



**VIU**  
summer  
SCHOOL  
**organizing**  
**FOR SUSTAINABLE**  
**FUTURES: micro**  
**and macro-**  
**INSTITUTIONAL**  
**CONDITIONS**  
**OF TRANSFORMATION**

**Organizing for Sustainable Futures:  
Micro and Macro-institutional Conditions  
of Transformation**

**June 16-20, 2025**

**Venice International University  
Isola di San Servolo, Venice**

# VIU Summer School

## Organizing for Sustainable Futures: Micro and Macro-institutional Conditions of Transformation

Venice International University

June 16-20, 2025

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In its 9th edition, the summer school aims at the development of ideas that promote a more sustainable future by bringing together early career scholars from all over the world to discuss their ideas on the Grand Transition of our society from the micro level of individual decision making to the organizational and the societal level. This year the summer school has been jointly co-organized with the Horizon Europe-UKRI "REBALANCE" project on the relationship between capitalism and democracy. The school gives early career scholars the opportunity to test their ideas with eminent scholars in management theory and to present their own work. Participants will become familiar with recent research from a broad set of disciplines. They will work on their ability to engage in the transdisciplinary discourse which is required for the development of innovative answers to the grand challenges of sustainability, equality and democracy. In collaboration with the REBALANCE project, participants may also learn from leading scholars the ways in which business can undermine democratic principles, processes and values, or contribute to them through new business models.

### Who is it for?

The Summer School is addressed to mainly PhD students and early career post-doc scholars in management, economics and finance, political science, philosophy, psychology and sociology. Moreover, high level policy makers and high level officials in public and private institutions will be admitted if their background is adequate.

### Faculty

Giovanni Favero, Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
Elisa Giuliani, Università di Pisa  
Anette Mikes, University of Oxford  
Guido Palazzo, University of Lausanne  
Juliane Reinecke, University of Oxford  
Francesco Rullani, Ca' Foscari University of Venice  
Ruth Sealy, University of Exeter  
Christine Vallaster, University of Salzburg  
Francesco Zirpoli, Ca' Foscari University of Venice

### Indicative Topics

#### Storytelling and Societal Change (G. Palazzo)

This session will discuss the impact on language, discourse and storytelling on human behaviour. How does the way we make sense of the world influence ethical and unethical decisions and how can we use the insights on the narrativity of human existence as a leverage for societal change?

**Doing Responsible Leadership Research Responsibly (R. Sealy) |** Responsible leadership (RL) research can be defined as moving away from individualistic or purely economic approaches, to consider organisational decision-making that reflects “all constituents and thus the common good in mind too.” Responsible leaders are expected to engage with environmental, social and governance (ESG) challenges within and outside of their organisations. Using leadership diversity research as a case, we will consider whether current academic approaches might hamper our understanding and thus our ability to improve the world. Looking forward we will consider our responsibility as academics and how RL research can address deficiencies in current leadership theories and frameworks.

**Management in the age of climate crisis: capitalism, “optopia” and the politics of hope (A. Mikes)**

In this session, our goals are to build a provocation and develop some propositions about the direction of capitalism and the purpose of management research in an age of climate crisis. Against the backdrop of dread and greed and the spectre of plutocratic capitalism, we offer a politics of hope. We envision a green capitalism in which corporations are held accountable for environmental and social stewardship. Rather than falling back on government or the corporation as an “either/or” choice, we urge a “both/and” approach and call for the active inclusion of communities and citizens in climate response through democratic, polycentric governance structures. Within this agenda, we envision a new role for the academy as “Ministry”; namely, giving voice to future generations and the silent (or silenced) victims of the present and, by embracing pragmatic realism, inspiring a liveable future—an optopia—that we can still forge from where we are.

**For the good and for the bad: individual and organizational perspectives on networks with hybrid purposes (F. Rullani) |** In this session we will focus on hybrid organizations, i.e., organizations striving to realize a positive social impact while generating economic gains at the same time, using the case of social cooperatives to show how networks of hybrid organizations may “lose sight” of their social goals in favor of the economic ones, and how they may gain them back by interacting within their network. The aim

is to capture the micro-level mechanisms allowing “bad seeds” to flourish within a field characterized by “good deeds”.

**International business and human rights (E. Giuliani) |** This session will discuss the link between business and human rights. Up to 10 years ago, the word “human rights” was rarely associated with “business”, while now human rights are becoming a core concept in the business & sustainability scholarship and practice. This lecture provides an overview of the theoretical lenses through which the business and human rights phenomenon can be understood and predicted. We will review theories applied in the past to explain criminal or corrupt behaviour at the organizational level and discuss the complex predictability scenarios of business-related human rights harm.

