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Venice International University Summer School

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

June 16-20, 2025

Program

Faculty

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

[Format of students' presentation and discussion of research project \(Days 1-4, 11:30-13:00\)](#)

10-minute presentation with power point and 10-minutes of feedback/discussion (20 minutes per student).

Sunday, June 15

18:20-20:00 Welcome Cocktail

Please note, session topics are indicative and may be subject to change

Day 1 | Monday, June 16

9:30-11:00 **Guido Palazzo**, HEC Lausanne

Storytelling and societal change

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?

Break

11:30-13:00 **Student Presentations** and discussion of research projects
(all available faculty)

13:00-14:30 *Lunch Break*

14:30-16:00 **Ruth Sealy**, University of Exeter Business School

Doing Responsible Leadership Research Responsibly

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.” (Maak & Pless, 2022: 2). Responsible leaders are expected to engage with environmental, social and governance (ESG) challenges within and outside of their organisations. Researching gender inequalities in leadership (UNSDG 5.5) has gathered momentum in the past decade, yet creating inclusive and diverse leadership teams is a challenge many potentially responsible leaders struggle to understand why and how to achieve. 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; for example, by our limiting assumptions about firms’ shareholder primacy motivations; about diversity essentialism; and by using reductive research designs.

Looking forward we will consider our responsibility as academics and how RL research can address deficiencies in current leadership theories and frameworks, insisting not only on rigour but relevance for responsible leaders transforming business in society.

16:30-17:30 **One-to-one talk to professors** (optional)

Day 2 | Tuesday, June 17

9:30-11:00 **Francesco Zirpoli**, Venice School of Management, Ca’ Foscari University

Irresponsible decision making in the network firm

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. Sociological and organization theories, including theories of organizational politics, social movements, relational embedding and cognitive framing will be presented, discussed and applied to understand the conditions under which global firms and the network of their collaborators confront with environmental, social and governance decisions.

Break

11:30-13:00 **Student Presentations** and discussion of research projects
(all available faculty)

13:00-14:30 *Lunch Break*

14:30-16:00 **Anette Mikes**, University of Oxford

Management in the age of climate crisis: capitalism, “optopia” and the politics of hope

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



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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.



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Break

16:15-17:15 **One-to-one talk to professors** (optional)

17:30 **Giovanni Favero**, Venice School of Management, Ca' Foscari University

Itinerant workshop

Walking through the city, we will discuss how Venice became Venice during the 20th century. The focus will be on the macro and micro conditions of the modern transformation in the perception of the historical urban centre into “a city like no other” to be preserved as it is. The tour will start from the San Giobbe Economics campus of Ca' Foscari University, formerly a slaughterhouse, and will end at Zattere with the view of an example of industrial architecture: the Stucky Mills. We will visit the Frari Church and the burial of Giuseppe Volpi, the founder of Porto Marghera. Together with a final glimpse to the last surviving squero building gondolas at San Trovaso, this provides a telling image of the complex relationship with tradition of modern Venice.

19:30 *Social dinner*

Day 3 | Wednesday, June 18

9:30-11:00 Juliane Reinecke, University of Oxford

Taming Wicked Problems? Understanding the Evolution of Transnational Governance and Social Movement Dynamics

This session will critically examine the role of private power in developing transnational governance solutions to wicked problems. Wicked problems are 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. To do so, we will focus on the political dynamics of how governance initiatives emerge and evolve out of conflicts between social movement actors and corporations. How do these dynamics shape definitions of who is responsible and what is sustainable or valuable? Given the multiplicity of private regulatory regimes, does the competition of social movement-led and industry-led initiatives lead to a race to the bottom or race to the top? Finally, we will discuss the implications of these types of governance dynamics to tame wicked problem.

Break

11:30-13:00 **Student Presentations** and discussion of research projects
(all available faculty)

13:00-14:30 *Lunch Break*

14:30-16:00 **Christine Vallaster**, University of Salzburg

Transforming into a circular economy: Hybridity of organizations and related challenges to overcome

Linear economic thinking (“throwaway economy”), which follows an expansive economic model and is geared towards limitless growth, is reaching its limits: climate crisis, scarcity of

resources or loss of biodiversity are just examples of the challenges that the society has to overcome. The circular economy (compared to the linear economic model) is a model of production and consumption in which existing materials and products are used as sparingly as possible, i.e. shared, leased, reused and recycled for as long as possible. 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, forms or logics that at first glance do not fit together: for example, conflict is bound to occur in the combination of pursuing for-profit and social-ecological objectives. 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.

