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**The future of the future? –
On the strategification of time in
organisations**

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The future of the future? – On the strategification of time in organisations

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For organisations today, time is an important challenge. ‘Change’, ‘speed’, ‘acceleration’, ‘flexibility’ and ‘innovation’ are all well known and obvious demands on organisations, and they all stress the fact that time has become a strategic challenge. Seen in relation to this fact it is remarkable how little organisations theory discusses time and conceptions of time.¹ Generally we find relatively few analyses of organisations which explicitly focus on time in organisations. Other disciplines draw surprising and radical conclusions about time, e.g. high energy physics, which argues that before the big bang there was no time, and that time may be constructed by man.² However, organisations theory is not characterised by such an radical approach to time. In studies of organisations it is much more common to meet time as an already

¹ One example hereof is textbooks on organisations theory, e.g. Hatch (1997). For an overview of time in organisations, see Hassard (1996).

² For an entertaining presentation hereof, cf. Foerster (1967). See also the homepage of the British high energy physicist Julian Barbour (www.platonian.com) and his book *The End of Time* (2000).

standardised factor, which without exceptions is forced upon organisations from the outside. In other words: theoretical and analytical questions about how organisations internally construct time and what consequences it has are neglected. One may push this point as far as to state that organisation theory lacks a language for time, and hence it is blind for empirically studying time in and between organisations.

This point makes Luhmann's contribution to organisation theory relevant. In Luhmann's theory of organisations we do not find time as a naturally given element. Organisation system are – being autopoietic systems – able to create time internally (Luhmann 1984: ch. 8). This theoretical point raises an important analytical challenge: How to analyse time? It seems to be considerably more difficult for us to analyse time than other sorts of order. It is relatively easy for us to understand spatial order, like classrooms, houses, countries or the differentiation of organisations in physical offices. It is also relatively easy for us to understand factual orders, such as differentiation of disciplines, policies, topics or the differentiation of organisations according to tasks or business units etc. It is also relatively easy for us to understand social order, such as differentiation in groups or classes or the differentiation of organisations in superior and inferior positions. Compared to these examples it seems a greater challenge to study the temporal order of organisations. How are organisations differentiated temporally? This is the focus of this article.

The problem of the article is: *How does time become object of strategic struggles, when time is internalised in organisations?* This problem rests on a set of hypotheses, which are unfolded in the analyses.³ Firstly the hypothesis that *time actually is internalised into organisations*. As mentioned above, this is not (solely) a theoretical argument, but also a question which are to be studied empirically. Secondly the hypothesis that *internalisation of time into organisations opens for the creation of more times in the organisation*. We may also say that organisations become polychronic. This means that organisations are not only differentiated according to tasks or units, but also in more times. Thirdly, the hypothesis that *when organisations become polychronic, time becomes strategified*. This means that strategies do not only take place within given understandings of time. Rather, the understandings of time

³ The hypotheses are, in other words, not formulated with a view to falsification.

becomes an object of struggle, time and differences of time is shaped strategically etc. Fourthly the hypotheses that *when time becomes strategified, future becomes increasingly important*.

Below I unfold these four hypotheses by analysing EUs organisation over time. More specifically I analyse *the Community*, i.e. the community which was established in 1958 as the *European Economic Community*, which later became the *European Community*, and which today is a part of the EU as one of the three pillars of the Union. This Community has since it was founded had as its probably most important aim to establish a common market between the member states. It is this creation of a common market which serves as *leitmotif* in my reconstruction of the temporal organisation of the Community.

In the article I first give a brief theoretical discussion, second I draw some analytical consequences here from, and with this set off I present my historical analysis of the creation of the common market by the Community. The historical analysis falls in three phases, and is followed by the conclusion of the article.

