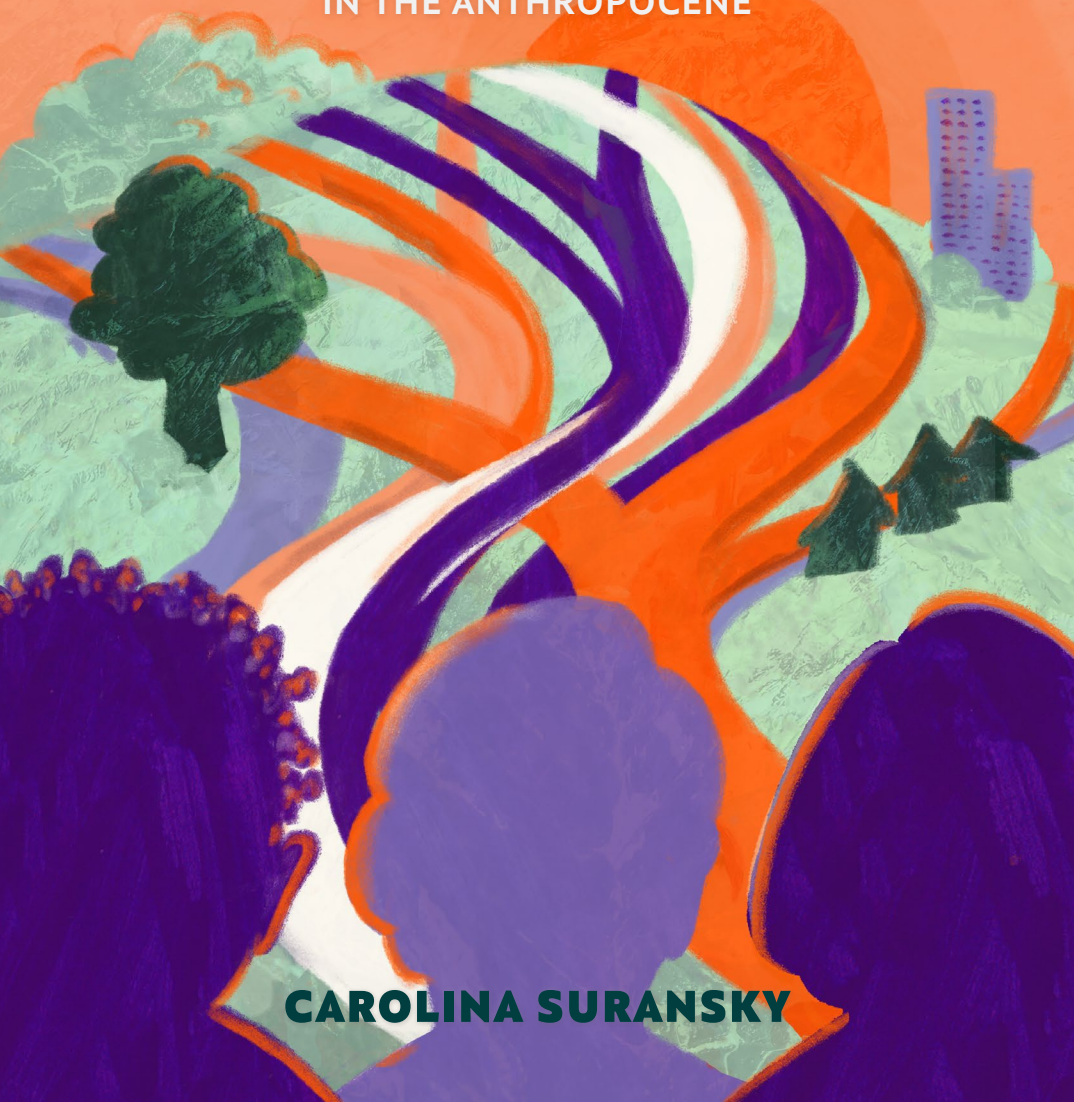


EDUCATION AT A CROSSROADS

**DIVERSITY, EQUITY AND INCLUSION
IN THE ANTHROPOCENE**



CAROLINA SURANSKY

In her inaugural address, *Education at a Crossroads: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Anthropocene*, Carolina Suransky argues that education cannot be neutral in times of ecological crises, inequality and polarization. She weaves together two main threads: pluralism and justice. Pluralism, she maintains, is at once a pedagogical practice that embraces dialogue and discomfort, an analytical lens to resist binaries, an epistemological stance that honors diverse traditions of knowledge and a political horizon where knowledge and politics meet. Justice, the second thread, is inseparable from ecological and social concerns. To ground these ideas, she interweaves personal stories that show how lived experience and theory speak to one another. Drawing on thinkers such as Appadurai, Mbembe and Latour, Suransky calls for humanistic education that opens spaces for many voices, confronts colonial legacies and helps us imagine more just and sustainable futures.

Carolina Suransky is Professor of Education with a focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the University of Humanistic Studies and Extraordinary Professor at Stellenbosch University. Her international background has shaped her commitment to justice in and through education and inspires her work on pluralism, decoloniality and ecological justice.



University of Humanistic Studies



Carolina Suransky

EDUCATION AT A CROSSROADS

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
in the Anthropocene

Inaugural lecture, delivered in abbreviated form on the occasion of assuming the position of Professor of Education with a focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the University of Humanistic Studies, 12 November 2025.



Education at a Crossroads:
Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in the Anthropocene
Prof. dr. Carolina Suransky

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For Aviva

*May your journey through the Anthropocene be filled with meaning,
courage and joy.*

EDUCATION AT A CROSSROADS

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
in the Anthropocene

1. An Education Chair in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at a Crossroads of Crisis and Commitment

Stepping into this Chair feels both like a homecoming and a new beginning. It is a continuation of my long-standing commitment to justice in and through education, but also an invitation to reimagine what humanistic learning can become in these current times of rupture and reckoning. We find ourselves living in the era of the Anthropocene, an era which is marked by human-induced ecological collapse, deepening social inequalities and intensifying polarization. In such landscapes, education cannot be neutral or untouched, but demands ethical and political commitment, philosophical struggle and planetary awareness.

With this Chair in Education and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), I will build on the humanist-inspired traditions of the University of Humanistic Studies (UHS). These are traditions of meaning-making, critical reflection and emancipatory education. At the same time, I want to challenge humanist traditions to stretch further and move towards a humanism that is better attuned to ecological entanglements and epistemic plurality; a humanism that is not only attentive to diverse human experiences, but also responsive to the more-than-human world that we co-inhabit.

Two main threads run through my address. The first thread concerns DEI in different layers of meaning. For me, DEI translates into pluralism, understood as active engagement with diversity that entails participation, dialogue and the mutual transformation of all involved. I will approach pluralism, firstly, as a pedagogical practice that needs discomfort, dissensus, interruption and not-knowing as conditions for transformative learning. Secondly, through Appadurai's notions of scapes and the capacity to aspire, I will highlight pluralism as an analytical lens to resist polarizing binaries of global and local and explore its complex entanglements that shape our lives. Thirdly, with Mbembe and Latour, I treat pluralism as an epistemological stance that honors multiple and suppressed knowledge traditions. And finally, through the idea of dis-enclosure, I will point to pluralism as a political horizon in which epistemology and politics meet. These layers are not separate. Taken together, they will form a red thread in my argumentation: pluralism in the Anthropocene must be understood as pedagogical, analytical, epistemological and political all at once.

The second thread is my commitment to justice. I will discuss how populist narratives, in the Netherlands and elsewhere, seek to delegitimize both DEI and climate action by portraying them as threats to national identity and economic security. Against this backdrop,

I argue that social inequality and ecological destruction are deeply intertwined. Decolonial thought helps me to understand that both are sustained by the same modernist systems, and thus call for an epistemological and educational framework that makes their interconnection visible at every level. With Appadurai, Mbembe and Latour as my interlocutors, I will argue that education can help to nurture the capacity to aspire, confront colonial legacies and foster planetary responsibility.

