



What characterizes a future proof business economist?

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24th AEEE Conference

Learning objectives

- You will learn which **characteristics** define the profile of a **future proof business economist** in **higher education** in Flanders;
- You will translate those characteristics at the level of **secondary education**;
- You will discuss how raising the complexity of economics education can be balanced with a **didactic** reduction of this complexity with a view to learnability.

Context of the project

- Reform of the curricula for the academic bachelor and master programmes of
 - Business Economics (180 + 60 ECTS)
 - Business Engineering (180 + 120 ECTS)at the Faculty of Social Sciences and Solvay Business School (Vrije Universiteit Brussel)

- Collaboration with
 - Duurzaam Educatiepunt (Flemish Government)
 - Brussels Institute for Teacher Education (BRITE, VUB)

Starting point: GreenComp



Source: Bianchi, G., Pisiotis, U. and Cabrera Giraldez, M., GreenComp The European sustainability competence framework, Punie, Y. and Bacigalupo, M. editor(s), EUR 30955 EN, Publications Office of the European Union, Luxembourg, 2022, ISBN 978-92-76-53201-9, doi:10.2760/821058, JRC128040.

A future proof business economist ...

1. deploys business knowledge in a targeted way for sustainable development;
2. uses the planetary and social boundaries as a compass;
3. follows (inter)national sustainability frameworks;
4. is a systems thinker;
5. thinks of the long run;
6. exhibits regenerative leadership;
7. takes a pluralistic view of the economy;
8. reports transparently on sustainability efforts;
9. is an entrepreneur with a multiple mission;
10. explores new business models in the circular and biobased economy;
11. is an inclusive entrepreneur;
12. can develop policy instruments to embed sustainability within organisations.

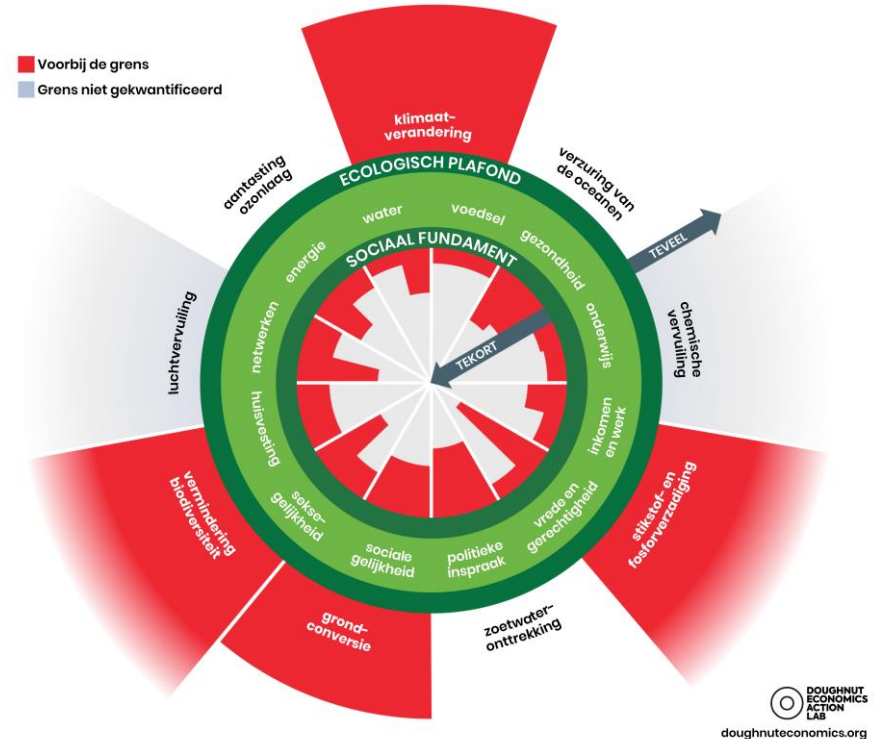
... deploys business knowledge in a targeted way for sustainable development

- General economics
- Business sciences
- Sustainable development:
 - here and now
 - in the long run
- Resilience



... uses the planetary and social boundaries as a compass

- ecological and social sustainability
- sustainability as a 'reflex'
- develop personal vision of sustainability
- sustainability as a guide for thinking and acting



