Probably most of us agree in that unemployment, demographic aging or uncontrolled immigration are major problems of society. One takes for granted that these problems could be regulated and the usual candidate to do this normally is politics. From a Luhmannian view, however, this seems astonishing: Why is it the political system standing in the focus of attention and not for example the economics or science? In this paper we talk about regulation, but are not interested in how to improve current regulation programs or to develop new ones. Instead, we ask how both the need and the social interest for regulation can be explained sociologically.

In our opinion this is a matter of societal self-descriptions. Common self-descriptions define society as a morally integrated collectivity of people. Underlying is then a political term of society which is inappropriate for sociological analyses. Following systems theory, society is nothing more than the differentiated unity of their coequal sub-systems. It does not have any central instance for inter-systemic coordination. Within functionally differentiated society, the political system can therefore neither be an integrative centre nor some kind of top of the society. But due to its function to represent the whole, the political system is forced to compensate the lack of structural regulation \textit{semantically}. Thereby the utopia of an integrated and regulated political society (pushing politics into the centre) is reproduced. The circle is closed again. One could bring it to the paradox formula: Regulation is the political answer to the society’s structural lack of regulation.

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