

**Call for Papers: ISLC 2026**  
**24<sup>th</sup> International Studying Leadership Conference**  
**Evolving Leadership: Learning from the Past, Shaping the Future**

**Dates:** Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> to Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December 2026

**Host:** [Hult International Business School](#)

**Venue:** Hult Ashridge Campus at [Ashridge House](#) (Hertfordshire, UK)

### **Introduction**

The *International Studying Leadership Conference (ISLC)* is a global gathering place for scholars and practitioners dedicated to advancing leadership research. Since its inception in 2002, ISLC has provided a forum for rigorous analysis and critical reflection on the nature and purpose of leadership theory, leadership development, and leadership research.

The 24<sup>th</sup> edition, hosted by **Hult International Business School** at the **Hult Ashridge campus**, invites scholars to engage with the theme *Evolving Leadership: Learning from the Past, Shaping the Future*. This theme challenges us to hold a dual gaze – rooted in tradition, open to emergence – reflecting ISLC’s tradition of critical inquiry while aligning with Hult’s identity as a future-oriented, practice-driven business school and Hult’s research mission to explore leadership that is ethical, inclusive, and impactful.

### **Conference Orientation: Leadership in Times of Turbulence**

Contemporary leadership is increasingly challenged by pervasive macro-level turbulence shaping today’s business landscape. External, unplanned, and unexpected events occurring at the macro-business environment have the potential not only to damage organisational structures and detrimentally affect workers’ experiences, but also to pose a threat to business survival (Prouska et al., 2024). Crises and uncertainties may affect whole industries, economies, and even clusters of countries. Furthermore, organisations increasingly operate in environments characterised by multiple, simultaneous crises, often described as a ‘polycrisis’ (Rakowski et al., 2025), reflecting the interconnected nature of global challenges such as the climate and nature crises, pandemics, violent conflict, social inequality, human rights violations, economic instability, and geo-political shifts and challenges to the rules-based international order.

Yet mainstream leadership theories—including transformational leadership—were developed assuming predictability, hierarchical structures, and linear progress (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Esenyel, 2024). Today’s leaders operate in environments characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity (VUCA) (Mack et al., 2015; Zhang-Zhang et al., 2022), where rapid decision-making (Fernández-Pérez de la Lastra & Sánchez-Gardey, 2024) often supersedes prolonged vision-building (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014; Winkler et al., 2024).

With consecutive and/or simultaneous economic, political, social, technological, and environmental crises occurring at the macro-context, leaders and organisations increasingly need to be proactively monitoring the macro-landscape for significant events, placing the Earth System at the centre of their thinking, anticipating significant changes for their organisations,

workers and other stakeholders, and collaborating to design interventions to achieve regeneration and renewal (Prouska et al., 2024, Stanberry, 2026).

This conference asks: *What can we learn from leadership's past to navigate present turbulence and shape future possibilities?*

We invite contributions that critically examine how leadership theories, practices, and identities must evolve beyond the limitations of traditional models. Drawing on wisdom traditions, historical precedents, and emerging scholarship, we seek to understand how leaders can respond to grand challenges—from climate crises and social inequality to digital transformation and geopolitical instability.

## **Conference Tracks and Research Questions**

### **Track 1: Leadership Legacies – Learning from the Past**

This track explores what historical, cultural, and philosophical traditions can teach us about leading through uncertainty and change. We encourage submissions that move beyond Western-centric models to examine diverse leadership wisdom.

#### **Suggested research questions:**

- How can phronesis (practical wisdom) inform leadership decision-making in complex, uncertain contexts? (Aristotle; Nonaka & Takeuchi, 2011; Girado-Sierra et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2025)
- What can we learn from non-Western leadership philosophies (e.g., Confucian ethics, Ubuntu leadership, Indigenous leadership traditions) (Kelly & Nicholson, 2021; Powell & Grobler, 2026; Zhu et al., 2025) about collective and relational approaches to navigating turbulence?
- How have leaders historically responded to crises, resistance movements, and societal transformation, and what lessons remain relevant today? (Liden et al., 2025; Theofanidis et al., 2025)
- What role does historical consciousness play in developing adaptive leadership capacity? (Uhl-Bien et al., 2007)

### **Track 2: Leadership in Transition – Navigating Present Challenges**

This track examines how leadership is responding—or failing to respond—to today's grand challenges. We welcome critical analyses of leadership's role in climate action, social justice, digital disruption, and organisational transformation.

#### **Suggested research questions:**

- How are leaders navigating the tensions between short-term organisational demands and long-term sustainability imperatives? (Boeske, 2023; Hahn et al., 2015)
- What does regenerative leadership look like in practice, and how does it move beyond resilience toward systemic renewal? (Candelarie, 2023; Hutchins & Storm, 2019)

- How is leadership responding to the integration of AI and algorithmic decision-making in organisational contexts? (Aziz et al., 2025; Hossain et al., 2025; Quaquebeke & Gerpott, 2023; Tigre et al., 2025)
- What are the implications of hybrid and distributed work for leadership identities, relationships, and practices? (Crevani et al., 2010; Tan et al., 2025)
- How do power dynamics shape—and constrain—leadership responses to social inequality and climate action? (Benulic et al., 2022; Fujimoto & Uddin, 2022)

### **Track 3: Leadership Futures – Reimagining Possibilities**

This track invites forward-looking contributions that reimagine leadership for emerging contexts. We welcome speculative, conceptual, and empirical work exploring new forms, identities, and practices of leadership.

#### **Suggested research questions:**

- What new forms of leadership are emerging to address the limitations of heroic, individualised models? (Abukalusa & Oosthuizen, 2025; Collinson, 2018; Raelin, 2016)
- How can leadership development be reimaged to cultivate collective, ecological, and ethical capacities? (Harrison, 2025)
- What forms of leadership are required for multigenerational, diverse, and digitally-mediated organisations? (Subašić & Ryan, 2025)
- In an era of AI and automation, how must leaders cultivate communication, curiosity, collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking to remain effective? (Bock & von der Oelsnitz, 2025; [Hillebrand](#) et al., 2025)

### **General Papers**

In addition to the three conference tracks, we welcome general submissions on leadership theory, leadership development, and leadership research that align with ISLC's tradition of critical, rigorous scholarship.

### **Submission Types**

We invite contributions from both scholars and practitioners that explore one or more of the above topics. We especially encourage submissions that foster exchange between research and practice, and that experiment with creative or dialogic formats to engage participants. We invite contributions in the following formats:

- **Academic papers** — empirical, conceptual, or theoretical contributions. Developmental or exploratory papers are welcome.
- **Workshops and interactive sessions** — interactive sessions designed to engage participants in reflection, dialogue, or skill development.

- **Symposia** – coordinated sessions of 3-4 related papers on a coherent theme, with a discussant.

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