**Transforming into a circular economy: Hybridity of organizations and related challenges to overcome (C. Vallaster) |** Linear economic thinking is reaching its limits: climate crisis, scarcity of resources or loss of biodiversity. Searching for new ways of doing business that fosters a transformation towards a circular economy comes with a wide array of managerial challenges. New forms of so-called hybrid organisations are emerging at the intersection of business, charity and politics emerge, which all have to manage the blending of identities. This presentation addresses the major question as to what kind of conflicts occur due to the hybrid nature of organizations and how to overcome them in the context of circularity, specifically when it comes to forming new B2B relations.

**Taming Wicked Problems? Understanding the Evolution of Transnational Governance and Social Movements Dynamics (J. Reinecke) |** This session will critically examine the role of private power in developing transnational governance solutions to wicked problems, defined as the large scale social challenges caught in causal webs of interlinking variables spanning national boundaries that complicate both their diagnosis and prognosis, such as poverty, inequality, climate change, deforestation or conflict in global supply chains.

**Irresponsible decision making in the network firm (F. Zirpoli) |** This session will give particular attention to the implication of the fact that decision makers are often “multiply embedded” in organizations, in places, in informal social

networks, in more formal associations, and so on. Interdependent decisions and actions of multiple agents acting in a distributed environment are profoundly altering both decision-making and the strategy implementation processes in ways that demand some rethinking of the governance and management conceptual toolkit.

### **Itinerant Workshop through Venice (G. Favero)**

Walking through the city, we will discuss how Venice became Venice during the 20th century.

### **“REBALANCE” Business and Democracy closing Symposium**

Five lectures will address critical intersections of business, human rights, and legal accountability.

**Flaviano Bianchini** from Source International will present "Business and Human Rights in Practice: A Case Study", offering a grounded perspective on how businesses impact human rights and illustrating practical approaches to addressing these challenges. In a second lecture, **Nadia Bernaz** from Wageningen University and **Olena Uvarova** from Yaroslav Mudryi National Law University in Kharkiv will discuss "Corporate Actors and the Rule of Law," exploring the role of corporate entities within legal frameworks and the implications for upholding human rights. **John Murray** from **Lund University** will discuss "Internal Business and Climate Policy" with a focus on the emergence of innovative regulatory initiatives to shape business conduct across borders. **Kostas Latridis** from the **University of Bath** will discuss "How populism impacts sustainable business", exploring how today's divisive political climate driven by nationalist populist narratives, poses significant challenges to corporate sustainability efforts. **Ignas Bruder** from **Technische Universität Dresden & Hertie School** will discuss "Democratic Organizing in Alternative Organizations: Principles, Practices and Reverberations," inquiring into how democracy unfolds at the organizational level and what reverberations this creates beyond organizational boundaries. These lectures aim to deepen understanding of corporate responsibilities and the practical steps to reinforce human rights protections in diverse contexts.



### **Methodology**

During the Summer School, participants will present and discuss their own research projects in working groups to the professors and their fellow participants and will receive valuable feedback.

### **Credits**

Number of **ECTS credits** allocated: **2**

A Certificate of attendance will be issued at the end of the course.

### **Application procedure**

The Program will admit **15** student participants.

### **Applications**

**December 2, 2024– February 20, 2025**  
via the **VIU website**

Applicants must submit the application form, a letter of motivation which should include a research statement (max. 1500 words), a curriculum vitae, a photo, and a short video presentation (2-3 minutes).

Students will be notified of their application status shortly after the application deadline and, if selected, asked to pay the tuition fee and accommodation fee (if requested) within ten days.

### **Fees**

Students of VIU member universities: **€ 250** incl. VAT.

Students of other universities: **€ 500** incl. VAT.  
VIU Alumni are eligible for a reduced fee.

The fee will cover tuition, teaching materials, lunches in the VIU cafeteria and social events. Student participants will be responsible for covering their own travel expenses to and from Venice, local transportation and accommodation.

PhD Students in EU universities may be eligible for Erasmus+ funding. Refer to international offices in home universities or contact VIU Erasmus office: [erasmus@univiu.org](mailto:erasmus@univiu.org).

### **Accommodation costs on campus**

The costs of accommodation on campus in shared room with other participants (triple or quadruple) is **€ 308** for 6 nights (breakfast included).

**Venice International University** is a consortium of 23 institutions from all over the world. The VIU campus is on the island of San Servolo in Venice.

