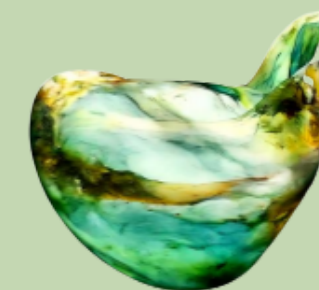


World FuturesDay

Anticipation in an Era of Volatility

Tuesday 2 December 2025

UNESCO Headquarters



Public Lecture

Éric Sadin is a French writer and philosopher renowned for his critical analysis of the digital age and artificial intelligence. His work explores how technologies reshape individual and collective life. Sadin's intellectual journey began in 1998 with his first internet connection and mobile phone, which he described as signaling "a new moment in the history of humanity."

He founded the review *éc/artS* (1999–2003) and received the Villa Kujoyama fellowship in Japan (2002). Sadin has lectured widely, including at Sciences Po (Paris), École supérieure d'art de Toulon, ECAL (Lausanne), and IAMAS (Japan). Positioning himself as a technocritic rather than a technophobe, Sadin interrogates the logics of the digital age. In *La Vie algorithmique* (2015), he critiques "digital reason" that quantifies life and erodes universal horizons. *La Siliconisation du monde* (2016) examines the fusion of digital technologies with liberal-market ideology, expanding technoliberal logic across society.

Since 2018, AI has become central to his work. In *L'Intelligence artificielle ou l'enjeu du siècle* (2018), he warns that AI marks an epochal shift, threatening human autonomy as systems increasingly "expertise reality" by making decisions and orienting behaviors. His recent books—*La Vie spectrale* (2023) and *Le Désert de nous-mêmes* (2025)—address generative AI, the metaverse, pseudo-languages, deepfakes, and the erosion of human creativity and judgment.



Discussant Panel



Sobhi Tawil

Director, Futures of Learning
and Innovation, UNESCO

Moderator



Rosa Vásquez Espinoza

Chemical Biologist, Author,
National Geographic Explorer,
and Laureate, UNESCO Al-
Fozan Prize, Peru



Tanja Hichert

Co-Chairholder, UNESCO
Chair in Complex Systems
and Transformative African
Futures, Stellenbosch
University, South Africa



Michael Shamiyeh

Chairholder, UNESCO Chair
on Anticipatory Techniques
and Future Design at the
University of Art and Design,
Austria



François Taddei

President, Learning Planet
Institute, France

Rosa Vásquez Espinoza

Chemical Biologist, Author, National Geographic Explorer, and Laureate, UNESCO Al-Fozan Prize, Peru

Dr. Rosa Vásquez Espinoza is a Peruvian chemical biologist, author, National Geographic Explorer, and award-winning artist whose work bridges indigenous knowledge and modern science to protect the Amazon Rainforest and its communities. With Andean-Amazonian indigenous roots, she draws inspiration from the wisdom of her grandmother—who transformed their backyard into a "natural pharmacy"—integrating traditional medicine, biodiversity conservation, and scientific exploration into her mission.

As the founder of Amazon Research Internacional, Rosa has pioneered groundbreaking research on extreme Amazonian ecosystems, and biodiversity, while advocating for policies that recognize the intrinsic value of nature. She was the first microbial explorer of the Amazonian Boiling River, led the first chemical analysis of stingless bees and their medicinal honey in Peru, and contributed to scientific advancements that supported Peru's Law 32235, granting legal protection to stingless bees for the first time.

For her groundbreaking contributions to biodiversity and conservation, Rosa was awarded Peru's Order of Merit (2025)—the country's highest state recognition for environmental protection, and the UNESCO-Al Fozan Prize (2025). She has also been named one of the BBC's 100 Women (2024), received the American Chemical Society CAS Leadership Award, and was recognized as one of "50 People Changing the World" and a recipient of the "New Explorer Award" (The Explorers Club).



Tanja Hichert

Co-Chairholder, UNESCO Chair in Complex Systems and Transformative African Futures,
Stellenbosch University, South Africa

Tanja Hichert is an academically qualified (M.Phil Futures Studies, MBA), highly experienced, futures and foresight practitioner who, in addition to running the Hichert & Associates consulting firm for the past 18 years, is a Fellow at the Centre for Sustainability Transitions at Stellenbosch University where she is Co-chair of the UNESCO Chair in Complex Systems and Transformative African Futures.

Tanja served a term as a Strategic Foresight Advisor for the United Nations Development Programme, and has extensive experience in strategic foresight process design, and applying futures and foresight to a vast range of public- and private sector issues. She also teaches post-graduate students and has a passion for expanding and building the practical application of Future Studies on the African continent.



