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## ***Occupation from the perspective of Niklas Luhmann- A deconstruction of occupational performance***

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### *Introduction*

For occupational therapy to further develop as a serious research discipline. But also as praxis that places occupation as the means and goal of intervention there is an urgent need for theory development that captures the full complexity of Occupational Performance as a process by which the individual connects with the environment. In the process of theory development a vital step is to challenge fundamental beliefs within OT literature.

### *Objectives*

The aim of this presentation is to discuss the implications of systems theory from the perspective of Niklas Luhmann.

### *Description/Report*

Systems theory has been identified by others as relevant for model and concept development linked to occupational therapy. The theory of Luhmann was applied to present a different perspective on models addressing Occupational Performance.

### *Results/Discussion*

The application of Luhmann had the following consequences:

- 1. We have to abandon the classic three dimensional understanding of occupational performance as a process penetrating person, occupation and environment as it is presented in the CMOP-E, PEO, PEOP and Action Theory. Changes only occur within the system if the system allows that change. Change happens through the elements the system has created itself, i.e. in the person and not through elements imposed by the environment.
- 2. Meaning of occupation or objects is not shared by social groups or cultures. Meaning resides within the person as a subjective experience. It is not outside and linking the gap between person and social environment.

### *Conclusion*

The consequences of applying Luhmann raises some important considerations as to how OT's perceive the uniqueness of each individual and how meaning related to occupation can become focus of research. For example, the therapeutic benefit of occupation is more unpredictable and not necessary positive as described in much literature. As such occupation can be counterproductive in therapy.