Time in Luhmann's theory of organisation

As autopoietic systems, organisations are conceived as cognitively open but operatively closed. Being cognitively open means that an organisation can observe itself and its environment. Being operatively closed means that all operations – all what the system is and does – are operations of the system itself, and that the system creates its operations by its own operations. In a temporal perspective it is decisive to note, that these operations have a momentaneous character: They have no duration. Operations are ‘once-off’ events. They happen and disappear again. In this sense they are not subject to change (Luhmann 1984: kap. 9). Because all the time happen and disappear, an autopoietic system is ceaselessly thrown into discontinuation. For the system to achieve duration, it is forced to recreate itself with new operations again and again. This theoretical starting point can roughly be summarised by saying that ‘operations operate’. There is not ‘somebody’ that operates or anything that operates

prior to the system. The system is solely 'its' operations; it is not prior to the operations, but is recreated every instant by its operations.⁴

The operations in focus here are operations of observation. The operations enables the system to observe (end thereby its cognitive openness). However, the operation itself cannot be observed. Operations are not observable. This means that any analysis of autopoietic systems are reconstructions, and for such a reconstruction it is decisive what assumptions are made about the operations of the system. Because the operations cannot be observed, these are necessarily assumptions or theoretical decisions. Luhmann makes the theoretical decision to observe social systems as communication systems. This means communication is social and vice versa. This decision may of course be topic of discussion. For the cause of argument in this article, however, it suffices to note that the 'formula' of autopoiesis may be summarized: Communication communicates. There is, in other words, not somebody communicating prior to the system, and systems do not communicate with one-another. Rather, social systems are nothing but communication which communicates. When it comes to organisations, Luhmann makes the decision to observe organisations as decision-communication. Thereby the 'formula' for organisations as autopoietic systems may be summarized: Decisions decide. Organisations are not about somebody deciding something, but rather that the system decides. Organisation systems do not exist prior to their decisions, but are recreated every instant in their deciding (Luhmann 1988). Organisation systems do only exist in the instant, and are forced to produce (new) decisions in order to achieve duration. The starting point is discontinuity. Continuity (and thereby also: Change) are a result of the decision activity of the system.

The statement that 'decisions decide' has the paradoxical result, that organisation systems only exist in the moment, but that this moment is unobservable (Moe 2001). The fundamental discontinuity of systems forces the observer of systems to reconstruct. But the same fundamental discontinuity also opens the issue of how time is constructed internally in systems: The system does not have any past. Neither does it have any future. All it has is a present (Luhmann 2000: chapter 5), and in this

⁴ For a criticism of Luhmann's theory with a special view at time, cf Kastl (1998).

present it may imagine pasts and futures, it may produce experiences and expectations, etc. We may, in other words, observe how organisations create time while they create themselves. We may reconstruct how the times of organisations are created by a distinction between past and future, set by the organisation. We can analyse how this distinction between past and future changes over time, how it is repeated and change from one moment to the next. But at the very same time we are barred from getting access to the moment, to the decision communication as operation. Even though the distinction between past and future is set in a ‘now’, then this ‘now’ disappears when we analyse it as a distinction between past and present. The moment is only described by what it is not, namely past and future.

Strategy of analysis

With discontinuous operations – temporal atoms – as starting point, past and future does not have any firmness or stability, but are recreated every now. This means, unsurprisingly, that past and future become plural, and this may be analysed by distinguishing between modalities of time (Luhmann 1982). Let me use ‘future’ as an example. Taking into account that future is multiple, it is too unprecise to talk about ‘future’. We have to indicate (where and) when this future is observed: Was is the future, as it looked yesterday, is it the future as I looks today, or is it the future as it may look tomorrow? These futures show various modalities of time, namely past future (the future as it looked yesterday), present future (the future as it looks today), and future future (the future as it may look tomorrow). We may also wish to distinguish between how we expect now that a future point in time will look (i.e. present future), and how we think, that a future ‘now’ will look, when it is observed at this future point in time (future present). Accordingly, we can also distinguish between present pasts and past presents.

Modalities of time are in various ways relevant for the decisions of organisations. An organisation may e.g. decide upon a vision to follow (i.e. present future), and it may make plans and budgets, and thereby orient itself towards a future present, i.e. try to set specific conditions for decisions in the future. The distinctions between modalities of time enable us to analyse organisations with focus on time. This is to say that modalities of time and systems theory provide a language for analysing organisations

with a focus on time, how they differentiate, who is a member of the organisation and under what conditions etc.