Michael Shamiyeh

Chairholder, UNESCO Chair on Anticipatory Techniques and Future Design at the University of Art and Design, Austria

Professor Michael Shamiyeh is an architect in the broadest sense, working with organizations to create a new and meaningful future (rather than fixing the problems of the past). He holds a UNESCO Chair for Anticipatory Techniques and Future Design, is member of the Intergovernmental Council of the Management of Social Transformation Program of UNESCO, a partner of the International Board Foundation, formerly established at the University of St. Gallen, Switzerland, and was a Visiting Professor at Stanford University, USA, from 2017 to 2020.

Together with colleagues from both institutions, he founded the Center for Future Design at the University of Art and Design Linz, where he is full professor and teaches courses on futuring and corporate entrepreneurship. He is the author of several books and regularly publishes in journals and popular media.



François Taddei

President, Learning Planet Institute, France

François Taddei, President of the Learning Planet Institute (LPI), has dedicated his career to revolutionizing education through innovation and collaboration. Co-founding the Center for Interdisciplinary Research (CRI) in 2006, he aimed to train scientists at the nexus of life sciences, learning, and digital technologies. The evolution of CRI into LPI in 2021 underscores Taddei's commitment to transforming education.

As LPI's Founder, Taddei leverages his expertise in evolutionary systems biology to advance the learning sciences globally. He advocates for large-scale collaboration to build a learning planet, supported by UNESCO and the United Nations University. Through initiatives like the Institute of Challenges, Taddei prototypes a model of the learning university to address global challenges.

Beyond academia, Taddei champions innovation in education through programs like the Frontières du Vivant degree and the Paris-Montagne Science Festival. His advocacy extends to international organizations, reflected in reports for UNESCO, the OECD, and the EU.



Sobhi Tawil

Director, Futures of Learning and Innovation, UNESCO

Sobhi Tawil is the Director of Future of Learning and Innovation at UNESCO headquarters in Paris where he currently leads the Futures of Education initiative. He has some 30 years of experience in teaching, education policy analysis, research and program management with diverse institutions and organizations, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies (Geneva), the Network for Education Policy Research Review (NORRAG), the International Institute for Higher Education (Rabat), as well as UNESCO.

Since joining UNESCO in 2002, Sobhi first headed the Capacity Building Program for Curriculum Development at the International Bureau of Education, before leading the Education Program for the Maghreb countries at the Rabat Cluster Office. Since 2011, he has been leading the Education Research and Foresight programme. Sobhi holds a PhD in Education and Development from the Graduate Institute for International and Development Studies in Geneva.



Anticipating systemic changes in an era of volatility



Gustavo Merino

Director for Social Policies in
the Social and Human
Sciences Sector

Moderator



Guido Girardi

Executive Vice President,
Fundación Encuentros del
Futuro, Chile



Ferdinand Nicholas

President, Northwestern
University, Philippines



Patrick Noack

Executive Director, Dubai
Future Foundation



Brenda Ogembo

Deputy Director, Senate
Liaison Officer, Kenya



Deša Srsen

Member of Cabinet of the
European Commissioner for
Intergenerational Fairness,
Youth, Culture and Sport

Guido Girardi

Executive Vice President, Fundación Encuentros del Futuro, Chile

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Ferdinand S. Nicolas

President, Northwestern University, Philippines

Ferdinand S. Nicolas is the President of Northwestern University (NWU), which was granted the first UNESCO Chair in the Philippines specializing in Anticipatory Governance and Regenerative Cities. Under his direction, thousands of Filipino students have been empowered with Futures Thinking, including public-sector youth leaders in their country. In championing strategic foresight, NWU was recognized by the World University Rankings for Innovation (WURI), placing 4th globally in Leadership in 2024 and 3rd in Visionary Leadership in 2025. In line with this, President Nicolas was selected to sit on the Board of Directors of the World University Network for Innovation - Presidents.

President Nicolas has also been engaged in different roles such as the Chairman of the Ilocos Consortium for Industry, Energy, and Emerging Technology Research and Development, Co-Chair for Management of the Regional Tripartite Industrial Peace Council, and Chairman of the Multi-Sectoral Governance Council of the Mariano Marcos Memorial Hospital and Medical Center.