Taken together, these two main threads, pluralism in its multiple registers and justice as horizon and commitment, form the backbone of my plea for engaged humanistic education. Such education must confront the structural conditions of epistemic injustice, colonial legacies, and the ecological crises that shape our everyday lives, our institutions and our imaginations. It must also cultivate an ethos that affirms both human and ecological plurality and that holds open tensions as fertile ground for ethical and pedagogical imagination. In this way, I seek to embody the UHS mission.

Notably, this Chair is the UHS's first Chair with an education profile.¹ This is fitting because education has always been central to our university's mission which is rooted in humanist traditions of meaningful formation, critical reflection and social engagement. Our mission reads:

...Inspired by humanism, we focus on issues that matter, such as social justice, sustainability, and the quest for meaning in a changing

¹ The establishment of this new Chair with an Education profile, and a special focus on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), can be seen in the light of the national *Recognition and Rewards* policies. This policy responds to a long-standing undervaluation of teaching. By creating professorial positions with an education profile, the system signals that teaching and educational leadership are vital to advance academia. It also reflects a broader international shift away from one-size-fits-all academic achievement toward recognition of diverse scholarly contributions.

society. We combine knowledge from social sciences and humanities to approach questions from various perspectives. Through research, dialogue, and connection, we contribute to societal issues. We do this close to and engaged with our community. We critically examine the world around us and create space for new perspectives. In doing so, we give meaning to today's challenges and contribute to the solutions needed in the world of tomorrow.²

Our new university motto is *Connecting Knowledge*³, and that is precisely what I will strive to do as chair holder: weaving together diverse people, forms of knowledge, perspectives and practices in service of education and inclusive futures and connecting our mission with national debates and global challenges.

Academically, I situate my Chair at a transdisciplinary intersection of educational and political philosophy, social theory, research on DEI and Anthropocene studies. My work starts with the conviction that education influences how we live together, whose voices are heard and what futures we can imagine. For me, this means that I want to address epistemic injustice, colonial legacies and the ecological crises that shape our institutions and ways of thinking. In this view, DEI is not just a policy framework but a pedagogical and ethical horizon that calls for a more just and plural understanding of knowledge. I aim to inspire students and all educators, to reconsider the assumptions their work makes about who belongs, which forms of knowledge are valued and what it means to flourish, not only as individuals, but as interconnected beings on Earth. I believe that education can create spaces where we can learn to engage with plurality and discomfort,

² See: About our university - University of Humanistic Studies. URL: <https://www.uvh.nl/en/about-us/about-our-university>

³ The UHS translation of the Dutch 'Kennis die verbindt'

face social and ecological crises as real experiences and develop the courage which is needed for democratic and planetary coexistence.

I share with my colleagues in the Department of Education at the University of Humanistic Studies the conviction that education can be a transformative response to the crises of the Anthropocene. Together, we wrote the book *Education for Transformation – Humanistic Perspectives on Flourishing in the Anthropocene*. In it, we argue that educators have the resources to foster flourishing in times of global uncertainty and human–planetary interdependence. We propose “diverse but converging pathways to renew humanism as inspiration for critical, decolonial and ecological educational practices” (de Ruyter & Suransky, in press). We stress that “humanistic education becomes not only a site of [cognitive] learning, but also a space of ethical formation and civic hope. It becomes, in short, a response to the times we live in, not as a retreat, but as a form of critical and ethical engagement with the world and with each other” (de Ruyter & Suransky, in press). In our book, we bring together many perspectives shaped by different disciplinary and epistemological backgrounds. In this booklet, I focus on my own views. I will discuss how my thinking has developed through theory, teaching and institutional work and reflect on what I think that this means for education that advances DEI in the Anthropocene. In doing so, I will engage with key interlocutors and build on articles that I wrote in recent years and now form the substantive basis for this Chair.⁴

Throughout this booklet, I will include short autobiographical vignettes. They open small windows onto the ways in which my personal and professional experiences in different parts of the world have shaped how I see and engage with DEI. Woven in as pauses, these stories invite the reader to place lived experience alongside

4 See bibliography

argumentation and analysis. They offer a personal perspective that makes visible the paths from which I step into my work in this Chair.

The following vignette is the first of these windows: a moment that illustrates how questions of identity, belonging and diversity are woven into my own life journey.

Vignette One: Life In Transit

It is 1988, and I live in Ann Arbor, Michigan. I sit in our bedroom and practice the Hebrew prayers that I will recite at our upcoming Jewish wedding. Around me are half-packed boxes, soon to be shipped to South Africa, which is my husband's home country, from which he had been exiled for 15 years. Aged 26, I feel overwhelmed by the convergence of worlds that I find myself inhabiting. Here I am: a white European woman in the United States, learning a Middle Eastern language, preparing to relocate to a country in Africa.

I pause and ask myself: Who am I in all of this? Who can I become?

2. Education in the Crossfire: Ideological Struggles in the Anthropocene

In January 2025, the Dutch newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* published an article titled: “*It has come to this: ‘anti-woke’ has ‘woke’ completely in a stranglehold.*”⁵ It described the rise of anti-woke and anti-DEI movements, particularly in the United States, but increasingly also in Europe, including the Netherlands. Under the Trump administration, terms which are associated with DEI and gender identity have been banned in federal institutions, which has led to the erasure of such language from official government discourse and to mass firings. Legislation in several U.S. states curtailed education on racism and inequality by erasing slavery and Indigenous histories from curricula.

These developments are not confined to the U.S. Similar patterns are emerging in the public discourse in the Netherlands. This trend marks a departure from the previous decade, when global movements like Black Lives Matter (BLM) and #MeToo prompted critical reflection in (higher) education. BLM foregrounded how knowledge production is deeply entangled with structures of exclusion and injustice which spurred universities to examine their colonial legacies and ongoing systemic inequalities. Today, these efforts face increasing delegitimization and backlash.

A notable feature of this pushback is the alignment of anti-woke rhetoric with climate skepticism or climate change denial. In this logic,

⁵ See: NRC 31 January 2025: *Het is zover: ‘antiwoke’ heeft ‘woke’ volledig in de tang* - NRC. URL: <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2025/01/31/het-is-zover-antiwoke-heeft-woke-volledig-in-de-tang-a4881613>

both DEI and climate policies are framed as threats to national identity, economic security and national and/or local cultural traditions. In a recent article *Education as a Philosophical Battleground* (Suransky, forthcoming).⁶ I argue that this convergence is not coincidental:

A striking development is the way in which resistance to ‘woke’ [and DEI] frequently coincides with skepticism or denial of climate change. These convergences appear to stem, at least in part, from an effort to preserve or reinforce established power structures.⁷

The ideological resistance to DEI and ecological threats is often cloaked in discourses of neutrality, tradition and ‘freedom of thought’. However, these discourses are never neutral; claims to neutrality merely mask the power relations that shape them. After all, in all ideological struggles which surround education, one of the central questions is: “*Who determines which knowledge is considered valuable and legitimate?*” Power dynamics play a crucial role in this: who holds the authority over dominant narratives and how do these narratives shape education? Education is not merely a vehicle for knowledge transmission, but rather a mirror of broader societal power relations. It functions as a battleground where conflicts over identity, history, truth and visions of the future become tangible. The South African Education scholar Jonathan Jansen captures this aptly:

Like national flags and anthems, the school curriculum has remained one of the most contested symbols of any social transition. Changing

6 The article will appear in Dutch: *Onderwijs als filosofisch strijdperk: Van polarisatie naar pluralisme en planetair bewustzijn*. I thank the editors of the *Algemeen Nederlands Tijdschrift voor Wijsbegeerte* for their valuable comments on the draft version of my article, which have also found their way into my inaugural address.