The temporal differentiation of organisations also raises the question of how various times and decisions are coupled. We can distinguish between couplings which are primarily sequential or primarily simultaneous. A sequential order is for instance the cooking of potatoes: First the potatoes are washed, then cooked and then peeled. A simultaneous order is for instance the cooking of a meal: Simultaneous potatoes are cooked and a beef is barbecued. Simultaneous and sequential events are hence well known. In connection to organisations, it is however remarkable that the sequential and the simultaneous often play a role at the same time. When cooking is organised in a restaurant, we will often see that potatoes are washed simultaneous with potatoes are being peeled. Simultaneous sequentiality is, in other words, a relatively common phenomenon. However, observing from the point of view of autopoietic organisation theory, we see the unlikelihood of achieving simultaneous sequentiality. It is unlikely because decisions are momentaneous events. Due to decisions being taken and disappearing again in the same moment, a decision cannot force itself as a frame of reference neither on later decisions (because at a later point in time, the previous decision is gone), nor on contemporary decisions (because the decisions are taken at the same time).

With these concepts as an analytic, I will in the next section describe the Community with focus on how the market is observed by the community. I will focus on how temporal horizons are set in regards to the market, how the Community observes itself and on how the common market is to be achieved using sequentiality, simultaneity and simultaneous sequentiality.

The construction of a common European market⁵

Based on this brief introduction, I will describe how the Community as an organisation system has changed over time, from what I term 'the conditioned Community', via what I term 'the goal-oriented Community', to what I term 'the strategic community'. Each of these forms, are closely associated with an

understanding of the market. The story, I unfold, is also a story about how the understanding of market changes from the naturally given market, via the politically organised market, to the transnationally negotiated market. These markets have each their temporality and have each their temporal consequences for the Community.

The naturally given market and the conditioned Community

The Community was established when the Treaty of Rome entered into force in 1958.⁶ And with the Treaty of Rome there was also set a specific understanding of market as well as Community. One of the main points in the following is, that during this period the Community is not yet an autopoietic organisation system. The Community is namely not yet selfreferential and selfcreating, but a hetero-referential machine created by external communication (Kommission der Europäischen Ökonomischen Gemeinschaft 1958; Kommission der Europäischen Ökonomischen Gemeinschaft 1959; Kommission der Europäischen Ökonomischen Gemeinschaft 1960; Kommission der Europäischen Ökonomischen Gemeinschaft 1961).

For the 'market' it was characteristic that the market was taken to be a given and well-known thing. It was taken to be given in the sense that it was a 'spontaneous order' which would appear, if only this was not hindered politically. One may also say that the market already was present as a potential. More precisely, one may say that on one hand, the market is a present order (the market is created spontaneously in the moment), and on the other hand that the market is a naturally given entity, with a nature which does not change over time. In other words, the market is a transhistorical entity, with a timeless existence. In this view the market was seen as a detemporalised order, which has the character of an eternal momentaneusness. In line with the time-modalities outlined above, we may talk about a present eternal?

This understanding of the market had several consequences for the organisation of the Community. Firstly, this understanding of market was a precondition for the encompassing plan in the Treaty of Rome, of how the market was to be realised. This market understanding made is possible quite specifically to point out in what ways the

⁵ This history of the Community is highly condensed. For a more elaborate presentation, cf. Frankel (2001).

⁶ Traktat af 25. marts 1957 om oprettelse af det Europæiske økonomiske Fællesskab.

member states hindered the spontaneous emergence of the market. On this background a relatively detailed plan was made of the steps to be taken over the following 12 years in order to realise a common market. This plan, entailed in the Treaty of Rome, was anchored in calendar time, that is, in an externally given time, standardised and quantified in days, weeks and years. Thereby, precise deadlines for the removal of barriers to the market could be set. The plan should establish specific future situations and conditions. The plan was a technique to establish future present.