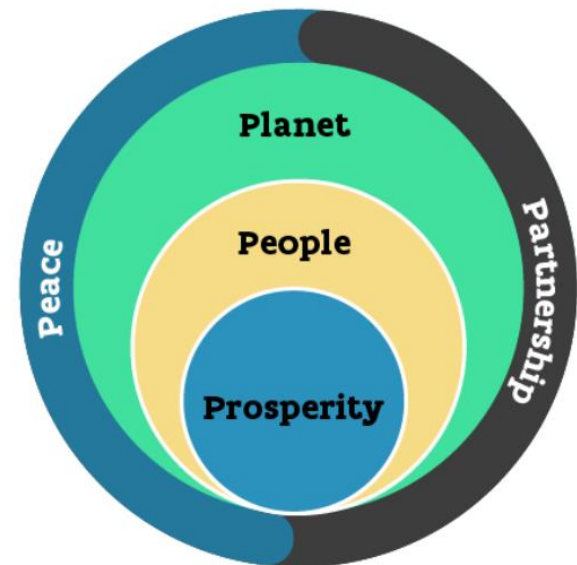
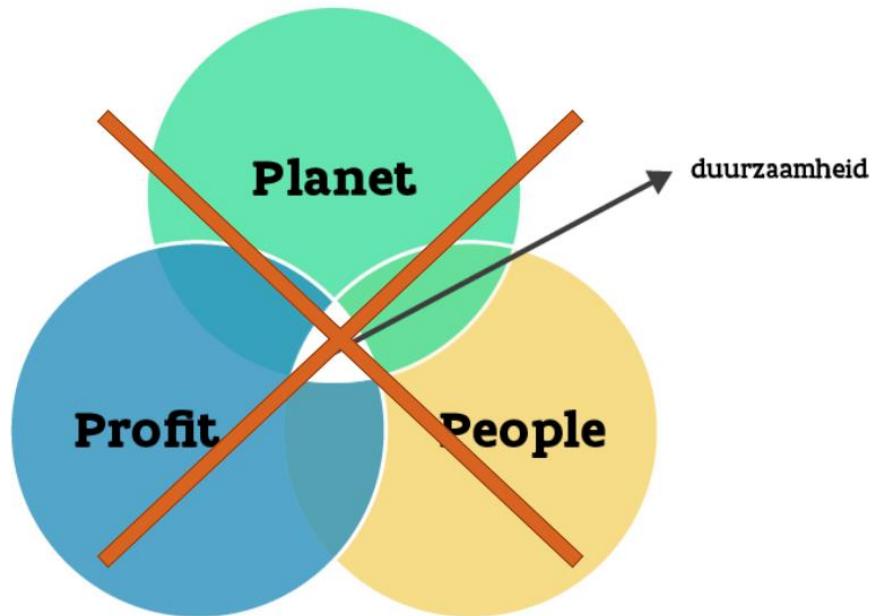
... follows (inter)national sustainability frameworks

- history and milestones
- regulations and policy frameworks
- can critically reflect on these frameworks
- translation to own business context



... is a systems thinker

- complexity and uncertainty
- business \leftrightarrow environment
- embedded economy



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... thinks of the long run



- anticipatory competence, visionary
- company survival
- short-term investments lead to long-term savings
- companies that op for sustainability
 - do not do worse financially
 - are more resilient in times of crisis
- war on talent
- from profit to multiple value maximisation

... exhibits regenerative leadership

- individual level:
inner development in terms of sustainability
- organisational level:
managing change processes, behavioural and systemic change
- value chain level:
working together in global and local value chains



... takes a pluralistic view of the economy

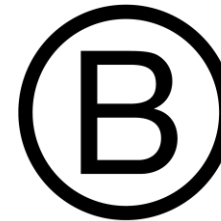
- goes beyond the neoclassical thinking framework of profit maximisation and economic growth
- understands the functioning of energy markets (energy economics)
- knows the instruments of government (environmental economics)
- understands human actions from a behavioural economic perspective (behavioral economics)
- understands old and new economic schools of thought and their history (ecological economics, feminist economics, etc.)