7 My translation of: Een opvallende ontwikkeling is de manier waarop het verzet tegen woke [and DEI] regelmatig samenvalt met scepsis of ontkenning van klimaatverandering. Deze combinaties lijken deels voort te komen uit een streven om gevestigde machtsstructuren [...] te behouden of te versterken. (Suransky, forthcoming)

a curriculum is more than adjusting teaching methods, learning processes, or assessment. Especially in societies in transition, curriculum change essentially represents a symbolic shift in dominant values triggered by changes in political regimes. Students of curriculum politics are therefore likely to encounter the wisdom once dispensed to a curriculum analyst visiting a foreign country: Show me your curriculum, and I will tell you who is in power. (Jansen, 2004: 784)

In today's political climate, populist movements frequently position universities as strongholds of ideologies that undermine national values and seek to gain control over the educational narrative. In the Netherlands, the Party for Freedom (*Partij voor de Vrijheid* - PVV) for example, advocates for what they call 'politically neutral' education and insist that ideological formation be limited to the private domain of the family. Their party program, with which they entered the national elections of November 2023, characterized education about colonial history, racial diversity and climate change as leftist indoctrination and woke activism.⁸ It states:

The PVV loves the Netherlands. We are proud of our culture, identity, and traditions. These must be preserved. Not erased. The leftist hatred that mocks heroes from our history will be ended. The apologies for

⁸ At the time of writing this inaugural address, the PVV has updated its party platform in anticipation of the general elections in November 2025. Although the language in the PVV's new program has somewhat shifted, its core ideas remain largely unchanged—particularly regarding education. As stated in their most recent program: "*Wij willen geen onderwijsvernieuwingen meer. Wij willen terug naar het gestructureerde onderwijs van weleer – met leraren die duidelijk uitleggen, begeleiden en controleren. Geen onderwijs over gender, klimaat of andere linkse indoctrinatie, maar terug naar de basisvaardigheden: rekenen, taal, geschiedenis. De Week van de Lentekriebels – symbool van seksuele woke-indoctrinatie – schaffen we af in het basisonderwijs.*" (Source: PVV Verkiezingsprogramma "Dit is uw land" 2025–2029, p. 33). My translation in English: We no longer want educational reforms. We want to return to the structured teaching of the past – with teachers who give clear explanations, provide guidance, and exercise control. No lessons on gender, climate, or other forms of left-wing indoctrination, but a return to the basics: arithmetic, language, and history. The so-called 'Spring Fever Week' – a symbol of sexual woke indoctrination – will be abolished in primary education.

slavery and the military actions in Indonesia, as offered by the King, will be withdrawn. Black Pete stays. (PVV, 2023:29)⁹

They continue:

We have to fly less, eat less meat — it just never ends. The PVV says: no, we're absolutely not going to do that! The Climate Act, the Climate Agreement, and all other climate measures will be immediately shredded. No billions wasted on pointless climate hobbies, but more money for our people. (PVV, 2023:22)¹⁰

The phrase 'our people' is unambiguous: it refers to hardworking locals (read: white Dutch citizens) whose culture and 'Western way of life' are said to be under threat. These 'ordinary citizens' are portrayed as victims of DEI policies, climate measures and neoliberal economic agendas. Populist leaders present 'green policies' as a direct assault on the sovereignty of the nation and the everyday lives of ordinary citizens. As a result, global challenges are redefined as local identity and economic concerns.

Education is argued to play a central role in this polarizing discourse. Schools and universities are framed as breeding grounds for undesirable ideologies. As the PVV claims:

9 My translation of: "De PVV houdt van Nederland. Wij zijn trots op onze cultuur, identiteit en tradities. Die moeten we dan ook behouden. Niet uitwissen. De linkse haat waarin helden uit onze geschiedenis worden beschimpt wordt beëindigd. De excuses voor het slavernijverleden en de politionele acties, zoals gedaan door de Koning, worden ingetrokken. Zwarte Piet blijft." (PVV, 2023:29).

10 My translation of: "We moeten minder vliegen, minder vlees eten; het houdt maar niet op. De PVV zegt: nee, dat gaan we mooi níét doen! De Klimaatwet, het Klimaatakkoord en alle andere klimaatmaatregelen gaan direct door de shredder. Geen miljardenverspilling aan zinloze klimaathobby's, maar meer geld voor onze mensen." (PVV, 2023:22).

Schoolchildren are indoctrinated with climate activism, gender madness, and a sense of shame about our country's history. We want education that is free from political activism. [...] Teachers must teach children how to think, not what to think. (PVV, 2023:32)¹¹

Higher education, too, is under fire:

Internationalization has severely damaged the accessibility of universities for the children of Dutch taxpayers [...]. Universities should primarily serve our children. The PVV therefore wants to significantly restrict study migration. (PVV, 2023:33)¹²

This critique strikes a sensitive nerve, as higher education in the Netherlands has been intensively internationalized over the past two decades, often driven by economic incentives. Universities have recruited many foreign students, in part because they pay higher tuition fees, and many English-language programs have been established to accommodate them. This suggests that the resulting backlash is not only cultural or nationalist; it also reflects deeper tensions about marketization and the public mission of the university.

To summarize: resistance to *woke*, DEI and climate education is often rooted in a broader distrust of the academy and globalization. These concerns are bundled into a singular enemy image: an imagined cosmopolitan elite that is said to threaten local values and livelihoods. I find such a polarizing frame – global versus local – dangerously

¹¹ My translation of: "Schoolkinderen worden geïndoctrineerd met klimaatactivisme, genderwaanzin en met een gevoel van schaamte over de geschiedenis van ons land. Wij willen onderwijs dat vrij is van politiek activisme. [...] Leerkrachten moeten kinderen leren hóé ze moeten denken en niet wát ze moeten denken." (PVV, 2023:32).

¹² My translation of: "De internationalisering heeft de toegankelijkheid van universiteiten voor de kinderen van Nederlandse belastingplichtige ouders flinke schade toegebracht [...]. De universiteiten moeten er in de eerste plaats zijn voor onze kinderen. De PVV wil dan ook dat de studiemigratie fors wordt beperkt." (PVV, 2023:33).

reductive. It obscures the entanglements and dependencies that define our planetary condition and diverts attention from a crucial role of education: to foster the capacity to live with complexity, to resist false nostalgia for an idealized past and to equip learners to navigate the deeply interconnected world they inhabit.

I think that it is important to acknowledge that such struggles are not confined to grand political discourse; they also surface in the small, everyday practices of education, where inequality is quietly reproduced through ordinary routines that easily pass unnoticed.

Vignette Two: Ten South African Rand and a Lesson in Inequality

It is 1997 and I live with my family in Durban, South Africa. Our two young daughters, Sarafina (7) and Sonya (6) attend the local primary school in Manor Gardens. Their primary school is a so called “Model C school”. Such schools were reserved for white children under apartheid but open to all since the early 1990s. Model C schools retained their strong infrastructure, well-educated teachers and high academic standards, because they combined government funding with additional income from school fees. As a result, they stood out sharply from the under-resourced township and rural schools that most Black children continued to attend. At Manor Gardens Primary School, most of the children are white. In recent years, however, a small number of Black African children had begun to attend, often the sons and daughters of domestic workers in the neighborhood,

sometimes of staff employed at the nearby University of Natal. In Sarafina and Sonya's classes, perhaps five out of thirty children are Black. Every now and then the school organizes a special event. On one such day, a firefighter was scheduled to visit Sonya's class to talk about his work. It promised to be exciting. For these occasions, children are asked to make a small contribution, like ten rand, to cover the costs. On that busy morning, I forgot to give Sonya the money.

