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Reimagining the civic university for sustainable and resilient futures

Rapid societal changes and unexpected crises demand new approaches to education that go beyond traditional paradigms. The concept of the civic university, which emphasizes engagement with societal challenges and contributions to the public good, becomes crucial in this context. In the post-truth era, education must focus on fostering information literacy and critical thinking, particularly in navigating digital misinformation and combating fake news. Simultaneously, societal disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic underscore the need to prepare learners to manage unforeseen and complex challenges. These challenges call for pedagogies of preparedness and competencies related to frustration tolerance. Resilience and empowerment are foundational elements of future education—empowering learners not only to think critically but also to act as engaged, resilient citizens. By combining these perspectives with the civic university's mission to serve society and framing competencies within the capabilities approach, education can create the necessary conditions for individuals and communities to thrive in an unpredictable world.

Bio

Wim Lambrechts is associate professor at Open Universiteit in the Netherlands, and visiting professor at Hasselt University. His work seeks to understand the contemporary complexity and uncertainty of sustainability issues in their historical context, with the aim of inspiring sustainable futures. He received a grant from the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), for a Future of Work project focusing on individual competencies related to sustainability, empowerment and resilience in learning communities. In recent years, he made contributions to the United Nations Encyclopedia of the Sustainable Development Goals, the UNESCO Futures of Education initiative, the European competency framework GreenComp, and the UNECE Environment for Europe Conference.