More specifically, the plan was to be realised by a Community, which was build by conditional programmes. A conditional programme is a 'if-then' programme, i.e. a specification of what is to happen if certain factors occur (Luhmann 1993). The programme specifies a response to a stimulus. Characterised by conditional programmes, the Community is not yet an autopoietically closed and selfreferential organisation system, but rather a hetero-referential machine, with a future existence is programmed and conditioned by rules and legal acts. As a machine it is uncertain whether the future is a horizon for the Community. The future is more likely to be described as structurally fixed events, which together give a tact for the establishing of the common market. Thereby the plan also provides a point of reference by which it can be measured whether the realisation of the common market is behind or ahead of schedule or is to be accelerated (Rådet 1960).

The plan indicates that time is external in relation to the Community. The Community does not yet create its own time. The Community is externally created, and set in an externally created time. The same goes for the ends of the Community: The realisation of the market. This end is a precondition for the Community, which it is not for the Community to discuss. The Community is, like the market, detemporalised. But where the market could be characterised by eternal momentaneousnes, we can rather characterise the formal organisation of the Community as standardised present. Standards, which describe which decisions, are to be taken when.

As a whole the plan is conditioned by these two forms of detemporalisation, and the plan is set in work by coupling these two forms with calendar time. It is in other words an a-political project, which takes place in non-strategified time. However, this

The politically organised market and the intentional Community (1962+)

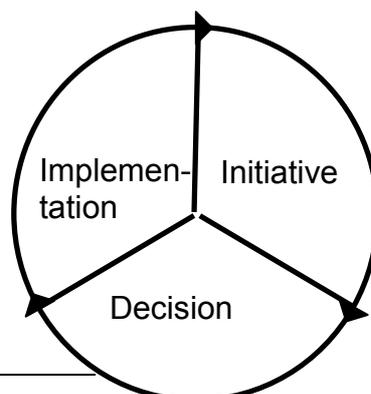
In this period the Community appears as an autopoietic organisation system; the Community becomes self-referential, and it creates its own time. This can be seen in the changes of the understanding of the market. The market is no longer a general thing, but becomes specific, also in regards to its temporality. In this understanding of the market, a market is not the same at all times. 'Markets' are observed as specific national markets of the member states. Differences between the national markets are observed as a problem, because differences hinder the free movement, and hence hinder the common market. The national markets differ due to differences between the regulations of the member states. This new understanding of markets has fundamental consequences for the Community. It alters the relation between politics and markets: Markets are no longer taken to be naturally given, but as politically constituted. And as markets are constituted by political decisions, the task of the Community turns becomes a task of organising the market. This is to say that it is not enough to remove barriers of the member states; it is also required that the Community, by taking political decisions, constitute the common market. Thereby every part of the market becomes specific – the market is specified by the decisions which organise the market.

Thereby the temporality of the market also changes. Now the market appears as a general vision – which one could call an utopia (Luhmann 1982) – about the general *free movement*. However, to realise this free movement requires several less general visions about how the market is to be constituted in one specific area. In other words, the establishing of the common market requires visions for a common environmental policy, for a common regulation of automobiles, for a common regulation of packaging, construction products etc. Hereby 'the market' becomes the common denomination of a long list of present futures. However, at the same time concrete regulation, stemming from these present futures, is to be initiated, decided upon and implemented. In order to give the common market a concrete form, several present futures are to result in planning and regulation. In the language of the Community, *harmonisation* is required, which is to say that an unknown number of harmonising directives are to be adopted in order to establish the common market.

The understanding of the market implies three times: A utopian vision about free movement (present future), several more specific present futures for a not specified list of policy areas, and finally the realisation of plans for regulation as future presents.

This change in understanding of the markets has the decisive consequence that the Community becomes intentional: It formulates ends, and selects appropriate means. The market is no longer simply one aim or end, but a several ends. As opposed to the general end 'free movement', we are now observing ends which are decided by the Community internally. The conditional programmes of the Treaty become insufficient, and to a large degree also absolved by means-ends programmes.