When the time comes for the children to gather in the hall, those who had not brought the fee are separated from the rest and sent to the library until the event is over. Sonya has to sit there with a few other children, all of them Black. When she came home, she was disappointed to have missed the session but most of all confused about why. I, on the other hand, was angry: at the school, but also at myself. Why did it take me so long to recognize the discriminatory nature of this special events policy? What do children learn about the world they live in when exclusion is enforced like that? In retrospect, Sonya certainly learned a lot about inequality that day. But I wonder how such experiences have shaped the world of the other excluded children.

3. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion at the University of Humanistic Studies

I believe that a university which is inspired by humanism, the practice of epistemic humility is especially important. By this I mean the recognition that our knowledge is always partial and situated, and that we need others' perspectives to expand and challenge us. Epistemic humility resists the temptation of certainty and opens spaces for plurality, dialogue and for learning from voices that are too often marginalized.¹³ This fits closely with humanist traditions, which have always stressed critical inquiry and dialogical engagement. As José Medina (2013) reminds us, epistemic humility is a democratic virtue: it helps us to counter epistemic arrogance and foster receptivity to difference. For the UHS, epistemic humility allows us to create spaces where diverse ways of knowing are valued, where disagreement is taken seriously and where education becomes a search for more just and caring futures.

Practicing epistemic humility requires us to confront the blind spots in humanism. As Harry Kunneman and I argued, humanism is not immune to what we called 'cosmopolitan myopia' (Kunneman & Suransky, 2011). Mainstream humanism has often overlooked global power asymmetries, colonial legacies and structural inequalities, thereby compromising its cosmopolitan promise. Seen in this light, DEI is not only about amplifying marginalized voices but about

¹³ In my commitment to epistemic humility, I draw inspiration from our consortium SIMAGINE, an international, interdisciplinary network hosted by the UHS that explores social imaginaries in pluralist, globalizing contexts, with particular attention to religion, secularity, media, art, education and decolonial perspectives. Simagine. URL: <https://simagineconsortium.com>

rethinking the very criteria through which knowledge is valued, selected and legitimized.

Gloria Wekker's *White Innocence* (2016) makes this challenge tangible in the Dutch context. She shows how a self-image of tolerance and progressiveness coexists with deep denial of colonial histories and racial hierarchies. Building on Edward Said's concept of the 'cultural archive', she discusses how colonial knowledge, and representations continue to shape institutions, curricula and everyday interactions in the Netherlands. Wekker argues that this denial, she calls white innocence, not only silences the voices and experiences of racialized people, but also prevents Dutch society to recognize how privilege and exclusion are structurally reproduced. For a humanist-inspired university, her insights are important: they remind us that epistemic humility requires confronting not only abstract structures of exclusion but also the specific cultural patterns of denial that live within us. In this way, Wekker urges us to transform education into a practice that head-on faces denial, discomfort and complexity.

In this context, it is important to acknowledge that disability too is an essential, yet often overlooked, dimension of DEI. At the UHS, students and staff pointed out structural barriers ranging from inaccessible entrances and digital environments to curricula that leave too little room for diversity. A group of PhD students in Disability Studies wrote in a letter to the Executive Board, stating: "*We find that studying and working at the UHS currently places a disproportionate burden on disabled students and staff, and that for some it is even (almost) impossible.*"¹⁴ The Board took this claim to heart and began to set important changes

¹⁴ This letter was endorsed by the UHS DEI steering group and sent to the UHS Executive Board (CvB) in January 2024. It was an initiative by UHS PhD candidates Liorah Hoek, Jacqueline Kool, Nienke Spaan and Aartjan ter Haar.

in motion. In the meantime, some of the most urgent obstacles have been addressed.¹⁵

While diversity and inclusion are often emphasized, the example highlights that the notion of equity is equally essential. Equity acknowledges that different groups face unequal structural barriers and that equal treatment does not always lead to equal opportunity. For a humanist-inspired university, equity requires a commitment to address these systemic inequalities, whether they are tied to race, gender, disability, class, first generation student or other dimensions of difference. Equity thus sharpens the ethical and political edge of DEI. It asks who can genuinely participate.

As such, DEI requires a comprehensive understanding of education that makes room for discomfort and interruption. Humanistic traditions call on us to engage tensions rather than smooth them over. While committed to academic rigor and the highest scholarly standards, a humanist-inspired university, in my view, should strive to become a pluriversity. The idea of a pluriversity contrasts with the traditional model of the university. Whereas a university has historically been organized around the ideal of universality, understood as a single, dominant framework of knowledge often rooted in Western modernity, a pluriversity calls for spaces where multiple knowledge systems can coexist, interact and be valued on their own terms.

¹⁵ The back entrance of the UHS building has been made accessible for people who use wheelchairs and digital accessibility has been improved with the introduction of a new university website and house style. Yet more is needed than meeting legal requirements: the needs of people with a disability too need to be recognized as an integral part of human diversity and structurally embedded in policy, education and knowledge development.

The idea of a pluriversity is widely discussed in decolonial thought, and draws on Aníbal Quijano's influential concept of the 'coloniality of power' (Quijano, 2000, 2007). Walter D. Mignolo and Catherine Walsh, for instance, further develop this idea in their book *On Decoloniality* (2018). They stress that a pluriversity is not about rejecting science or established academic traditions, but rather about breaking the monopoly of Western epistemologies to create room for epistemic diversity. It seeks to overcome what Quijano called the 'coloniality of knowledge,' which points to the dominance of Eurocentric frameworks that silence or delegitimize other ways of knowing. From this perspective, a pluriversity aligns with the values of epistemic justice and epistemic humility. It acknowledges that no single tradition has the final word on truth and that flourishing in the Anthropocene requires learning from a plurality of worldviews, including Indigenous, local and marginalized perspectives.

In my reading, these convictions resonate with the institutional commitments of the UHS. In its DEI vision, the university explicitly defines inclusion as "creating space for different ways of knowing, for stories that often remain invisible, and for discomfort as a necessary step in a learning process."¹⁶ Likewise, the UHS *Strategic Plan 2022–2026* places DEI within a broader triad of inclusivity, sustainability and globalization, and affirms that:

Across society, people experience the negative consequences of exclusion and seek ways to promote inclusivity for everyone. The pursuit of "a meaningful life in a just and caring society" takes place in an increasingly diverse context, where people live with different expectations, ambitions, views, images, and rituals. Inspired by

¹⁶ My translation of "ruimte maken voor verschillende vormen van weten, voor verhalen die vaak onzichtbaar blijven, en voor ongemak als een noodzakelijke stap in het leerproces" in DEI Vision, UHS.

the values and traditions of humanism—in which we recognize both existential meaning-making dimensions and a moral-political commitment, the plurality of society deserves a central position in education and research. The University of Humanistic Studies seeks to be a place where a diversity of people can flourish and feel safe, recognized, and valued. For polyphony is an important value in the humanistic tradition.¹⁷

The strategic plan shows that DEI is central to humanist traditions of meaning-making and moral-political commitment. DEI helps to shape both who belongs at the university and what counts as knowledge. The UHS must equip learners to face complexity and imagine more just and sustainable futures, which is an ethos that is urgently needed in times of polarization and ecological crisis, and one I aim to strengthen with this Chair. Yet equity and inclusion cannot remain abstract ideals: they need to be practiced amid the tensions of public life, where recognition is contested and pluralism demands negotiation. An example at the UHS illustrates how difficult, and necessary, it is to hold such spaces open.