... reports transparently on sustainability efforts

- life cycle analysis
- ESG reporting regulations
- labels
- digitisation for reporting



Certified

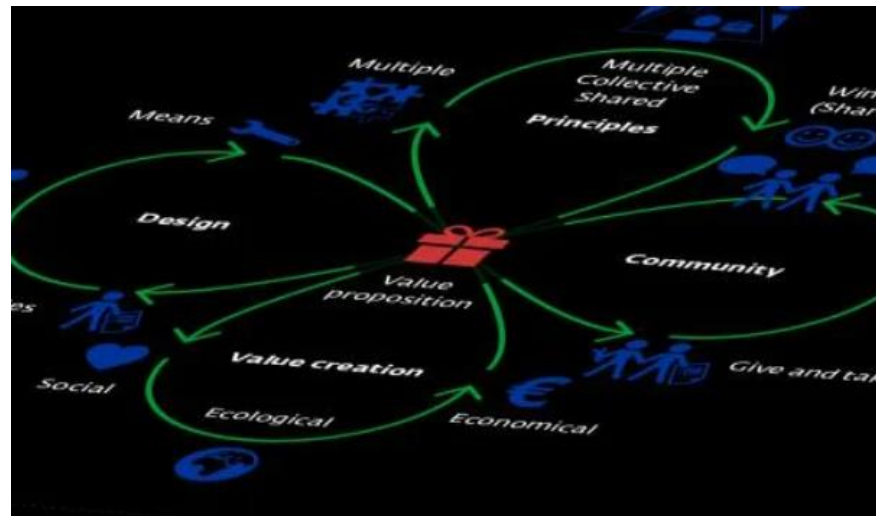


Corporation

This company meets high standards of social and environmental impact.

... is an entrepreneur with a multiple mission

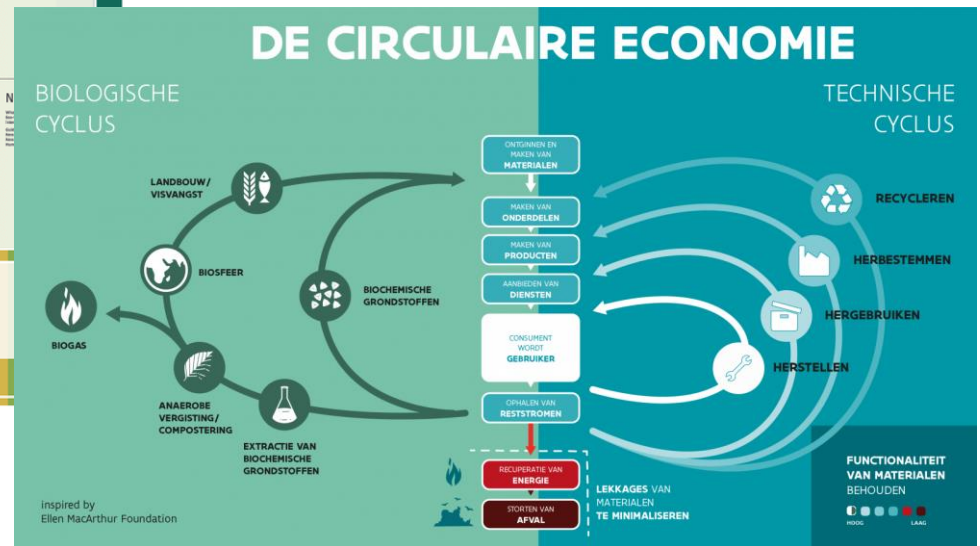
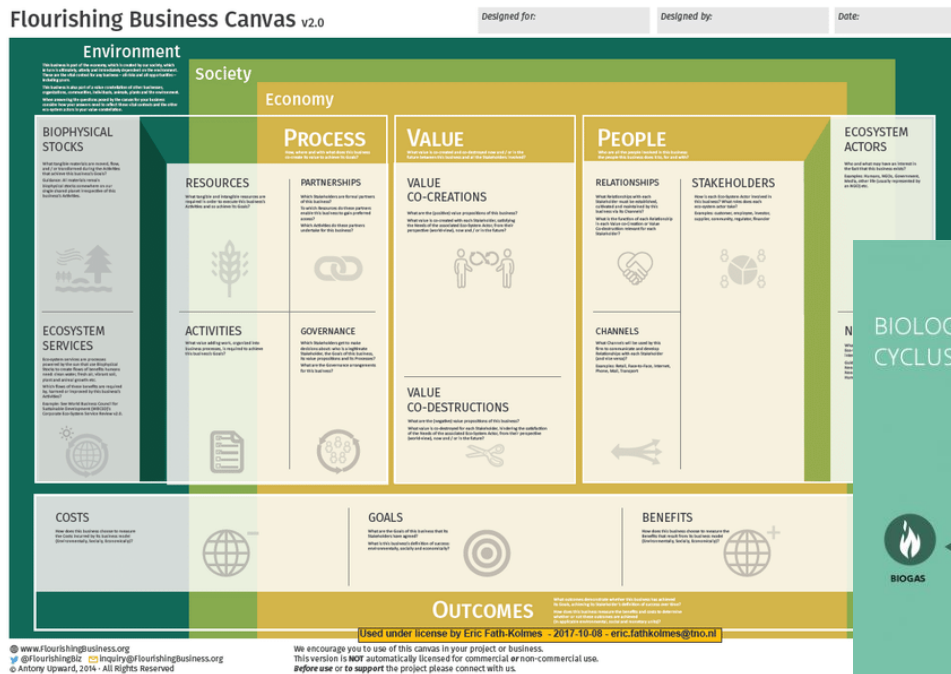
- purpose-driven
- value creation: economic, ecological and social level
- value creation for the company and its stakeholders
- from ecological footprint to sustainable footprint
- diversity of company forms