The linear sequentiality of the previous period is in this period absolved by a circular sequentiality. Thereby I wish to indicate that the sequences of initiative-decision-implementation result in decisions, which serve as occasion for new initiatives etc. The new understanding of market implies that the Community needs to make a vast amount of decisions which were not taken into account when the Treaty was made. These decisions requires that the Commission makes use of its monopoly of initiative, and in most cases it also requires (unanimous) adoption by the Council, and subsequent implementation. This situation opens up for new sequences of decisions, and these sequences serve as occasion for (previous) decisions to be considered and revised. Thereby the 'circle closes', and we may illustrate the decision making with the following policy-circle model:⁷



⁷ For an analysis of the EU, based on this model, cf. Højbjerg (2000).

The conditional programmes, and their giving tact to sequences of decisions, are increasingly succeeded by the pulse given to the circular sequentiality by ends-means programmes. It is the circular sequentiality which shall make the three temporalities of the market meet, make the utopian vision into more specific visions, and make these visions into future presents, which offers private companies and other actors on the market frames of action, which offers them a 'level playing field'.

Thereby it is also opened up for each policy area to create its own time. Environmental policy may produce time horizons different to that of competition policy. The Community becomes polychron. Hence the common vision gets the important function to coordinate these temporalities in one, common time horizon.

The intentionality of the Community indicates that the Community becomes an operatively closed system. In this closure, the utopian vision of the market plays a decisive role. This becomes clear in a Commission memorandum from 1962.⁸ In this memorandum it is stated, that the Treaty of Rome completely *entails the conditions of its own realisation*. Hereby the system refers to itself as its own foundation, which indicates that the communication of the system is produced according to system internal conditions. The system gains autonomy. Thereby is also said that whenever lacks are demonstrated – such as the plan for the establishing of a common market in the Treaty – then these lacks become occasion for the system to take more decisions to 'repair' the lacks; the system starts to re-interpret its own foundation.

During the 1970s, the self-reference is unfolded with more consequences. As it seemingly becomes an evermore encompassing problem to establish the common market, it is stated that the Community, under the (then) current organisation, is unable to make the appropriate amount of decisions to realise the market, and thereby unable to pursue the process which is seen as the *raison d'être* of the Community

⁸ Kommissionen 1962 KOM(62) 300: *Memorandum der Kommission zum Aktionsprogramm der Gemeinschaft für die zweite Stufe*, Bruxelles, den 24.10.1962.

(Kommissionen for de Europæiske Fællesskaber 1977). Thereby yet a step is taken, strengthening the self-reference of the Community: Revisions of the Treaty becomes a theme. Hence it is no longer the Treaty, which entails the conditions of its own realisation, but the Community which entails the conditions for the realisation of its own present future, and such a realisation may imply that the formal foundation of the Community must undergo a revision.⁹

At this stage it may already be clear that the operative closure of the Community implies that the informal organisation wins importance as compared to the formal organisation. Increasingly, the formal organisation is evaluated as observed from the informal organisation. And as suggested above, it also implies that future gains importance. However, at the same time the history of the Community also gains importance, amongst others because the decisions of the Community create a history, on which new decisions are based. The self-referentiality of the Community also implies that the Community observes its own past. It is observed how conditional programmes characterised the Community in the past, and this is observed as a decisive problem which is to be solved by setting ends and selecting means to realise these ends.

During this period the members of the Community are primarily the formal institutions – the Council, the Parliament, the Economic and Social Council etc. – with the member states primarily represented in the Council. However, the autopoietic closure of the system has the effect that the member states occur both as members in the system and as environment. As members they take part in taking decisions. As environment they are object of observation of the Community.

The boundaries of the system change character. The intentional Community sets its boundaries itself, and does so closely linked to the ends, i.e. by the horizon of the future. As the member states constitute markets, it is only natural that the member states and the institutions of the Community have decision competencies.

⁹ Such a treaty revision marks the start of the third period.

