

## Venice International University 30th Anniversary Celebrations

**November 27-29, 2025**

### Guiding Transitions

The evolution of humanity, from the Stone Age to the present, has been marked both by processes of gradual, continuous development and by sudden leaps that have radically altered prevailing paradigms. These moments of acceleration (revolutions in the broadest sense) have affected multiple dimensions of civilization, giving rise to new social, linguistic, and cultural forms, as well as to new technological, epistemological, artistic, and literary frameworks. Historically, such radical shifts have been triggered by wars, epidemics, scientific discoveries, and other transformative events that disrupted established trajectories of progress.

Compared to the past, humans of the third millennium experience transitions with unprecedented frequency and intensity. It is now possible to define transition itself as a recurrent condition of contemporary life. It could even be argued that transitions are becoming the normal condition of contemporary life. These transitions are increasingly driven by phenomena of great complexity and heterogeneity, and they unfold with remarkable rapidity. Such characteristics make it difficult to foresee their outcomes, whether immediate or long-term, direct or indirect. Consequently, we often face a sense of uncertainty (and even helplessness) regarding our ability to steer these processes in directions beneficial to humanity and the planet.

To study transitions means to identify them (knowledge), to analyze their structure and dynamics (understanding), and to design strategies and tools to orient them (management). This endeavor requires the development of general models capable of describing transitions through a set of parameters, the identification of those parameters in specific contexts, and the simulation of their evolution in order to understand how they can be adjusted to influence outcomes.

The most impactful transitions of our time concern the pervasiveness of digital technologies, the production, distribution and management of energy, the causes and effects of climate change, the transformation of social relationships, and the dynamics of large-scale migration.

The reflection “**Guiding Transitions**” seeks to open a space for dialogue, both methodological and case-based, laying the foundations for the construction of an educational and research path dedicated to understanding and shaping transitions in their multiple dimensions.

## THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 27

Venice International University, San Servolo Island

13.30 *Registration*

14.00 Institutional Greetings and Introductory Remarks

Ambassador **Umberto Vattani**, President of Venice International University  
Prof. Avv. **Anna Maria Bernini**, Italian Minister of University and Research [tbc]

14.30 Introduction to the Conference by the Steering Committee

**Carmelo Marabello** - Dean of Venice International University, **Eileen Sweeney** - Boston College, **Cem Guneri** - Sabanci University, **Maji Rhee** - Waseda University, **Laurent Servant** - University of Bordeaux, **Mario Martina** - IUSS Pavia, **Alessio Cotugno** - Ca' Foscari University of Venice.

### Session 1: Transition in Higher Education and Artificial Intelligence

Chair: **Riccardo Pietrabissa**, IUSS Pavia

15.00 Keynote: The Dilemmas of AI in Higher Education - **Luc Steels**, Vrije Universiteit Brussel (Emeritus)

15.15 Keynote: Navigating the AI Horizon: Promises, Perils, and the Power of Collaboration - **Ece Kamar**, Sabanci University (online)

15.30 Open Discussion

16.15 *Coffee Break*

### Session 2: Structural Inequalities Within and Across Societies

Chair: **Marina Calloni**, University of Milano Bicocca

16.45 Keynote: Children's Rights - **Manfred Nowak**, Global Campus of Human Rights

17.00 Keynote: Social Justice - **C. Shawn McGuffey**, Boston College

17.15 Open Discussion

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### **VIU Alumni & Friends Dinner**

19.30 with the participation of the students and faculty of the Globalization Program and the Deans of VIU, with music performed by UNIPD Big Band, the Jazz Orchestra of the University of Padova

## FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28

Venice International University, San Servolo Island

### Session 3: Ecology and the Environment

Chair: **Shuming Liu**, Tsinghua University

09.15 Keynote: Environmental and Energy Transition - **Simone Borghesi**, University of Siena

09.30 Keynote: A relational agenda for just social-ecological transitions - **Rika Preiser**, Stellenbosch University

09.45 Open Discussion

10.30 *Coffee Break*

### Session 4: Cities in Transition

Chair: **Laurent Servant**, University of Bordeaux

11.00 Keynote: Urban Transition and Resilience – **Nicola Tollin**, UNESCO Chair on Urban Resilience, University of Southern Denmark

11.15 Keynote: Rising Seas, Fading Plans? Rethinking Transition in Coastal Cities – **Francesco Musco**, Università Iuav di Venezia and CORILA

11.30 Open Discussion

### Closing Panel

12.15 **Tiziana Lippiello**, Rector Ca' Foscari University of Venice; **Daniela Mapelli**, Rector, University of Padua (tbc); **Bernd Huber**, LMU Munich; **Riccardo Pietrabissa**, IUSS Pavia; **Giovanni Zanalda**, Duke University; **Norimasa Morita**, Waseda University; **Umberto Vattani**, VIU President; **Carmelo Marabello**, VIU Dean (moderator)

13:00 *Lunch*

### Conversations on Energy, Environment and the Sea

Moderated by Amb. Umberto Vattani, VIU President

[in Italian with English translation]

14.30 Prof. Dott. **Gilberto Pichetto Fratin**, Italian Minister for the Environment and Energy Security  
Sen. **Nello Musumeci**, Italian Minister for Civil Protection and Marine Policies  
Prof. **Andrea Rinaldo**, University of Padua