Break

16:30-17:30 **One-to-one talk to professors** (optional)

Day 4 | Thursday, June 19

9:30-11:00 **Francesco Rullani**, Venice School of Management, Ca' Foscari University

For the good and for the bad: individual and organizational perspectives on networks with hybrid purposes

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.

Break

11:30-13:00 **Student Presentations** and discussion of research projects
(all available faculty)

13:00-14:30 Lunch Break

14:30-16:00 **Elisa Giuliani**, University of Pisa

International business and human rights

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. We will use 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. We will also zoom-in to the individual level and see how a hidden Mafia-like association operated to configure the cooperative network pro domo sua. In doing this, our aim is to capture the micro-level mechanisms allowing “bad seeds” to flourish within a field characterized by “good deeds”.

More in detail, the first point is analyzed conceiving the network of Italian cooperatives as an ‘institutional field’ hit by a ‘stigmatizing event’ that exposed their progressive departure from social goals in favor of economic goals. We analyze how cooperatives operated as a whole and as individual organizations to restore the centrality of social impact via a process of joint re-conceptualization and re-operationalization of their

original values. The second point looks at how hidden criminal actors operating among cooperatives maneuvered their network ties to fight against the network configuration established by the new Mayor of the city of Rome, highlighting those structures that were put in place during the battle, and assessing their effectiveness.

Break

16:30-17:30 **One-to-one talk to professors** (optional)



Day 5 | Friday, June 20

“REBALANCE” Business and Democracy closing Symposium

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

9:30 **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.
(with morning break)

13:00-14:30 Lunch Break

14:30 **Kostas Iatridis** 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.
(with afternoon break)

17:00 End of the day

The Summer School is part of the activities of the REBALANCE project (GA 101061342).

Faculty short bios



Giovanni Favero is Professor in Economic history at the Venice School of Management of the Ca' Foscari University of Venice. He is delegate of the President for research in economics. His research interests focus on the historical construction and use of quantitative economic and social data in corporate and urban governance, the long-term dynamics of innovation in organisations and society and the contribution of historical methods to social sciences. He recently published in the journals *Enterprise and Society*, *Business History*, *Accounting History*, *Journal of Transport History*, *Journal of Organizational Ethnography*. Publications and a complete cv on www.unive.it/persone/gfavero.



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Anette Mikes is an Associate Professor of Accounting at Oxford Saïd and a Fellow at Hertford College. She is recognised as a Thought Leader by Harvard Business Publishing and has been awarded an honorary Fellowship at the Stockholm School of Economics' Mistra Center for Sustainable Markets. Anette was the 2017 laureate of the ACA Prize of the University of St-Gallen for her contributions to the field of risk management and financial governance. Between 2014-2019, she was a professor at HEC Lausanne, and beforehand, she was an Assistant Professor at Harvard Business School. Anette completed her PhD at the London School of Economics. She holds an honorary doctorate from the University of Uppsala.



Elisa Giuliani is Professor of Management at the Department of Economics and Management of the University of Pisa, where she is also founder and director of the Responsible Management Research Center. She is also Affiliate Professor at the Institute of Economics of the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna in Pisa. She is among the coordinators of the Italian national doctoral programme in Sustainable Development and Climate Change. Elisa holds a PhD in business administration from the University of Pisa (2002) and a PhD in science and technology policy from SPRU, Sussex University, UK (2005). Elisa is interested in understanding how companies contribute to or hamper societal wellbeing. She is the Coordinator of the Horizon Europe REBALANCE project "Rebalancing disruptive Business of multinAtional corporation and global value chAins within democratic and iNclusive citizenship processes" funded within the framework of the call "Protecting and nurturing democracies" for the period 2022-2025.



Guido Palazzo is Professor of Business Ethics at HEC, University of Lausanne. His research deals with corporate responsibility in global supply chains, the mechanisms of (un)ethical decision making in organizations, storytelling and the fight against organized crime. His work has been published in journals such as *Academy of Management Review*, *Academy of Management Journal*, *Journal of Management Studies*, *Business Ethics Quarterly* and *Journal of Business Ethics*. He advised numerous corporations in Europe, Asia and the USA on ethics and compliance.