Patrick Noack

Executive Director, Dubai Future Foundation

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Brenda Ogembo

Deputy Director of the Senate Liaison Office, Kenyan Parliament

Dr. Brenda Ogembo is a distinguished public policy and governance researcher and practitioner with over fifteen years of experience strengthening democratic institutions and fostering innovation within the Kenyan Parliament. As a Principal Clerk Assistant and Deputy Director of the Senate Liaison Office, she holds a key leadership role, guiding the development and implementation of innovative programmes to support the Senate's work, with a specific focus on research and learning related to strengthening Kenya's devolved governance. Brenda's career and research are deeply rooted in the intersection of legislative development, devolution, and citizen engagement. Brenda is also passionate about the emerging field of anticipatory governance and serves as the head of secretariat and principal advisor to the Kenya Senate Futures Caucus. She has previously served as the lead policy advisor to the Senate Standing Committee on Finance and Budget and the Standing Committee on Devolution and Intergovernmental Relations. She is highly skilled at designing and running institutional capacity-building programmes, managing complex development partner projects, and building strategic networks to deliver impact. Brenda's academic credentials include a PhD in Politics from the University of Birmingham and an MA in Public Policy from King's College London. She also holds a Bachelor of Commerce in Finance from Strathmore University, Kenya. Brenda is a Chevening Scholar and a Commonwealth Scholar.

Ultimately, Brenda is driven by her belief that good governance is the bedrock of a thriving society and is committed to empowering African governance institutions and their citizens to build a more inclusive and sustainable future for the continent.



Deša Srsen

Member of Cabinet of the European Commissioner for Intergenerational Fairness, Youth, Culture and Sport

Deša has been an official of the European Commission since 2013. She currently serves as a Member of Cabinet to Commissioner Glenn Micallef, where she is responsible for developing the Intergenerational Fairness Strategy and Strategic Foresight Reports. Before joining Commissioner Micallef's Cabinet, Deša was Deputy Head of Cabinet to the Vice President of the European Commission in charge of democracy and demography. Since joining the Commission, she has also held several Head of Unit positions in the Commission's Directorate-General for Regional Policy. From 2016 to 2019, Deša was part of the Brexit negotiating team under the leadership of Michel Barnier.

Prior to joining the Commission, she served in the Croatian diplomatic service from 1999, focusing on Croatia's EU accession negotiations and was the country's first Antici counsellor (from 2011 to 2013). She holds a master's degree from the College of Europe in Bruges, degrees from ENA in Paris and Strasbourg and completed the executive Emerging Leaders program at Bocconi University and ESMT Berlin. She studied philosophy and political science in Brussels.



Gustavo Merino

Director for Social Policies in the Social and Human Sciences Sector

Gustavo Merino has been serving as Director of Social Policies at UNESCO since January 2024. He has held senior positions in the Government of Mexico including Deputy Minister of Social and Human Development, Deputy Minister for Prospective, Planning and Evaluation at the Ministry of Social Development. He was also General Director of Mexico's national development bank for agriculture and rural areas, Financiera Rural. At the FAO he was Director of the Investment Centre Division. He has also been Dean of the School of Social Sciences and Government for Mexico City Region of Tecnológico de Monterrey where he also led the Research Centre on Public Policy and Health at the School of Government and the Public Policy Unit of the Institute for Obesity Research. He was also Professor of Economics and Director for at Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM) in Mexico City and Director of its Centre for Public Policy Research. He has a master's and PhD in Public Policy from Harvard University and a BA in Economics from ITAM.



Strategic directions for international cooperation



Zazie Schäfer

Director of the Bureau of
Strategic Planning, UNESCO

Moderator



Lidia Brito

Assistant Director-General for
Natural Sciences and ADG ad
interim for Social & Human
Sciences, UNESCO



Tawfik Jelassi

Assistant Director-General
for Communication and
Information, UNESCO



Stefania Giannini

Assistant Director-General
for Education, UNESCO



Mohamed Elfarnawany

Representative of the
Assistant Director-General
for Priority Africa and
External Relations, UNESCO

Lidia Brito

Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences and ADG ad interim for Social & Human Sciences, UNESCO

Lidia Arthur Brito was appointed UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences on 2 November 2023. She had been Assistant Director-General for Natural Sciences ad interim since June 2023, helping to formulate innovative responses to contemporary environmental challenges. A forest engineer with a Master's and Doctorate in Forest and Wood Science from Colorado State University-USA, she was born in Mozambique and has been part of Eduardo Mondlane University's staff since her graduation in Forest Engineering in 1981. She has held senior positions in Mozambique such as Head of the Forestry Department from the Faculty of Agronomy (1997-1998), Vice-Rector for Academic Affairs of Eduardo Mondlane University (1998-2000), Minister for Higher Education, Science and Technology (2000-2005), and Advisor for Strategic Planning and External Relations of the Mayor of Maputo City (2005-2008).