Source: Jonker & Faber (2021)

... explores new business models in the circular and biobased economy

- extended producer responsibility (EPR)
- green, biobased, circular and social economy:
- sustainable business models and templates



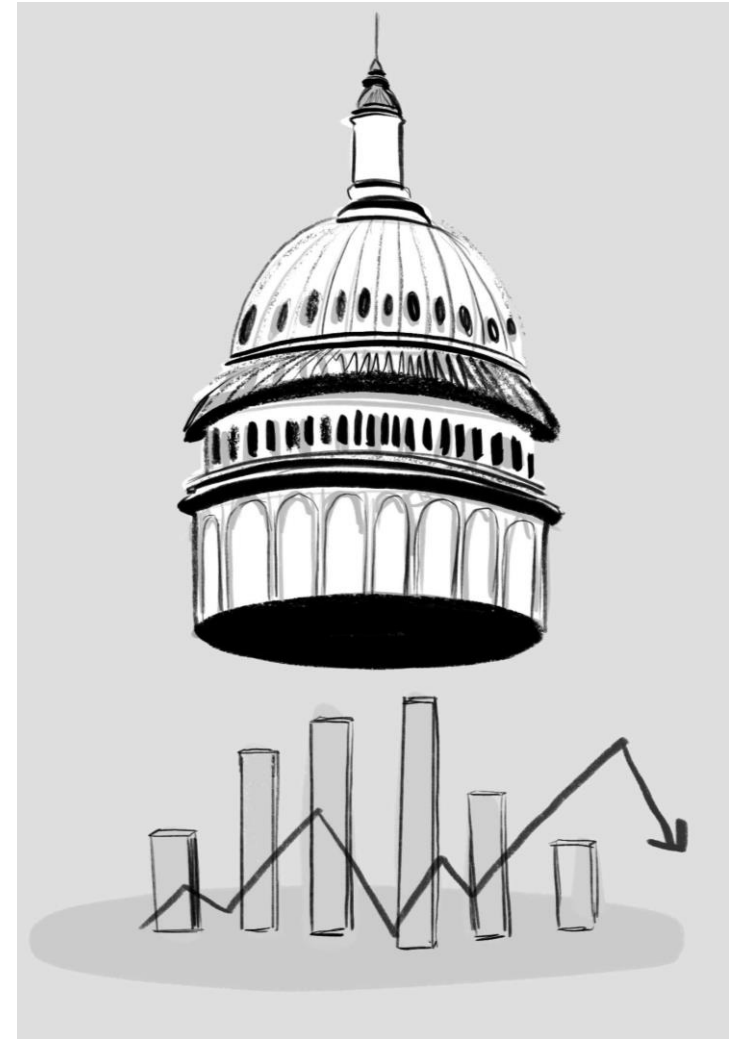
... is an inclusive entrepreneur

- from shareholders to stakeholders
- community-driven
- empathy
- diversity
- inclusive human resources policy



