the mecanisms of self reference and recursivenes in his own reality-construction when making 2nd order obeservations on a system's 1rst order observations?

1rst order observations

Definition: what the system perceives and describes as reality; reservoir of meaning and communication

Sources for system to produce 1rst order observation: key criteria to define system boundary, history and path of system, emergeance of patterns, recursive loops between artefeacts and self-perception,

➔ **1rst order description:** explicit self-portrayal, artefacts, events, stories and narratives, statements and information given in interviews, crucial decisions, core notions and terms, metaphores, social dynamics in conflicts, dramatizing, structures of organization, relatiing to environments.

2nd order observations

Definition: selective observation of actions and sense-making in system by external observer

Sources for consultant to make 2nd order observations: 1rst order description of system

➔ **2nd order descritptions:** hypotheses concerning characteristic processes, dyna-mics and patterns, especially with regard to communication, interactions, paths of development, decision-making, examples of idiosyncratic sense-making and potential options for enhanced sense-making and new action-patterns in changing contexts.

3rd order observations

Definition: professional criteria that help consultants to calibrate their own perceptions and interpretations; scientific criteria for validity of qualitative research

Sources for 3rd order observations: use brain, heart and guts to open perception, practice code of systemic attitudes for consultants, refer to approved, shared theoretical concepts, expertise on type of organization and problem, use tacit knowledge gained in processes of socialization to profession.

Any deliberate observation or reflection of the observer's own process of the mind, can in fact function as 3rd order observation, when it pertubates his/her automatisms in reality-construction.

Content of Presentation, Part 2

Is systems theory based organizational consultancy „serious"? Or is it just a set of intervention techniques comparable to NLP? Is it scientific? What are the criteria for quality and validity?

Part 2: Why State of the Art Systemic Organizational Consultancy is Scientific Qualitative Research

- Scientific Research – Traditional Quantitative versus Qualitative Paradigm

- Systemic Organizational Consultancy compared to other Forms of Qualitative Research

- **Methods in Systemic Organizational Consultancy**

- Zoom-up: Criteria for Good Scientific Practice in Qualitative Research

- ➔ State of the Art Systemic Consultancy measures up to Criteria for Good Scientific Practice in Qualitative Research

Scientific Research – Traditional Quantitative versus Qualitative Paradigm

Other than quantitative research, qualitative research produces theory that evolves during the research process, that cannot be easily reproduced or generalized. Qualitative research is more complex than quantitative research.

traditional quantitative paradigm		qualitative paradigm
physical phenomena /environment: find general laws, determin cause-effects-chains	object of research	social environment: understand social realities and perspectives of actors, analyse structures, processes and patterns of reality perception/construction
build up theraurus of universally true, context-independant knowledge	purpose	help actors and bystanders in decision making and adapting patterns of behavior in given social contexts, theories of medium scope
formulate hypothesis, design experiment to test and falsify opposite = null-hypothesis	methods	start with social question, determine information sources, collect data, develop hypotheses from data, sharpen focus and iterate data sampling –hypotheses-making; results-open, ongoing theory-building
scientific community to test and verify knowledge	presented to	parties involved in decision making and behavior-patterns to develop course of action
statistical significance of findings, repliccability of results, validity of experimental design, reliability of testing, compatibilty of theory and results	criteria for validity of research	usefulness of theories for parties involved, adequacy of methods compared to research-question, adequate diversity of perspectives, empathy for social complexity, unbiased data-sampling and interpretation, innovative theory at the point

Systemic Organizational Consultancy compared to other forms of qualitative research

Methods of qualitative research such as Objective Hermeneutics, Grounded Theory, Ethnografic Lifestile-Analysis etc, employ a **common set of qualitative techniques/ methods** such as guided or narrative interviews, document-, discourse- or content analysis, encoding and scoring techniques etc. They have also **developed specialized concepts and methods adequate to their special object of research** (e.g. the Qualitative Interviews for the Analysis of Social Systems (Froschauer, Lueger).

comparison of methods and standards		
Example of Grounded Theory		**Systemic Organizational Consultancy**
decode text (or other artefact) to carve out embedded structures of sense/meaning.	object and direction of research	research into collective mind-sets and behavior patterns in social systems.
develop a theory that is "grounded" in data.	purpose	change collective mind sets and behavior patterns in social systems o increase degrees of freedom, to improve performance and to safeguard their viabilty.
define data sources, data-sampling, theoretic sampling, iterative encoding, iterative theory-building	explicit and controlled research process	Action Research Approach and Action Survey Loop: define data sources, collect data, formulate hypotheses $\Leftrightarrow$ 2nd order observations, write and feed back diagnosis-report to client, joint evaluation of usefulness of hypotheses and road map for further action. Implement change actions by closely monitoring and theorizing changes in system behavior ...
text of document or transcribed statements of an interview	raw data	1^{rst} oder descriptions: self portrayal of client system in documents/ on websites ..., artefacts such as dress code, building ..., critical incidents, statements in narrative interviews (groups of /individuals), stories and narratives, statistitical data, organizational structures, patterns of communication and decision making ...
successive written interpetations and encodings	processed data-material	Researchers' perception and interpretation of system's 1^{rst} order observations
theoretic sensitivity	challenge to researcher	3rd order observations to guide and control own perceptions and interpretations when making 2nd order observations.