17 My translation of: “In de volledige breedte van de samenleving ervaart men de negatieve gevolgen van uitsluiting en is men op zoek naar manieren om inclusiviteit voor iedereen te bevorderen. Het nastreven van ‘een zinvol leven in een rechtvaardige en zorgzame samenleving’ gebeurt in een steeds pluraler wordende samenleving waarin mensen leven met verschillende verwachtingen, ambities, opvattingen, beelden en rituelen. Geïnspireerd door de waarden en tradities van het humanisme, waarin we zowel levensbeschouwelijke zingevende dimensies als een moreel-politiek streven herkennen, verdient de pluraliteit van de samenleving – een centrale positie in onderwijs en onderzoek. De UHS wil een plaats zijn waar een verscheidenheid aan mensen zich kan ontplooiën en zich veilig, erkend en gewaardeerd voelt. Want meerstemmigheid is een belangrijke waarde in de humanistische traditie.” In: UHS Strategic Plan 2022-2026 p.13

Vignette Three: A Battle of Flags and a dialogue on Gaza

It is the fall of 2023, I live in Utrecht, the Netherlands. At the University of Humanistic Studies, where I work, the war/genocide in Gaza is a contentious topic of conversation. Personally, I struggle with the situation in the Middle East. I feel horrified and sad about those who were brutally murdered on October 7th. I see the ruinous, ultimately futile, response of the Israeli far right cabinet and the army. I worry about family members who live in Israel, I feel desperate about the unimaginable suffering of Palestinians, and I think of the people of Neve Shalom/Wahat-al-Salaam, the Jewish-Palestinian village where I lived in 1986.

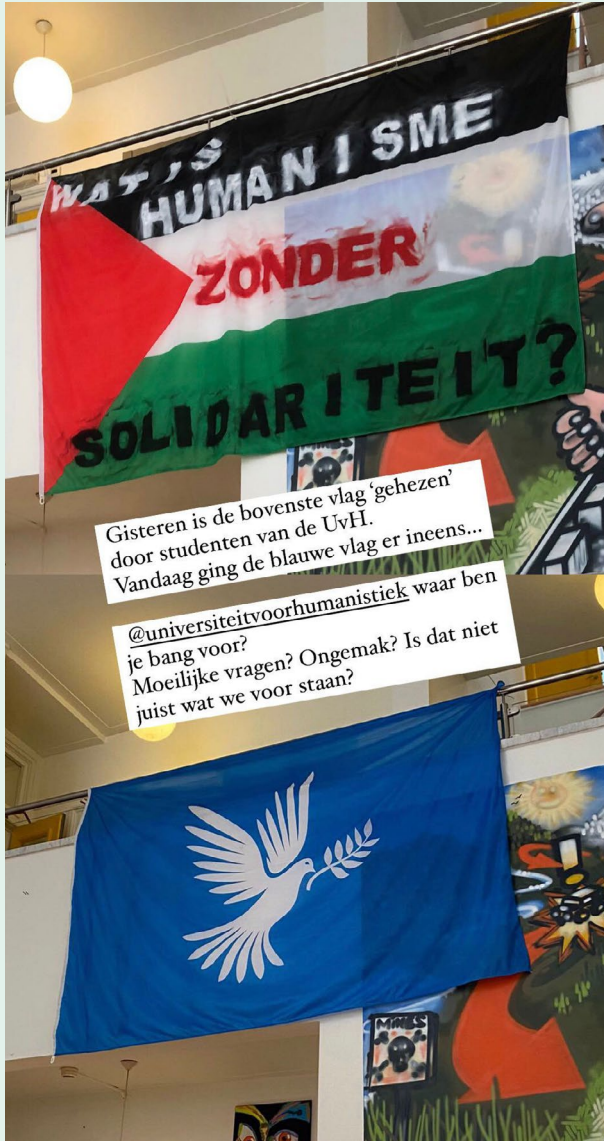
During a break in a Bachelor course on Humanization in Dutch society, a group of students approach their lecturer. They are upset that Gaza has not been mentioned in class. *“We are at the kind of university where this should be discussed whether it fits the program or not,”* one student insists. The lecturer hesitates. He acknowledges the gravity of the situation but admits that he finds it difficult to address in a teaching setting. The course has its own focus and he does not find it appropriate to change the program. The students are disappointed.

A few weeks later, the Executive Board asks me to facilitate a university-wide dialogue after *Students for Palestine* call on the university to cut ties with Israeli universities. These students argue: *“In the name of humanity, the UHS must speak out against the genocide in Gaza. If the university makes political statements about the war in Ukraine but not about*

Gaza, it implicitly says that Palestinian lives are worth less. From the perspective of the humanist principle of equality and the defense of human dignity, this is highly problematic.” In the days leading up to the dialogue, a ‘battle of flags’ unfolds in the hall. Students hang a large Palestinian flag with the words: “*What is Humanism without solidarity?*” A few days later, others add a Peace Flag with a white dove. Just before the dialogue begins, the Peace Flag is taken down by *Students for Palestine*, who ask: “*UHS, what are you afraid of? Difficult questions? Discomfort? Isn’t that what we stand for?*”

In preparation for the dialogue, I met separately with the Executive Board and with *Students for Palestine* to explore how we might hold a meaningful conversation without the expectation of consensus. I believed I was ready. Yet, as the dialogue began, I felt angry about the removal of the Peace Flag. Why was there no space for that perspective? I chose to voice these feelings at the outset. My openness, however, immediately provoked controversy: some participants questioned whether I could still serve as a fair facilitator.

As chair of the Steering Committee on DEI, I ask myself: what is my role? The war/genocide in Gaza forces us to face difficult ethical questions about the responsibility of a university in times of great suffering. How can I create space for pluralism, dissent and moral urgency while remaining true to the critical and dialogical traditions at the heart of humanist values, without falling into relativism?



4. Learning to Live in Globalizing Landscapes

I return now to my earlier observation that, in populist discourses, the global is often cast as a symbol of loss and threat, while the local is romanticized as a site of authenticity and sovereignty. Political movements such as *Make America Great Again* (MAGA) and *Brexit* clearly draw on this frame when they promise a return to an idealized past. In certain left-wing anti-globalist currents too, globalization is portrayed one-dimensionally as a destructive force. In both cases, a binary and polarizing framework prevails, one that fails to grasp the complex entanglement of global and local processes and tends to essentialize ‘what is one’s own’. This reductive frame reinforces an ‘us-versus-them’ mentality which deepens social and political divides and fuels further polarization.

From my perspective as Chair in Education and DEI, I want to consider how we might approach the situation more nuancedly and what the implications of such an approach would be for education. For inspiration, I turn to the work of cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai who provides an alternative lens to understand globalization and, importantly, offers critical insights that can help to design education that resist polarization. In his book *Modernity at Large* (1996), Arjun Appadurai introduces the concept of *scapes* to capture the multiple and layered nature of globalization. He distinguishes five interconnected dimensions of global ‘flows’: *ethnoscapes* (flows of people through migration), *mediascapes* (flows of images and information), *technoscapes* (flows of technology), *financescapes* (flows of capital), and *ideoscapes* (flows of ideas and ideologies). These scapes move across the globe in uneven and unpredictable ways. Appadurai explains:

The new global cultural economy has to be seen as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order that cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing center-periphery models (Appadurai, 1996, p. 32).

Crucially, he emphasizes that local contexts are not passive recipients of these flows. Rather, they are sites where global influences are constantly reinterpreted, translated and possibly resisted:

The local is not a leftover of the global, nor is it an alternative to it. It is rather a product of the many interactions between globalizing forces and local subjects who absorb, transform, and sometimes resist these forces (Appadurai, 1996, p. 178).

In other words, the global and the local cannot be thought of as separate spheres; they are dynamically entangled. This vision has important implications for education. It invites us to investigate how these *scapes* take shape in different environments and how migration, media, technology, capital and ideas are locally experienced, and to critically reflect on how such entanglements create both constraints and new possibilities.