... can develop policy instruments to embed sustainability within organisations

- government policy:
taxes (carbon tax), subsidies,
tradable emission rights, ...
- company policy:
sustainability performance
management
- circular procurement



Translate this profile to secondary education



Take your red ball pen and change as much as you want!

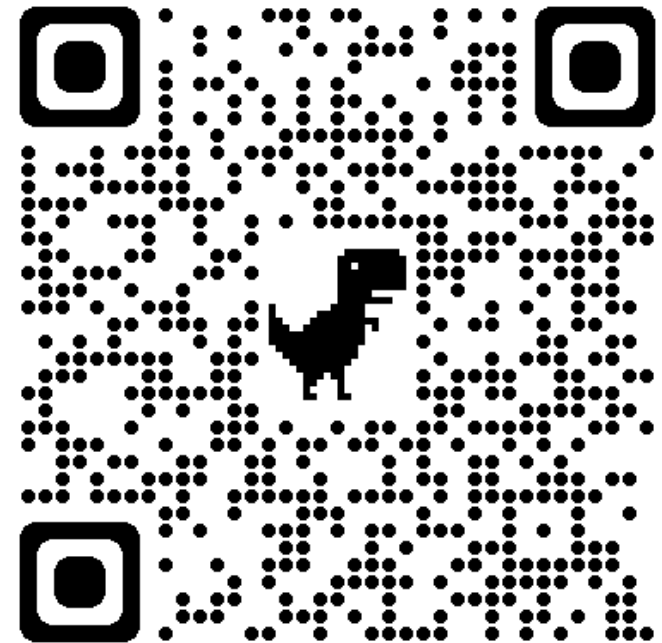
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Make suggestions that answer the following questions:

- How can we adjust the mastery level?
- What is not relevant for secondary education and should be deleted?
- What did we miss and should be added?