Thereby new problems appear. As a result of both markets and member states being temporal, the problem of different speeds appear (Kommissionen for de Europæiske Fællesskaber 1979). The market is faster than the Community (and political organisation more generally). The solution to this problem is acceleration. As in the first period we find acceleration. However, in the first period the measure of acceleration was a given plan which regularised the future. In this period the measure of acceleration is the temporality of the market, a temporality which by and large is unknown to politics, and which primarily is observed by the fact that politics is late.

For the Community, however, it seems difficult to catch up on the market due to the member states. They are observed as a hindrance to acceleration. In many instances, the Commission cannot find support for considering the proposals it forwards to the Council.

The market is observed in two ways compared to organisation, namely as (un-organised) environment and as (organised) system. On one hand this understanding of market implies that markets do only exist because they are constituted politically, i.e. by being created politically (hence politics and markets are necessarily contemporary). On the other hand, however, markets are always ahead and require new political decisions.

Acceleration is primarily sought to be achieved by differentiation of the organisation. One example hereof is comitology, i.e. new sequences in the decision process, which makes it possible for the Council to adopt frame-decisions and leave it to the Commission, in cooperation with the member states, to fill out these frames. Thereby the time of the organisation is differentiated in the time of the Council and the time of comitology, and thereby also differentiated in procedures with each its own time horizon and work rhythm. The various decision procedures are, however, still seen as part of one, overarching decision procedure.

Such differentiations do not solve the problem that the Community temporarily is in a tension between the member states (which are too slow) and the market (which is too fast). During the 1970s this temporal difference is observed as a fundamental

problem, as a risk for the Community to be pulled apart.¹⁰ The pulse, given to the Community by the circular sequentiality, is fundamentally challenged: It can only be too slow (in relation to the market), and it can never (in relation to politics) get as fast as required. There is seemingly an unsolvable time difference in play, which challenges the existence of the Community. On this background are Treaty revisions more regular theme. And thereby we have reached the start of the next period.

The transnationally negotiated market and the strategic community (1985+)

The beginning of this period is marked by the negotiation and ratification of a Treaty revision, namely the so-called 'Single European Act' (entered into force in 1987). One of the decisive changes in this revision was to change the decision procedure of the Community in such a way that harmonisation directives could be adopted, even when unanimity could not be reached in the Council. Previously, unanimity was the rule, and this rule was observed as an important reason for the time difference which challenged the Community.

However, the problem of the time difference is more encompassing than a view at the treaty revision makes it appear. The problem cannot be solved alone by accelerating the circular sequential decision procedure of the Community. This point is underlined by the fact that the understanding of market changes in the early 1980s. This change implies that not only rules from formally political institutions are observed as constituting markets, but also private rules. This implies that the constitution of the common market becomes yet more encompassing. Thereby the establishing of a common market is challenged in two ways. Firstly, the ongoing harmonisation of the Community only harmonises how the member states organise the market, and not how the market is organised by private political market organisation. The result hereof is that harmonisation directives alone will never suffice for the establishing of a common market because there ongoing will be private political market organisation in each member state, which will hinder the common market. Secondly, a new

¹⁰ Specifically the so-called information procedure, which was adopted in the early 1980s, reflects this problem. Cf. *Forslag til Rådets beslutning om en informationsprocedure med hensyn til tekniske standarder og forskrifter (OJ C 253 p. 2-6, udgivet den 1.10.1980)* samt *Rådets direktiv af 28. marts*

temporal difference is observed as a problem: The private political market organisation is observed at considerably faster than the political market organisation. Therefore it is impossible for the Community to make decisions in the required speed.

The lack of competencies, which the observation of private, technical barriers to trade imposes on the system, has the result that the boundary of the system is observed as a problem. The solution to this problem is that the boundary of the system is redrawn in such a way that the system becomes much more encompassing. Such a redrawing takes place with the so-called *new approach to technical harmonisation and standards*¹¹. This approach entails cooperation with both national and European technical standards organisations. These organisations are given the task to adopt technical standards, which make the legal acts of the Community more concrete. Thereby the Community decrease the number of legal acts, required to realise the internal market. The so-called ‘new approach directives’ are framework directives, which require that the ends, formulated in the directive, are made concrete by European Technical standards. The new approach does, in other words, turn the observed lack into a strategic advantage. The Community internalises decision making procedures with a temporality, different from what it already had. The Community becomes increasingly polychronic.