She joined UNESCO in November 2009 as Director for Science Policy and Sustainable Development in the Natural Sciences Sector, in Paris, and in 2014 she was appointed UNESCO Regional Director for Sciences in Latin America and the Caribbean region (UNESCO Montevideo Office). In 2022, she became Director of the UNESCO Multisectoral Regional Office for Southern Africa in Harare (Zimbabwe) and UNESCO Representative for Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe.



Tawfik Jelassi

Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information,
UNESCO

Dr. Tawfik Jelassi was appointed UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information on 1st July 2021. In this position, he is responsible for the Organization's programmes on building inclusive knowledge societies, leading digital transformation, strategizing the role of ICT in education, and fostering freedom of expression.

Dr. Jelassi holds a Ph.D. doctorate in information systems from New York University (USA) and postgraduate diplomas from the University of Paris Dauphine (France). Dr. Jelassi has extensive experience in higher education, scientific research, and information & communication technologies. He held academic, corporate and government leadership positions in Europe, the USA, and Tunisia. Among others, he was Programme Director and Professor of Strategy and Technology Management at IMD Business School in Lausanne (2015 – June 2021). Prior to that, he served as Minister of Higher education, Scientific Research and Information & Communication Technologies in the democratic transition government of Tunisia (2014 – 2015).

Prior appointments included being Chairman of the Board of Directors of Ooredoo Telecom in Tunisia, Dean at Ecole Nationale des Ponts et Chaussées (Paris), and Professor & Chairman of the Technology Management Department at INSEAD (Fontainebleau).



Stefania Giannini

Assistant Director-General for Education, UNESCO

Ms Stefania Giannini was appointed UNESCO Assistant Director-General for Education in May 2018. A prominent figure in global education, she provides strategic vision and leadership in coordinating and monitoring the implementation of the Education 2030 Agenda to ensure education remains a top priority on the world's political agenda. Leading a team of 1,000 staff, she has strengthened UNESCO's role in the global education architecture, advancing more effective multilateral cooperation and driving a renewed push for better and more equitable education financing. A staunch advocate for inclusive and innovative education, she reaffirmed UNESCO's global leadership during the historic disruption of education due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and at the 2022 United Nations Transforming Education Summit that was organized in its wake.

Believing that partnership is the new leadership, Stefania Giannini has mobilized action-driven coalitions such as the Global Education Coalition, connecting over 200 private and public partners, focusing on digital learning and AI in education, and the Greening Education Partnership, which brings together nearly 100 countries and 1,600 organizations.

With an academic background in the Humanities and a PhD in Linguistics, Ms Giannini served as Rector of the University for Foreigners of Perugia (2004-2012). As Minister of Education, Universities and Research of the Republic of Italy (2014-2016), she led significant reforms centered on social inclusion and cultural awareness. She also served as Senator of the Republic (2013-2018).

Recognized for her thought-leadership and strategic acumen, Stefania Giannini is frequently invited to serve on high-level committees and advisory boards, providing guidance and expertise on key policy and organizational matters.



Zazie Schäfer

Director of the Bureau of Strategic Planning, UNESCO

Zazie Schäfer is a strategist with more than 25 years of experience positioning UN organizations both with a sharp eye on the present and a vision for the future. She currently serves as the Director of the UNESCO Bureau of Strategic Planning, where she oversees the Organization's Strategy and Partnership divisions. Previously, she was the Deputy Director of the UNDP Nordic Representation Office in Copenhagen, where she managed strategic relationships with the five Nordic countries. Prior to this position, she was Director for UN System Affairs in New York, coordinating UNDP's engagement in the latest phase of UN reforms and strengthening partnerships with UN agencies and Member States. She came to this position from the UNDP Executive Office, where she was a senior strategy adviser engaged in the preparation of two UNDP Strategic Plans and their translation into corporate performance. She joined the UNDP Executive Office in 2012 after 6 years in the UN Secretary-General's Strategic Planning Unit where she was an adviser to the UN Secretary-General's Cabinet mechanism and co-founded the UN Secretary-General's Global Pulse Initiative.

Zazie started her career in Egypt, working for an international consultancy firm. She joined the UN in 1998 in Morocco, working on women's rights issues and better UN coordination. Zazie holds an MA Degree in Arabic and International Relations from the University of St. Andrews, and an MSc Degree in Development Economics from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.



Closing remarks

Gustavo Merino

Director for Social Policies in the Social and Human Sciences Sector

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