



University of
Management
and Economics

zeppelin university

bridging
business culture politics

Relational Pathways to a Global Economy

4th Conference on Relational Economics & Organizational Governance

September 10 – 11 2026

ISM University of Management and Economics, Vilnius, Lithuania

Disruptive developments in economy, politics, and society have become a hallmark of the early 21st century. Economic inequalities have risen in spite of scattered governmental efforts. Illiberal tendencies and the rise of authoritarian regimes on a global scale have complicated sustained efforts in terms of diversity and inclusion but similarly hampered ambitious climate action. Moreover, business models and labor markets come under pressure as a consequence of rapid technological change. The complexity of these issues has been thoroughly addressed under the name of *grand challenges*. Their mutual reinforcement is further stressed in the literature on the *polycrisis*. However, recent research comes short in addressing the inherently relational nature of these challenges. Their complexity arises from the specific interaction of polyvalent system logics. Hence, solution approaches that remain within a paradigm of equilibria may not suffice.

So far, relational economics has focused on presenting an alternative framework for understanding and explaining global value creation, economic organization, cultural complexity, leadership and management. We believe that the challenges outlined above present a serious testing ground for a relational approach in the social sciences. To prove itself useful, it must be put to the test in the face of central challenges of our times.

Therefore, this conference aims to provide a relational perspective on contemporary challenges such as the formation of new global value creation networks, digitalization, global governance or the New Authoritarianism. It seeks to encourage scholars to apply relational perspectives in order to suggest practical solutions. The goal is to create a platform that fosters interdisciplinary collaboration on contemporary challenges.

We invite participants to explore how relational economics can:

- Advance new pathways to global governance and economic cooperation
- Explain the character and governance structures involved in the rise of New Authoritarianism and its challenges for liberal democracy

- Develop suitable frameworks to foster sustainability, resilience and global sensemaking in business and society
- Improve networks and governance structures for technological innovations and disruptions

Moreover, we appreciate and welcome presentations that engage with epistemological, ontological or methodological foundations of relational economics. Theoretical advancements and empirical studies that extend its reach beyond familiar grounds remain essential. These contributions provide fundamental insights that underpin the endeavor of relational economics and crucially inform its further development.

We invite contributions from all areas of social science and humanities, including economic theory, management and organization science, political science and international relations, psychology and sociology. The interdisciplinary conference will have a limited number of participants to enable intensive discussion. We offer to compensate travel and accommodation costs for selected participants.

Submission guidelines: We invite submissions for the conference that align with the overarching theme. Please submit an abstract of max. 500 words that provides a concise summary of your contribution, including the main argument, methodology (if applicable), and (preliminary) findings. Clearly highlight the connection to the conference theme.

Deadline for submissions is 1st of May 2026. Abstracts are to be submitted to jonas.stark@zu.de.

Publication: As part of the conference, we plan to include selected contributions in the book series “Relational Economics and Organizational Governance”. Proposals for book chapters will be selected based on the quality of the abstracts and conference presentations. Authors of the selected contributions will be invited to submit their full manuscripts for a separate review process following the conference.

Venue: ISM University of Management and Economics, Gedimino Pr. 7, 01103, Vilnius, Lithuania.

For any inquiries, please contact the organizers Jonas Stark (jonas.stark@zu.de) and Dr. Tobias Grünfelder (Tobias.Gruenfelder@ism.lt).