Importantly, Appadurai stresses that people do not have equal opportunity to navigate these global flows. With his notion of the *capacity to aspire*, he shows how access to resources, imagination and opportunities shapes who can envision and pursue different futures:

The twist with the capacity to aspire is that it is not evenly distributed in any society. It is a sort of meta-capacity, and the relatively rich and powerful invariably have a more fully developed capacity to aspire. [...] The poorer members, precisely because of their lack of opportunities to practice the use of this navigational capacity [...] have a more brittle horizon of aspirations (Appadurai, 2013, pp. 188–189).

Poverty, in this sense, is not simply a lack of material goods, but also a lack of circumstances that allow people to imagine and work toward alternative futures.

In my own teaching, I invite students to analyze their places of birth through Appadurai's lens. They explore which *scapes* and aspirations are present in the region where they grew up and how these affect the everyday lives of locals. Students from rural areas point, for instance, to the influence of social media (*mediascapes*) or the proximity of refugee asylum centers (*ethnoscapes*). Students from urban areas often describe international business activities (*technoscapes*), religious diversity (*ideoscapes*), and demographic shifts (*ethnoscapes*).

A striking example comes from a student who wrote about the transformation of the region Eindhoven.¹⁸ In her reflection, she describes how during football matches of PSV, the crowd still nostalgically chants “Boerûh, Boerûh¹⁹!”, which is an echo of Southeast Brabant's agrarian and industrial past. The transformation of the Eindhoven region exemplifies the entanglement of global processes and local realities and makes visible the possibility of education to engage with these dynamics. Once a region marked by agriculture and manufacturing, it is now known as the “Brainport,” a high-tech area which is centered around the company ASML. Due to a shortage of technically highly skilled Dutch workers, ASML relies on migrant workers. Their arrival has led to economic growth, but also to major demographic and

18 With thanks to Kim Snoeijsen for granting permission to cite this example from her essay: *The Impact of ASML; “Chips Make the World Go Round” – An Academic Essay about the Globalization Effects of ASML and the Potential for Humanistic Spiritual Care within the Brainport Region*. University of Humanistic Studies, Utrecht, 2024.

19 “Farmers, Farmers!” chanted with a local Brabant accent.

cultural shifts: in 2024, approximately 44% of Eindhoven's residents had a migration background.²⁰

The Brainport example illustrates how globalization redistributes opportunities and risks unevenly: while some groups gain access to new resources, others face rising housing costs, intensified competition and feelings of cultural dissonance. Populist discourses frame such changes as threats to locals and thereby reinforce a polarizing narrative. Appadurai's perspective, by contrast, shows how the local is constantly reconfigured through the collision and blending of global *scapes*. This shift of perspective has profound implications for education that seeks to advance DEI. Appadurai's framework of *scapes* encourages pedagogies that move beyond abstract accounts of globalization and instead help students to connect global processes to their own lived contexts and those of others. It makes it visible how these global flows intersect in uneven ways and thereby produce both opportunities and inequalities. For education, this means that we need to help students to develop critical literacy about global–local entanglements, while simultaneously creating dialogical spaces where divergent experiences of social change can be interrogated. As such, education can play a role in expanding this capacity by nurturing the ability to imagine alternative forms of belonging and solidarity and by developing skills and confidence to act on these visions. In this sense, education becomes not only about understanding structures of inequality, but also about developing agency.

For the UHS, this calls us to invite students to question dominant narratives, engage with marginalized perspectives and practice the normative role of humanistic professionals. The Brainport Eindhoven

²⁰ See: Bijna de helft van de Eindhovenaren heeft migratieachtergrond, Indiase gemeenschap nu groter dan de Marokkaanse | Eindhoven | ed.nl. URL: <https://tinyurl.com/5b6p5trd>. The newspaper refers to figures given by CBS – Statistic Netherlands.

example illustrates why this matters: rather than treating globalization as a story of economic growth with unfortunate side effects, it can be understood as a site of democratic imagination and social learning. By centering lived experience, recognizing cultural complexity and confronting socio-economic inequalities, locally embedded educational practices can help to foster solidarities that cross divides.

The question arises: *How can education help us to see globalization not as a danger to resist, but as a space where inclusive futures can be imagined and enacted?* To answer this question, I turn to the philosophers Achille Mbembe and Bruno Latour who challenge what they consider to be enduring legacies of Modernity. Each in their own way argues that in the Anthropocene, human and ecological diversity are inseparable, since the same Modernist systems that exploit the Earth also marginalize cultures and ways of knowing. Just as the destruction of ecosystems threatens planetary flourishing, the silencing of epistemic plurality erodes our collective capacity to imagine just and sustainable futures. Mbembe and Latour inspire me to see education as a space to confront these twin challenges together and encourage students to develop an ethos that embraces both human and ecological plurality.

Vignette Four: Imagining Ourselves Otherwise

It is July 2016, and together with colleagues from Azim Premji University (India), the University of the Free State (South Africa), Gadjah Mada University (Indonesia), the University of Humanistic Studies and Hivos²¹, I am co-teaching graduate students and civil society based staff in the International Summer School on *Pluralism and Social Change*. We are in Bangalore, India. For my session, I draw on bell hooks' idea for an exercise on intersectionality that unsettles assumptions about identity and privilege. I tell the students: *"Imagine you have died and arrived in Heaven, which for some Humanists may come as a surprise! At the gates you are told that there has been an administrative error: you were not meant to die yet. To make up for this mistake, you are given the chance to return to Earth in any form you wish. You may choose for example your geographic location, gender, sexual orientation, skin color, education level, economic circumstances and health conditions. You may even return as other than human. Please reflect on how you would return, and why you would choose these characteristics."*

What follows is an animated discussion about how different it is to be born Black in New York or in Sudan, to be a woman in the Netherlands or in Afghanistan, to be gay in Indonesia or in Australia. Some students wish to

21 Hivos (Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation: Hivos - People Unlimited. URL: <https://hivos.nl>) and the Kosmopolis Institute of the UHS collaborated for 14 consecutive years in the International Summer School on Pluralism and Social Change and was part of the Pluralism Knowledge Program. See also: Pluralism Knowledge Programme | openDemocracy. URL: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/pluralism-knowledge-programme>

return exactly as they were, grateful for the lives they enjoy, while others choose to become someone entirely different, curious to see the world from another perspective. A few imagine returning as animals, hoping for more freedom and fewer worries. What quickly becomes clear is that identity is always formed within contexts: some privileged, others marginalized; some rooted in close communities, others marked by individuality. Who we are is never only a matter of personality but profoundly shaped by the circumstances in which we live and by the ways we create meaning within them. The exercise offers a vivid starting point for our later discussions of social theory and the complexities of identity in plural societies. I marvel at how much richer and more layered the dialogue becomes with participants from radically diverse contexts, compared to when I did this exercise with only Dutch students in Utrecht.

5. Challenging the Epistemology of Modernity: Decolonial Horizons with Achille Mbembe

As I argued earlier with Henk Manschot²², Modernity has contributed greatly to human flourishing by advancing values such as freedom, equality, autonomy and human rights. These ideals, enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, continue to inspire social movements worldwide and form a foundation of humanistic education. Yet Modernity's story is not only one of emancipation, but also of exclusion, domination and epistemic violence.

Decolonial thought brings this sharply into focus. I turn to decolonial critique not because Modernity cannot be criticized from within, Nietzsche, Marx, Arendt and Foucault for instance are powerful examples, but because decolonial critique unsettles the very ground of Modern thought by questioning its foundational assumptions from another epistemological horizon. As Mignolo and Walsh (2018:3) put it:

Within Western thought itself, there have always been critiques, Eurocentric critique of Eurocentrism, so to speak. [...] But these are not the critiques that we follow here. Our thinking is with decolonial critiques [...] with the nonacceptance of the West and North Atlantic fictions as the only way. [This allows us to] open and engage venues and paths of decolonial conviviality that take us beyond, while at the same time undoing, the singularity and linearity of the West.

