Niklas Luhmann's Concept of Trust - Trust and its Connections to Norms, Strangers and Care

The overall theme of this work is the explication of Niklas Luhmann's concept of trust and its connections to norms, strangers and care. The luhmannian perspective of trust is discussed from three different viewpoints. First, I study Luhmann's concepts of familiarity, confidence and trust in the context of his systems theory. I present an overview of the functions and meanings of social systems and examine what type of role the theory of trust has in Luhmann's larger system's theoretical thinking. Second, I examine the connections between Luhmann's theory of trust and the traditional theories of trust. I compare his theory of trust to two of his most important influences, Talcott Parsons and Georg Simmel. Third, I extend the discussion of trust to the areas - which Luhmann himself does not handle - of strangers, terrorists and the system of care. By doing this, I expand the limits of luhmannian trust and concretise its usefulness of today's sociological problems. The content of this work can be introduced as follows:

First, I will introduce the basic concepts of Luhmann's systems theory: autopoiesis, meaning, communication, evolution and differentiation. Second, I show why trust in particular is of central concern in contemporary social theory and in today's society, and examine the connections between Luhmann's theory of trust and his autopoietic systems theory. The connections between Luhmann's theory of trust and that of Parsons will also be addressed. Third, I specify the concepts of terrorism, stranger and trust in the global age. I study especially the connections between Simmel's and Luhmann's theories of trust as well as show how the growing number of meetings with strangers are affecting today's trust relationships. Last, I examine the concept of care, especially caring for the elderly, from the perspective of Luhmann's systems theory. I consider care as a functional subsystem of society which has gradually been developed over the years in the modern welfare state and outline also Luhmann's organisation theory and specify elements of contemporary care organisations as well as address the connections between Luhmann's theory of trust and the systems-theoretical model of care.

Keywords: trust - confidence - familiarity
systems theory - communication - meaning
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Additional Information

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