The strategic Community is an answer to the problem of lacking competencies. The external boundary is redrawn, with the result that technical standardisation organisations become member. Parallel to this ‘enlargement’ also the form of rationality of the Community is changed. Besides conditional programmes and means-end programmes, the Community now also encompasses strategy programmes. Strategy programmes do not primarily focus on means and end, but on problems, and how these problems can be solved. Thereby it becomes possible to compare means-end relations. Various and different means and ends may be used to solve the same problem. In other words: The strategy programmes are reflexive programmes, able to observe the equivalence of means-end relations. This reflexivity also indicates a

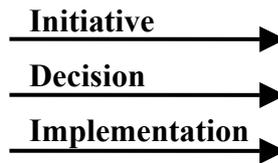
1983 om en informationsprocedure med hensyn til tekniske standarder og forskrifter (OJ L 109/8, offentliggjort den 26.4.1983)

higher degree of autonomy of the system: The system can reflect upon how its boundary to the environment is established. However, the strategic Community is not only characterised by a larger number of members, but also by a less obvious and more fluctuating membership. The external boundary cannot be established once and for all, but becomes an ongoing problem. It is not given naturally or formally who is a member and who is not. It is e.g. noted that ‘standardisation is an advantage for all of us, and the public authorities have by using it to such a large extent made the economic actors responsible for their own destiny’ (own translation of Nicolas & Repussard 1995). The system becomes a community of destiny; the common destiny and responsibility for the establishing of the market is decisive for the drawing of the system boundary.

Hereby present future becomes decisive for the system boundary: It is the future market which is the turning point when the question of membership or exclusion of the Community is raised.

The decision making becomes simultaneous sequential: There are more, parallel decision processes. The new approach seems at a first glance to be sequential: First we have the initiative to make a legal act, then the legal act is adopted, and subsequently it is to be concretised by technical standards. Such a sequentiality is, of course, by no means impossible. However, it is not necessary. The decision making is now characterised by more decision making forums, which take own initiatives, make own decisions and own implementation. There are many examples of technical standards being decided and implemented, which concretise a directive, while the directive is still about to be adopted. The multiplication of decision forums has as a consequence that the establishing of the market can take place simultaneous and sequential and the same time. Thereby it becomes impossible to say in what arrangement initiative, decision and implementation will take place. Simultaneous sequentiality implies that frames, and that which is to fill out the frames, may be decided upon at the same time. This may be illustrated as follows.

¹¹ Rådet. 1985. “Resolution af 7. maj 1985 om en ny metode i forbindelse med teknisk harmonisering og standarder (85/C 136/01).” *EF-Tidende*. The new approach is discussed and elaborated by the Commission in several documents (1990; 1994; 2000a; 2000b).



Simultaneous sequentiality implies that both structure and process are challenged as means to ensure coordination. Simultaneity implies that the frame does not necessarily constitute a frame, because decisions taken at the same time cannot constitute a frame for one another. Furthermore, the simultaneity implies that it is not necessarily a process, because a process requires decisions which follow specific, subsequent decisions. Neither do we have a situation in which a common end coordinates the decisions. We rather find a situation in which there are conditions for – simultaneous and sequential – struggles about what ends to pursue with what means. In a temporal perspective this implies that the polychrony of the Community becomes radicalised. As opposed to the polychrony of we found in the previous period, it is in this period questionable whether there at all is any common vision for the various temporalities of the Community. Each sequence constitutes a time of its own.