²² See bibliography. Over the past twenty years, Henk Manschot and I worked side by side, inspiring and supporting one another through shared journeys across Europe and far beyond: to India, Indonesia, Uganda, South Africa, China and the United States. Many of my insights developed in the context of our collegiality and friendship.

Decolonial perspectives critique the ways in which Modern ideals have been enacted through violence and exclusion, while also offering conceptual tools to reclaim and reframe those ideals from standpoints of those whose humanity has long been denied. They invite us into broader epistemological and ethical horizons that recognize multiple ways of knowing, being and relating to the world.

Achille Mbembe is a compelling voice in this field. In *The Earthly Community* (2022), he links ecological devastation directly to colonial histories of extraction and domination. He writes:

Abetted by financialization and technological escalation, humanity's predatory capacities have greatly intensified, further envenoming inter-species relations. From this, a dramatic involution has ensued, and a profound dissociation arisen between technological reality and social-political thought [...and...] a new 'plantocracy'²³ is emerging. (Mbembe, 2022: 22–23)

For Mbembe, the climate crisis is inseparable from racial injustice: both are outcomes of the same Modern-colonial project. To contest these structures, he draws on Jean-Luc Nancy's notion of *dis-enclosure*, which is a radical opening of fixed conceptual and political boundaries. In his seminal work on Christianity, Nancy called for the deconstruction of its enclosure around absolute truths, inviting a more plural and open engagement with existence (Ten Kate, 2012). Mbembe reworks *dis-enclosure* within a decolonial frame and becomes a process of undoing epistemic and political confinements imposed by colonialism and sustained by Modernity.

23 With his concept of 'plantocracy,' Mbembe refers to colonial plantation systems, in which power was concentrated in the hands of plantation owners and the exploitation of both labor and ecology was central.

Vignette Five: A Village's Choice

It is 1995, and I am in Durban, South Africa, working in the Faculty of Education at the University of Durban-Westville. Under apartheid, this university was designated for South Africans of Indian descent. However, in recent years, its student population has shifted, and the majority now consists of Black African students, many from the province of KwaZulu-Natal. I am responsible for overseeing the faculty's selection process for new students. An immensely difficult task. More than 600 applicants compete for just 175 places. Who should be selected? What criteria truly matter? The faculty has decided to give priority to students who aspire to teach mathematics and science, both subjects that were systematically denied, even forbidden, in Black African schools under apartheid. Yet many applicants lack the necessary academic preparation. A bridging program has been designed to address this gap, but the dilemmas remain.

When the selection days are over, I post the final list in the faculty hall: 175 admitted students and a reserve list. Soon, a crowd gathers: some students celebrate with joy, others leave distraught. About an hour later, an elderly Black man knocks on my office door. Beside him stands a young applicant. "There has been a mistake," the old man says. "This boy has been chosen by our village to become a teacher. We do not yet have a school, but he will be the one to teach our children. The whole village participated in the decision, and together we raised the money for his fees. The mistake is that we do not see his name on your list."

I am speechless. Who am I, as a white Dutch immigrant woman, to make life-altering decisions for this South African rural village? I realize so well that this selection process does not only affect individuals but could also shape communities. What power do I hold and why do I have such power? On what grounds can I deny the hopes and sacrifices of this man and his village, who endured apartheid and now place their trust in us to help them build a different future? After reviewing the young man's school records, I quietly add him to the list of admitted students, without immediately informing my colleagues. Did I make the right decision, ethically and politically? To this day, I sometimes still ponder over that question.

In *Out of the Dark Night* (2021), Mbembe deepens the notion of dis-enclosure to move beyond the lingering structures of colonial control that continue to shape identities, relationships and futures. Decolonization, he argues, must extend beyond political independence or institutional reform and confront colonialism's formative role in modern subjectivities and global hierarchies. For Mbembe, *dis-enclosure* reframes humanity's shared history: not by erasing the past but by undoing its closures and opening new ethical and political horizons.

This reorientation, grounded in vulnerability, mutual care and relational belonging, also redefines sovereignty: not as control or exclusion, but as a shared commitment to planetary care. Belonging, in this vision, is not tied to fixed identity but to ethical-ecological relations which are rooted in mutual vulnerability. Mbembe's inclusive political imaginary challenges rigid borders and opens new pathways toward ecological and epistemic justice.

To summarize: I turn to Mbembe because he compels us to see how Modernity's promises of emancipation are inseparable from histories of exclusion, colonialism and ecological destruction. His reworking of Nancy's *dis-enclosure* invites us to break open the confinements of modern epistemologies and to reimagine the human, community and the Earth in more relational and just ways. For education, and for my vision of DEI, this reinforces a core belief: we must rethink how we understand knowledge, belonging and responsibility. Education itself can become a practice of *dis-enclosure*, and so help to imagine futures which enable us to live together differently in a fragile, shared world.

6. Bruno Latour's Critique of Modernity and Reimagining Education in the Anthropocene

While Mbembe compels us to confront colonial legacies and their enduring closures, Latour challenges the Modern Nature–Culture divide. According to Latour, this binary has been central to Western thought since the Enlightenment and shaped our worldview by casting nature as passive and exploitable, thereby reinforced ideals of human mastery and distorted our understanding of science, politics and the planet. Latour argues that this divide has collapsed in the Anthropocene, where ecological disruption makes clear that humans and nonhumans are profoundly entangled:

...seeking 'Man's place in Nature' [...] is not at all the same task as learning to participate in the geo-history of the planet. [...] There is no harmony in that cascade of unforeseen events, nor is there any 'nature.' [...] No unity, no universality, no unchallengeability, no indestructibility can be invoked to simplify the geo-history in which humans find themselves immersed (Latour, 2017: 107).

Latour develops these insights with the help of the concept of Gaia, in dialogue with the work of scientist James Lovelock, known for studying macro-level atmospheric systems and microbiologist Lynn Margulis, who focused on the evolutionary role of bacteria (Lovelock & Margulis, 1979). In an interview with Nicolas Truong, Latour explains why he chose Gaia:

It's important that it's a myth, and that it's a scientific, mythological and political concept all at the same time. It's precisely because the

term is hybrid that it's also clearly the name of a change in cosmology.
(Latour, 2024: 35)

Philosopher Isabelle Stengers deepened Latour's cosmological shift with her notion of the 'intrusion of Gaia'. Stengers (2015) portrays Gaia as a figure that unsettles the boundaries between science, politics and myth. In dialogue with her, Latour came to embrace Gaia as his preferred metaphor. He recalls:

And then there's what Isabelle Stengers calls the intrusion of Gaia. [Her] Gaia is a character who impacts policy. We're inside Gaia. The question of its conditions of habitability has become essential. [...] We can't separate mythology, science and politics. That's not what cosmology is. A cosmology is the connection between these things
(Latour, 2024: 36).

Latour's reflections on Gaia reveal not only the substance of his thought but also the texture of his intellectual process. He does not present Gaia as a fixed concept; instead, he admits the difficulties and disruptions that it brings, when he says, "If I'd wanted to simplify things, I wouldn't have used Gaia. Gaia has really complicated my life" (Latour, 2024: 33). In doing so, he shows that philosophy emerges through struggle and reflection, which is educationally valuable.

