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From Luhmannian Thought to Management Tools: Social Systems Theory Makes a Difference in Practice



Join our joint webinar between the Centre for Systems Studies and the Operational Research Society's Systems Thinking

Special Interest Group (SIG).

Niklas Luhmann's social systems theory is often treated as a highly abstract body of thought, rich in conceptual precision but remote from organisational practice. This

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Registration is closed.

talk challenges that assumption. It argues that Luhmannian thought can make a distinctive practical contribution precisely because it does not begin with individuals, intentions, or values, but with communication, decisions, distinctions, and systems of observation.

The talk shows how concepts such as decision premises, programmes, functional differentiation, paradox, and multifunctional tetralemma can be translated into tools for organisational diagnosis, consulting, and strategic reflection. These tools do not offer another recipe for “better management”. Instead, they help practitioners observe organisations differently: as decision systems that translate between incompatible economic, political, legal, scientific, educational, and moral expectations.

The talk also introduces the Wolfson Tool Factory, an experimental initiative supported by Wolfson College Research Networks, which brings together social systems theorists and consultants to co-produce theory-based, market-ready management and consulting tools.

Speaker - Steffen Roth FRSA FCybS



Steffen is a Full Professor of Management at Excelia Business School, La Rochelle, France, as well as a Visiting Fellow of Wolfson College, University of Cambridge.

He is also a Visiting Professor of Management and Organization at the University of Witten-Herdecke, Germany, and holds the title of Full Professor of Social Sciences at Kazimieras Simonavicius University, Vilnius, Lithuania, where he is the Founding Director of the Next Society Institute. Currently, Steffen serves as an Editor-in-Chief of Kybernetes as well as an Associate Editor of Systems Research and Behavioural Science and the

Journal of Organisational Change Management.

The journals his research has been published in include Organisation Studies, Journal of Business Ethics, Sociology of Health & Illness, Organisation & Environment, Journal of Business Research, Ecological Economics, Technological Forecasting and Social Change, European Journal of the History of Economic Thought, European Management Journal, and Futures. Further details about his academic contributions can be found on his ORCID profile: orcid.org/0000-0002-8502-601X

When

02/06/2026 10:00 - 12:00

GMT Daylight Time

Where

The Business School
University of Hull
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