What is then left to constitute the unity of the organisation? Maybe nothing. However, the above mentioned community of destiny does most likely play a crucial role. The various parts of the establishing of the market relate to a common future, and this future is decisive for the establishing of the market. Visions of the future become a crucial form of coordination, both as present future and as future future. It seems to be important to shape visions about how actors at the market in the future are to take responsibilities for the market. Examples hereof is the green paper on corporate social responsibility and the white paper on 'Governance in the European Union'.¹² Present future and future future has become crucial battlefields in drawing the Community. Thereby the founding treaties have become just one among more instruments in the battle about the future, notably because also the treaties are interpreted in the light of the future.¹³

¹² Cf. KOM(2001) 366 and KOM(2001) 428 respectively.

¹³ A well-known example hereof is the crucial role of teleological interpretation in EC law.

Conclusion

The article has demonstrated how Luhmann's theory of organisation, based in discontinuity, opens up for analyses of the temporality of organisations. This raises some theoretical questions, empirical points and analytical challenges.

Theoretically we may note that the 'now' never becomes accessible for system theoretical observations, and that this is not the ambition of the theory. If the 'now' is to be grasped, it is more appropriate to refer to e.g. radical phenomenology.¹⁴ For systems theory the now can only be an object of theoretical decisions. This has been demonstrated with Luhmann's theory of organisation, which defines organisations operations as decision operations. Thereby a theoretical question is opened, namely of how the problem of temporality can be characterised specifically in relation to decisions (as opposed to other forms of operations, e.g. payments or rulings).

Empirically the analysis has opened up for insights, which demonstrate how time can be decisive for organisations. The strategification of time implies that time has become a battlefield today. In a time where the enlargement of the EU is a central, political issue, it is important to stress, that the membership of the EU not primarily is a formal questions, but first and foremost a question of becoming a part of the common future and take responsibility for the realisation of the visions of the EU. Such ongoing 'accession negotiations' do not only take place between the EU and candidate countries, but at many levels and in many forums and in relation to many actors.

Seen in relation to the Danish debate on the EU, the analysis highlights a crucial distance to the obsession with evaluating EU in its present form. Seen from the perspective of the Community, the most important question is not how the EU may be evaluated in terms of democracy, competitiveness or legality with focus on its *present past*. For the Community, neither the past nor the present is the major source of legitimacy, but rather the future. In regards to the debate in Denmark this implies that if the debate primarily focuses on the past and the present, influence is lost on the

¹⁴ Cf. e.g Kirkeby/Fuglsang (2002).

important issues in the Community (and the EU more generally), which are decided and coordinated through visions.

In the same line of thought it becomes a crucial question decisions are coordinated. How to coordinate simultaneous sequentiality? Simultaneous sequentiality is one of the strengths of organisations. This goes for the restaurant, which simultaneously washes and peels potatoes, for the conveyor belt and for almost any other industrial production. However, the analysis of the Community stresses how this problem is radicalised to the improbable in Luhmann's theory of organisation. This is so because the focus is on communication as the temporal atom of the theory. Thereby one gain of the theory is exactly to demonstrate the improbability of things, we otherwise take for granted. This is furthermore stressed in the analysis by the political challenges raised by simultaneous sequentiality. Simultaneous sequentiality challenges fundamentally the procedural order of decision making in the Community. At the same time the analysis highlights that present future and future future gets a more important function in regards to coordinating the simultaneity of sequential decisions.

Analytically a host of questions can be raised on the background of this article. With the words of Goethe, one may note that temporal analysis 'is easy, however, that which is easy is difficult'. It is a challenge to create a language fit to describe the temporality of organisations. More specifically a host of exciting analytical challenges are raised for the temporal gaze, such as how power emerges for a temporal gaze. The power literature has e.g. focused on 'structural power' (e.g. Christensen/Jensen 2001), i.e. power which is invisible because it takes the form of 'taken for granted' structures. Compared hereto, 'process' is the category for open, not restrained possibilities. However, the temporal analysis may highlight the importance of 'process power'. When something is designated as a process, it becomes irreversible. Whereas structures are reversible – they can be changed and re-established – processes are irreversible. To designate something as a process is also to note that it cannot be turned back. This is a description common in regards to the EU. As opposed to this, the temporal gaze may open for new possibilities by pointing at the reversibility of structure.

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