Juliane Reinecke is Professor of Management Studies, Saïd Business School, University of Oxford. Previously, she was Professor of International Management & Sustainability at King's Business School, and prior to that was a Professor at Warwick Business School. Juliane is a Fellow at the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership and Research Fellow at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge, from where she received her PhD. Previously, she held professorships at King's College London and Warwick Business School. Her research interests include global governance, sustainability & human rights, multi-stakeholder collaboration in organizations and global value chains. Her work has been published in the Academy of Management Journal, Journal of Management Studies, Organization Science, Organization Studies, and Research Policy, among others. Juliane serves as Associate Editor of the Academy of Management Journal.



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Francesco Rullani is a Full Professor and Job Market Officer for the PhD in Management at Ca' Foscari University of Venice (IT), where he is also the Director of the Impact Unit, Yunus Social Business Centre, in addition to having founded and directed Bliss - Digital Impact Lab. He was an Associate and Assistant Professor at LUISS University in Rome (IT) and is affiliated as Scientific Collaborator to CeSID, formerly ERShub@luiss, which he founded and directed.

He was a Visiting Associate Professor, Assistant Professor and Post-Doc at Copenhagen Business School (DK), and visiting fellow at Stanford University (USA) and Bocconi University (IT). He received his PhD from Sant'Anna School of Advanced Studies (IT). His research focuses on self-organized digital innovation, social innovation and social entrepreneurship. His publications have appeared in Strategic Management Journal, Research Policy, Journal of Business Ethics, Industrial and Corporate Change.



Ruth Sealy is a Professor of Leadership at Henley Business School in the UK, and also an Honorary Professor at University of Exeter Business School, where she was formerly a Full Professor of Responsible Leadership and Director of Impact. With global academic expertise on women on corporate boards, Ruth's research areas include women in leadership; board composition; role models; board dynamics; non-financial narrative reporting; and various aspects of corporate governance. Her current work focuses on the responsabilization of diversifying boards and leadership teams and the incorporation of diversity in Environmental Social & Governance (ESG) measures. In the past, Ruth was the lead researcher of the annual UK Female FTSE Report, monitoring women on listed boards and executive committees, from 2007-2016, and co-authored similar reports in Hong Kong and India. She worked closely with the UK government on board policy 2010-2015, was a member of the NHS Advisory Board on board diversity 2015-2017, and has conducted several research projects with regulators (e.g. Financial Reporting Council, Solicitors Regulation Authority). Prior to becoming an academic, Ruth was the Managing Director of a start-up, which she grew and sold to a larger organisation. She retrained as an organisational psychologist and worked as a consultant before starting a PhD at Cranfield School of Management in 2004.



Christine Vallaster is head of the Marketing unit of the Department of Business Administration at the Paris Lodron University of Salzburg, Austria. She was responsible for the Marketing & Relationship Management Department at the Salzburg University of Applied Sciences, Head of Research for the Business Administration course and most recently, Head of the Department of Business & Tourism. She obtained her PhD at the University of Innsbruck with a longer stay abroad for her empirical research in Hong Kong (China) on strategic decision-making processes in multicultural work groups. Christine gained work experience as an assistant professor in Buenos Aires (Argentina). These experiences contributed to her later habilitation topic on how companies have to design their internal work processes keeping their brand promises to their customers and stakeholders. During her habilitation phase, she was funded by the Alexander Humboldt Foundation and the German Research Society (DFG). Christine's research focuses evolves around Branding, Sustainability and Strategy.



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Francesco Zirpoli is a Professor of Management at the Venice School of Management, Department of Management at Ca' Foscari University of Venice, where he is also the Director of the PhD in Management, scientific director of CAMI - Center for Automotive and Mobility Innovation and Director of the Master in Mobility Innovation and Management. He is currently research associate of the Program on Vehicle and Mobility Innovation, Mack Institute for Innovation

Management at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, USA and of Istituto di Ricerche sulle Innovazione e Servizi per lo Sviluppo (IRISS), Italian National Research Council (CNR). His research interests include organizational routines, network governance, business-government interactions, organization boundary decisions, and the organization of innovation processes. His work has been published in journals such Organization Studies, Organization Science, Research Policy, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Sloan Management Review, European Management Review, R&D Management, California Management Review, International Journal of Operations and Production Management. Francesco's research work has been mentioned in the Financial Times, The Washington Post, Business Week, Les Echos, The Detroit News and other international newspapers and magazines and in Italian media such as Radio24, Radio Rai1, the Sole24Ore, the Corriere della Sera, l'Inkiesta, il Fatto Quotidiano.

Francesco gained his M.Phil. and PhD in Management from the Judge Business School of the University of Cambridge, U.K. and his Doctorate in Business Administration from the University of Naples "Federico II".