After 10 minutes, swap characteristic

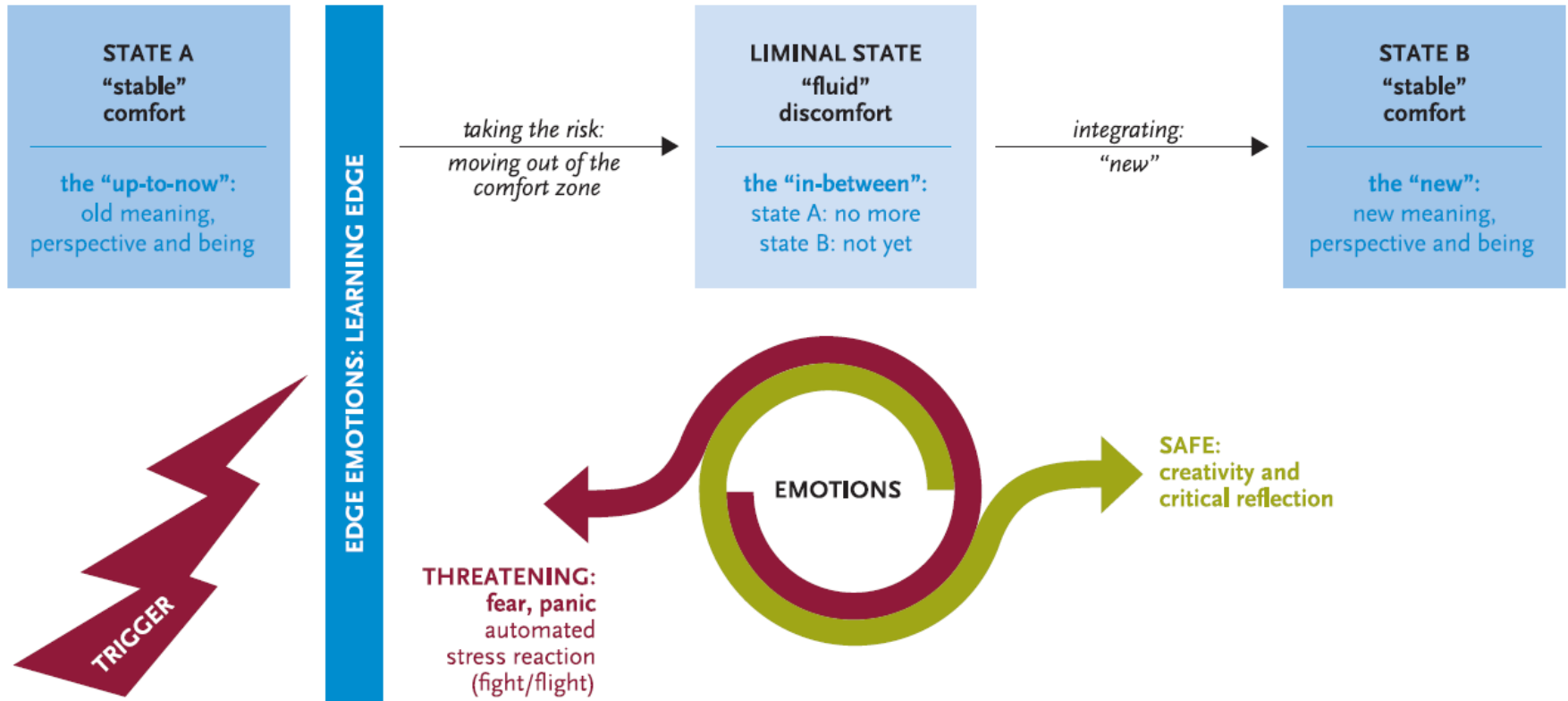


Pedagogical framework: ESDUC



Source: Zenasni, S.; Vaesen, J.; Surmont, J.; Stiers, I.; Kuppens, T. (xxxx) Conceptualizing Education for Sustainable Development in Urban Secondary Schools. *Education and Urban Society* (under review).

Transformative learning as a starting point



Source: Förster, Zimmermann & Mader (2019) Transformative teaching in Higher Education for Sustainable Development: facing the challenges. GAIA 28/3: 324-326.