Methods in Systemic Organizational Consultancy

Systemic organizational consultancy is more complex than most other qualitative approaches: social complexity, psychic complexity. Purpose is a) system diagnosis, b) to change collective mindsets and behavior patterns.

Methods for making system-diagnosis:

- Methods of process consultation to make working contract and shape interaction for a helping relationship.

- Concept of defining the „Beratungssystem" /consulting system by defining problem (content-dimension), social and temporal scope of interactive system.

- Methods for designing research process: action survey loop as process modell, conventional methods to determine empirical data collection.

- Ususal set of qualitative research methods for data collection: questionnaires, guided group – or individual interviews, narrative interviews, data collection from artefacts, critical incidents technique, story-telling, content-analysis of systems' reports and self-portrayals ...

- Methods for guiding and controlling researchers perception and interpretation: code of systemic attitudes.

- Concept of hypotheses and methods of hypotheses-making.

Methods for changing collective mind sets and behavior patterns ⇔ taking impact and reorganizing a system during the very process of research

- concept of intervention, repertoire of interventions (verbal, analogical, paradoxical, complementary escalation, solution focused intervention ...)

- Techniques for designing interactive social processes for collective sense-making:

  - workshop designs,

  - design/ architectures for change processes, defining extra roles (e.g.change agent) and extra social units (e.g. change team, resonance groups, steering commeittees ...)

  - special inventions such as large group interventions, e.g. appreciative ummit, RTSC-Conference, Future Search ...

- Concept and design of feedback workshop with clients, process of joint creation of road map for change.

- Concept of continuous monitoring of context, objectives for consultation and collaboration in respective roles.

Zoom-up: Criteria for Good Scientific Practice in Qualitative Research

Criteria for good scientific practice in qualitative research:

Methods of data-sampling and data-processing that are adequate to object of research.

Triangulation of methods: diversity of methods (such as analysis of documents, critical incidents, discourse analysis, interviews, narratives, analysis of artefacts etc.) leads to comprehensive and in-depth assessment of object of research.

Validation of interview-context: interview partners give candid and truthful testimony; a fundamental contract between researcher and interview-partner has been established, that is characterized by openness, trust, an intact working alliance and a low power gradient between researcher and interview-partner.

Authenticity of information: subjects have been given adequate scope to express their views and the meaning the researched issues have to them. With relevance to research object, subjects' idiosyncratic perspectives, common day-to-day practices and individual sense-constructions become evident.

Careful and diligent reconstruction of subjects' reality constructions: in the course of the research process, statements of subjects and their underlying value structures have been attended to with care; subjects' multiple reality constructions have been assessed and systematically realted to each other.

Researchers' interpretations are empirically founded: Theories refer closely to data; there is sufficient proof in verbal statements, divergent or negative evidence has been taken into account.

Irritation of preconceived knowledge of researchers by empirical findings: employed research techniques allow for researcher being surprised and irritated in his preconceived knowledge. Innovative heuristics: Theory-making is done in a way to discover new ideas that may question or modify researchers' preconceptions.

Profit and usefulness for clients and research subjects: In the course of the research process, subjects initiate new orientation, attitudes, mind-sets. The purpose of research is to help decision-making or to stimulate new action.

Communicative validation of results by „member check": Validity of theories has been evaluated by subjects per "member check"; subjects see delivered research results as valid.

(Steinke, I. (2005): Gütekriterien qualitativer Forschung. In: Flick, U. von Kardorff, E. u. Steinke, I. (Hrg): Qualitative Forschung. Ein Handbuch. 4. Auflage (1. Auflage 2000), Reinbek bei Hamburg (Rowohlt Taschenbuch), S. 319 – 331.

State of the Art Systemic Consultancy measures up to Criteria for Good Scientific Practice in Qualitative Research

Systemic organizational consultancy in an action research tradition, constitutes a methodological approach, that is adequate to the very object of research: to understand and to change collective mind-sets and behavior patterns in a social system for it to gain new degrees of freedom, to improve performance and to enhance viability.

The Action Survey Loop as model for research process, maps the iterative nature of theory-making; special theory and special techniques such as circular questioning and hypotheses-making have been developed for data-collection and –processing.

To explore a given problem, systemic consultancy defines research question ⇔ delimites the relevant consulting system (content, social and temporal dimension) and draws a research design (e.g. kind and numer of interviews), for establishing an adequate data-base to observe system's 1rst order descriptions.

Methods of process consultation ➔ authenticity of information and working alliance between consultant and client.

The ultimate source of intelligence for making 2nd order observations, though, are researchers' very perceptions and mind-sets for interrelating/interpreting data. Criteria for good scientific practice are hence also realized in heuristics of consultants' code of systemic attitudes, and other 3rd order criteria for guiding and controlling perceptions and interpretations when making 2nd order observations on a system.

Systemic consultancy is a form of impact-taking research, that transmits innovative, often irritating, but useful insights and options for better adapted behavior to social system. Special adequate theory, concepts and techniques for interventions, (pertubation, feedback, reflecting...) have also been developed.

Milestones such as the survey-feedback-workshop lay grounds for participation and transparency and organize validation per member check by system.

Organizational consultancy follows a casuistic approach and delivers low-scope theory with the aim to foster theory based practice: it helps actors in social systems to understand context, provides coherence for framing their day-to-day experience, and gives degrees of freedom for decision-making and action-taking.