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Record Nr.	UNINA9910463109103321
Autore	Luhmann Niklas <1927-1998.>
Titolo	Theory of society [[electronic resource]] . Volume 2 / / Niklas Luhmann ; translated by Rhodes Barrett
Pubbl/distr/stampa	Stanford, Calif., : Stanford University Press, c2013
ISBN	0-8047-8727-1
Descrizione fisica	viii, 453 p
Collana	Cultural memory in the present Theory of society ; ; v. 2
Altri autori (Persone)	BarrettRhodes
Disciplina	301
Soggetti	Sociology Social systems Communication Electronic books.
Lingua di pubblicazione	Inglese
Formato	Materiale a stampa
Livello bibliografico	Monografia
Note generali	"Originally published in German under the title Die Gesellschaft der Gesellschaft."
Nota di bibliografia	Includes bibliographical references and indexes.
Nota di contenuto	Front matter -- Contents -- 4. Differentiation -- 5. Self-Descriptions -- Notes -- Notes -- Index to Volume 1
Sommario/riassunto	This second volume of Niklas Luhmann's two-part final work was first published in German in 1997. The culmination of his thirty-year theoretical project to reconceptualize sociology, it offers a comprehensive description of modern society. Beginning with an account of the fluidity of meaning and the accordingly high improbability of successful communication, Luhmann analyzes a range of communicative media, including language, writing, the printing press, and electronic media, as well as "success media," such as money, power, truth, and love, all of which structure this fluidity and make communication possible. The book asks what gives rise to functionally differentiated social systems, how they evolve, and how social movements, organizations, and patterns of interaction emerge. The advent of the computer and its networks, which triggered potentially far-reaching processes of restructuring, receives particular attention. A concluding chapter on the semantics of modern society's self-description bids farewell to the outdated theoretical approaches of "old

Europe"—that is, to ontological, holistic, ethical, and critical interpretations of society—and argues that concepts such as "the nation," "the subject," and "postmodernity" are vastly overrated. In their stead, "society"—long considered a suspicious term by sociologists, one open to all kinds of reification—is defined in purely operational terms. It is the always uncertain answer to the question of what comes next in all areas of communication.