



**Venice International University
Summer School
Organizing for Sustainable Futures:
Micro and Macro-institutional Conditions
of Transformation**

June 17-20, 2024

Program

Sunday, June 16

18:20-20:00 Welcome Cocktail

Day 1 | Monday, June 17

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 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 **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

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



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Day 3 | Wednesday, June 19

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

International business and human rights

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 **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 20

9:30-11:00 **Johanna Mair**, Hertie School of Governance / Stanford University

Transformative Processes and Enabling Conditions

In this session we put the spotlight on organizations that adopt alternative organizational forms and therefore are often considered as the hope to ensure diversity within capitalism. In our conversation we will not rest on discussing the specific form or non-conformist actions these organizations take on but rather examine enabling conditions for their emergence and how what they do triggers transformation. Using our readings as a starting point we will also revisit the potential of studying gradual processes of transformation that lead to new social orders. We will discuss theoretical opportunities and implications for research designs to push forward this line of inquiry.

Break



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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

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

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)

Students' Presentation and discussion of research project format:

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

