



Concept of the International Systemic Research Conference (ISR 2017)

University of Heidelberg, March 8th-11th, 2017

What do we mean by “Systemic Research” in the context of this conference?

Systems theory and Systemic Research try to understand the behavior of elements by studying their relationship patterns within and between the systems they are a part of. This conference focusses on **human systems only** – on communication patterns between persons and organizations (*social systems*), thoughts and feelings within a person (*psychological systems*) neuronal, endocrinological and immunological processes within that person (*biological systems*), and on *interactional processes between these systems levels*.

This conference focusses on **research that has relevance for human systems practitioners like psychotherapists, health professionals, teachers, social workers, organizational consultants, social activists**. Therefore, the focus is on *stabilization and change* (systems dynamics), and on process and outcome of *interventions* (systemic interventions).

Such research is **methodologically challenging**. It expects human systems to be *complex*, full of *emerging properties*, functioning by *circular and dynamic instead of linear and static cause-effect-modes*. And it **epistemologically reflects** how the researchers' own assumptions *co-construct their research designs and their results*. **Systemic research requires intensive dialogue** – between researchers, between researchers and practitioners, between researchers and clients. Systemic research tries to establish *collaborative, non-hierarchical working relationships*.

The conference is **open to a wide range of research methods**. *Qualitative, quantitative, mixed methods and theoretical contributions* are equally welcome. Contributions may range from *single-case to large cohort-studies, experimental to field studies, social interventions to laboratory experiments*.

Tradition and scope of the conference

The conference builds on a series of previous German language (1998, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012) and European Conferences (2014) and extends their scope to an international level. It is organized by the Institute of Medical Psychology of Heidelberg University, and supported by professional associations for systemic intervention, research and training.

As of now, **supporters** include the American Family Therapy Association (AFTA); Chinese Mental Health Association, Systemic Therapy Branch; European Family Therapy Association (EFTA), German Association for Systemic Therapy, Counselling and Family Therapy (DGSF), Helm Stierlin Institute (HSI), Systemic Society (SG).



Heidelberg University Hospital

International Systemic Research Conference Linking Systemic Research and Practice

We strive to **bring together at this conference** senior and junior researchers (including university students) with research interested practitioners from psychotherapy, social work, teaching and training, organizational and management consulting and with some politicians and administrators interested in reflexive practices

How will the conference be organized?

All **responsibility** for structure, organization, program and finances of the conference lies with the institute of Medical Psychology, represented in this conference by Prof. Jochen Schweitzer and supported by Prof. Matthias Ochs. Our **cooperating partners** are asked to contribute their ideas and communication pathways to find the best topics, speakers, and event designs for panels and debates, seminars and research methodology workshops and to attract their members to the conference. We like to offer all contributors the following **event formats**:

- (1) Invited *plenary talks*
- (2) Panel and debates of 90 minutes to discuss controversial issues between two or three presenters and their audience
- (3) *Seminars* where two or three speakers present their own research for discussion
- (4) *Research Methodology Workshops: in which* one experienced researcher or research group offers a concentrated 60 minutes training on their research methodology
- (5) One big and prominent Poster Session of 60 minutes
- (6) Events, happenings, drama events related to conference topics
- (7) "What I would like to say at the end of this day" - Reflections on the conference day for those who like to join, 30 minutes at the end of each day
- (8) Welcoming reception, Heidelberg night walk, Friday night conference party

Justice in Participation Fees (for details, see the registration form)

In view of increasing disparities of the distribution of wealth within and between countries, **conference fees will strongly vary by country and professional status, to enable participation of colleagues from low income countries and university students.** Fees differentiate between high-, middle- and low-income countries, following OECD statistics of per capita incomes. There are reductions for university students, currently unemployed colleagues and members of supporting associations. We are **very grateful that all key note speakers have agreed to come without a honorarium**, to make this possible.

Early Registration pays (for details, see the registration form)

To make our planning process safe and uncomplicated, early registration is very helpful for us. It is also rewarded by quite low fees for early registrants that become higher as the conference approaches