Rethinking economics

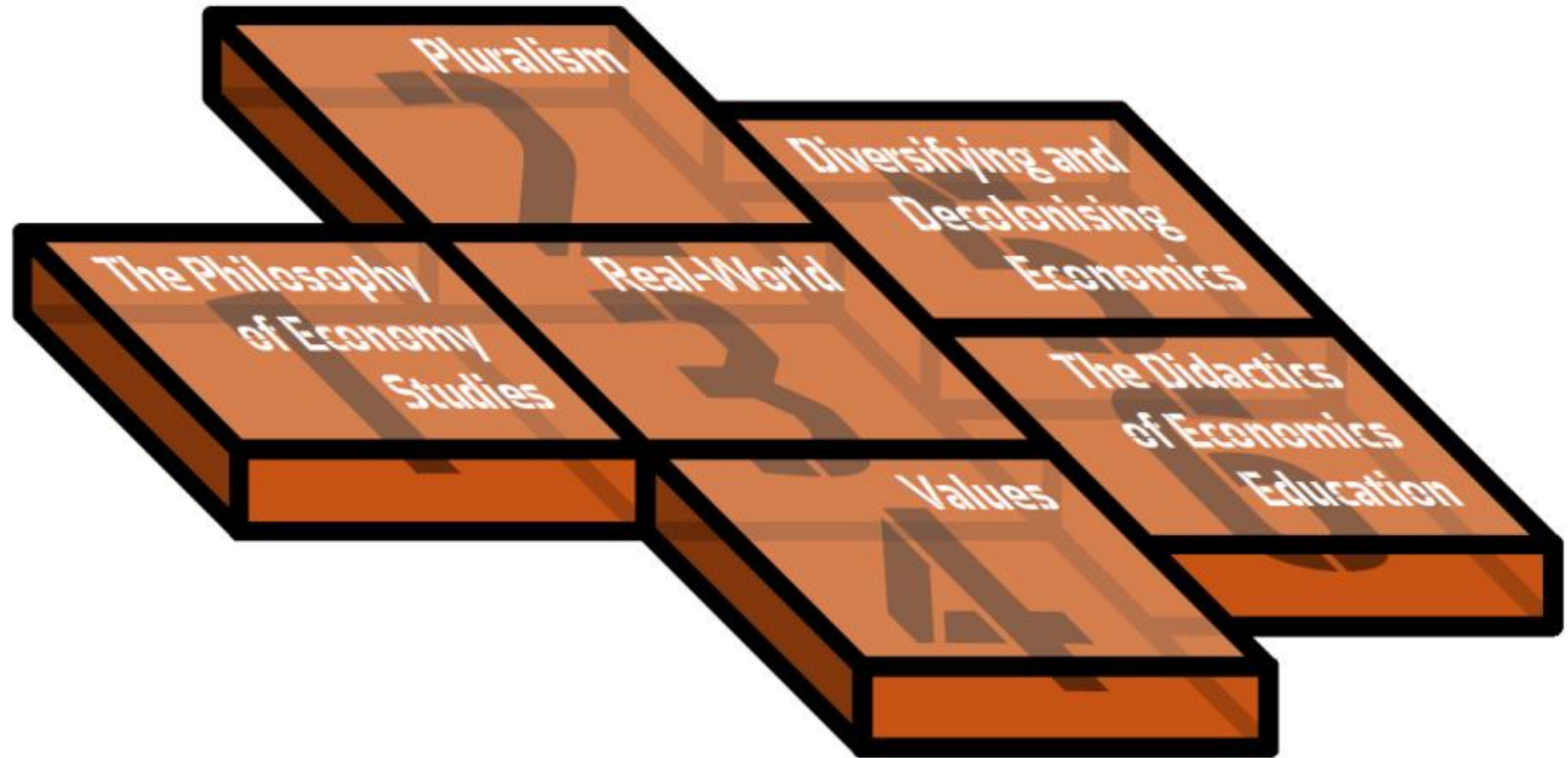


Figure 1: An overview of Part I: Foundations.

Example: lesson plans for upper secondary education

- PhD research of Lise Janssens at UHasselt
- Underpinning vision
 - increase pluralism
 - stimulate transformative learning
- Quasi-experiment – mixed methods research
 - 2021-2022: teachers teach as they are used to
 - 2022-2023: teachers adopt lesson plans developed by Lise
- Research questions
 - “To which extent do pupils attribute a different role to business people and the economy towards sustainability?” (pre/post-tests using own scale based on the work of Andersson, 2016)
 - “What mechanisms cause this change (or not)?” (qualitative research)

Example: lesson plans for upper secondary education

Learning package 1

Official learning objective:

“Pupils evaluate economic growth as a measure for welfare and wellbeing”

1.1 An indicator for measuring welfare and wellbeing

- 1.1.1 Design your own indicator for measuring welfare and wellbeing (lateral thinking)
- 1.1.2 GDP and other indicators for measuring welfare and wellbeing (incl. SDG-dashboard)
- 1.1.3 Comparing welfare and wellbeing between countries (research competence)

Example: lesson plans for upper secondary education

Learning package 2

Official learning objective:

“Pupils reflect about the limits of the economy and the role they play in it”

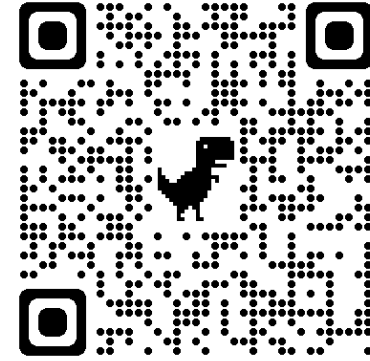
1.1 Can an economy grow forever?

1.1.1 Serious game about the limits of economic growth

1.1.2 Limits of economic growth and possible alternatives: circular economy, doughnut economics, bio-economy, degrowth (jigsaw)

Discuss how **raising the complexity** of economics education can be balanced with a **didactic reduction of this complexity** with a view to learnability.

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Future proof business economist - Tom Kuppens

Interested in co-creating transformative change?



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