



## Shaping societal transitions

We are preparing the future generation of academics to work on the complex challenges facing our society. In our education, we are therefore committed to providing students with the necessary academic knowledge and developing the skills and attitudes needed to contribute to these complex issues. Complex societal challenges require major, continuous changes in society. The IIS will therefore focus on shaping societal transitions in our education.

### **What are societal transitions?**

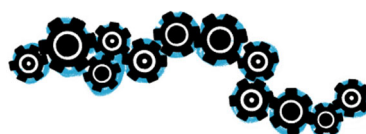
Society is facing urgent and complex challenges, such as the development of sustainable energy supplies, accessible healthcare, a just city and inclusive digitalisation. These types of challenges are firmly embedded in existing societal structures and institutions, and demand radical changes in structural thinking and action. These radical changes, which are not easy to manage, are societal transitions and may involve system-wide resistance, inequality and instability. The IIS is developing education in which students learn to relate to and actively manage such societal transitions, in order to initiate and facilitate change processes.

### **Why do we, at the IIS, work with societal transitions?**

Our students will soon be taking over the reins from the current generation. Many of these young people want to be leaders of a more just and sustainable world and expect their university to take the lead in this together with them (Inspiring Generations UvA 2021). The IIS will work in co-creation with students, lecturers and social institutions to broaden and deepen knowledge, skills and attitudes on complex societal issues through interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary education. At the IIS, students are given tools to turn their ideals into reality. In our education, we foreground interdisciplinarity and transdisciplinarity. We will now continue to integrate this with the knowledge, skills and approach needed to shape societal transitions.

### **What knowledge, skills and approach does the new generation of professionals need?**

Graduates who can contribute to societal transitions are bridge-builders who appreciate and can bring together a diversity of ideas, stakeholders and perspectives. Together with various other parties, they develop enlightening insights and seek creative solutions and approaches that do justice to the complexity and different interests in a dynamic environment. They are capable of analysing complex challenges and reflecting critically on their analysis and on themselves. They can then translate this analysis into a course of action and evaluate the process. Graduates have the scientific knowledge and skills to deal with these types of challenges.



## How do we educate our students accordingly?

The IIS can and wants to allow students and lecturers to experiment with complex transition-focused challenges in a safe, small-scale educational environment. In this educational environment, students, lecturers and other partners work together equally and intensively on education, on the basis of co-creation. The IIS builds on existing education within the UvA with methods for shaping transitions. An overarching methodology that we use in our education is an iterative process of doing and learning, which includes the four successive phases of Imagine (What if?), Connect (Why not?), Act (How about if?), and Evaluate (Then what?).

## What are the unique characteristics of the UvA and the IIS?

- The UvA is a wide-ranging research university and much of our research and education is among the best in the world. This offers opportunities for high-quality cooperation between different disciplines. The power of the UvA lies in integrating a multitude of perspectives within complex societal issues such as energy transitions, circularity, digitalisation, shifts in healthcare, tackling institutional racism and the evolving functionalities of cities.
- The UvA has a comprehensive international academic network that enables us to compare and connect complex challenges both locally and internationally.
- Amsterdam has traditionally been a breeding ground for many societal transitions. The strong connection the UvA and IIS have with local partners in Amsterdam and the wider region ensures that education is embedded in the context of initiatives in the city and beyond. Students have the opportunity to work with various stakeholders throughout the extensive community of the IIS.
- The IIS has in-house lecturers and educational developers who can make the connection between various scientific disciplines and social partners, enabling us to facilitate and upscale initiatives of students and lecturers. In addition, we offer students and lecturers room for experimentation through education, publications, knowledge sharing and grant programmes.