Latour's cosmological shift brings to life one of his core arguments: in the Anthropocene, science, myth and politics cannot be separated. His proposition is that Gaia's entangled nature offers a powerful model for transdisciplinary thinking. His reflections do more than question epistemological boundaries, they also point to educational possibilities. By embracing uncertainty, working with metaphor and holding science, politics and myth together, Latour challenges us to rethink both *what* we teach and *how* we teach. Latour's ideas show that DEI in education means re-creating spaces to develop ethical, epistemic

and imaginative capacities to live in the Anthropocene. Education then becomes a practice of learning with Gaia: transdisciplinary, relational and oriented toward both human and planetary flourishing.



Photo above: At the 2025 *geopathy summer school* in Cornillon-en-Trièves, with the seven planets in the foreground

An example of how these ideas come into sharper focus, is in his metaphor of the “Seven Planets,” which extends his cosmological critique into a pedagogical framework. Here, Latour maps plural ways in which different actors imagine the Earth and their place within it. Moreover, it offers educators a tool that invites learners to explore different worldviews, value systems and ecological imaginaries. When he refers to the “Seven Planets” (Latour, 2019), he does not portray them as literal planets, but as metaphorical representations of how different actors, such as scientists, communities and political entities, perceive and respond to the Earth.

The *Planet Globalisation* reflects neoliberal assumptions of free trade and growth. *Planet Security* emphasizes control, militarization and protection from risk. *Planet Modernity* embraces technological optimism and human exceptionalism. *Planet Vindication* represents those who are marginalized by globalization and fight for justice. The *Planet Anthropocene* acknowledges the profound planetary impact of human activity. *Planet Exit* fantasizes about technological escape or withdrawal from global interdependence. Finally, the *Terrestrial Planet* embodies a political ecology in which humans recognize their embeddedness in the Earth’s systems and assume responsibility for them.

In my own teaching I use the ‘Seven Planets’ in an exercise in which small groups of students circulate across the room, thereby passing different planets.²⁴ At each stop, they discuss how they see this mode of being on Earth and how their perceptions play out in their own lives. I find it to be an insightful exercise which invites learners to recognize the diversity of epistemological positions and encourages them to

24 I learned about this exercise during the 2024 Latour Summer School in Cornillon-en-Trièves, France, organized by the French collective S-Composition (Chloé Latour, Jean-Pierre Seyvos, Alan Lebeque, and Agathe Crou), as well as during their workshop in the same year which was conducted by them at the University of Humanistic Studies.

reflect on how different worldviews generate different responses to planetary crises. These insights are helpful when they engage others who hold different views on what it means to live on a threatened planet. I noticed that the exercise helps students to position themselves in relation to these different planets, to understand possible contradictory positions and reflect on them as ethical-political orientations. The exercise invites students to explore how worldviews shape political and ecological responses, and how different knowledge systems coexist, sometimes in conflict, not only between groups and individuals but also within oneself. The exercise is powerful because it exposes frictions between competing planetary imaginaries which are rooted in struggles over whose knowledge counts and whose worlds are seen as relevant. It shows how Latour's philosophy can inspire educational design because it not only maps ecological imaginaries, but also invites learners to engage with diverse worldviews and positionalities while critically examining patterns of epistemic inclusion and exclusion.

While Latour does not explicitly align himself with decolonial theory, his commitment to epistemic plurality and situated knowledge resonates with some of decoloniality's central concerns. His planetary lens offers an entry point to rethink Modernity's epistemology and acknowledge historically marginalized ways of knowing. Latour's dialogue with African philosophers in Dakar in 2022²⁵ offers a convergence with decolonial thought. There he noted the resonance between his own work and Séverine Kodjo-Grandvaux's call to revalo-

25 Sadly, at that point in time, Bruno Latour's illness prevented him from discussing this in person. The quotes which appear in this segment were originally in French and are from a translated transcription of his unpublished talk in Dakar which was held on the 22nd of March 2022. Latour's unpublished paper is titled "*How not to unify too quickly that which nonetheless 'embraces' 'us all'. The enigma of Gaia presented by a modern anthropologist to African philosophers*". Bruno Latour's daughter Chloe Latour shared it with me and gave me permission to use it.

alize local knowledges suppressed by colonial epistemologies.²⁶ In line with a statement by Séverine Kodjo-Grandvaux²⁷, Latour says that he departs from the idea that:

It's not a question of systematically rejecting everything that comes from the West, but of grasping how the concepts or paradigms produced by Western epistemology may or may not be relevant to understanding scientific realities. And, at the same time, to revalorize scholarly practices, knowledge and know-how originating in these societies that had been depreciated, or even forbidden, by the colonizer. (in: Latour, 2022, unpublished paper, see footnote 25)

While his own language remains cautious, he positions himself within a broader conversation about epistemic justice and the need to provincialize Reason (with a capital R). His reading of Gaia as a contested and relational figure, rather than a new totalizing ecological Truth (with a capital T), further reinforces this alignment. In fact, Latour warns that if Gaia is treated as a planetary abstraction that is imposed from above, it risks becoming a new avatar of colonialism:

What we can no longer obtain in the form of obedience, dependence and subjection by appealing to Reason, the countries of the North are now ready to impose in the name of the indisputable demands of the planet! (Latour, 2022, unpublished paper, see footnote 25)

²⁶ Séverine Kodjo-Grandvaux is a philosopher and researcher known for her work in African philosophies. She is an associate researcher at Paris 8 University's Laboratory for Studies and Research on Contemporary Logic and Philosophy.

²⁷ Her original statement: "Contrary to what one might think, it's not a question of systematically rejecting everything that comes from the West, but of grasping how the concepts or paradigms produced by Western sciences may or may not be relevant to understand African realities. And, at the same time, to revalorize knowledge and know-how from African cultures that had been depreciated, or even forbidden, by the colonizer." (My thanks go to Agnès Vincenot for translating the text from French into Dutch. The version you are reading here is my translation from Dutch into English.)

In this context, Latour uses the term ‘vectors of extension’ to argue that what is often called universal knowledge, is never neutral or given. Instead, he contends that sciences, technologies and political projects do not simply produce truths which are valid everywhere for everyone. Instead, their reach depends on complex networks of people, institutions and instruments and on fragile translation chains that allow them to travel. What presents itself as universal is in fact the result of trajectories (vectors) of expansion that impose themselves on others and carry with them specific histories and interests. His views sharply contrast with dominant views of universality, which imagine knowledge as detached from context and valid everywhere. Latour rejects this Modernist ideal of universality. Instead, he proposes a plural landscape of ‘modes of existence,’ where different vectors of extension, scientific, political, religious, artistic and ecological, must be recognized and negotiated. In this sense, Latour’s critique resonates with decolonial thinkers such as Mignolo and Walsh, who call for pluriversality and the coexistence of diverse ways of knowing and living. In taking this position, Latour echoes central concerns of decolonial critique on Modernity, particularly its resistance to epistemic enclosure. He also takes an ethical stance: a commitment to attend to difference and resist totalizing narratives in the face of planetary urgency in the Anthropocene. Latour’s vision is not only interdisciplinary but also ontologically plural and calls on us to rethink how education can help to shape our relationship with all life on Earth. For humanistic educators, the task is to move toward a pedagogy of co-existence: between humans and with the more-than-human.

To summarize: Latour’s critique of Modernity and his cosmology of Gaia offer more than a theoretical challenge; they also provide a pedagogical orientation. By challenging the Modern Nature–Culture divide, questioning universality and insisting on epistemic plurality, Latour helps us to see education as a practice of learning to live within

entanglement. For DEI in education, this means moving toward pedagogies of coexistence where difference is valued and interdependence stands at the center of how we teach and learn in the Anthropocene.

7. Education as Spaces for Epistemic and Ecological Transformation: Three Examples

Views on education remain rather abstract unless they are anchored in concrete practices. To make my ideas more tangible, I now turn to three educational initiatives that have embodied them in practice. Each stems from projects in which I have been personally involved and about which I have published, respectively with Noortje Bot (case 1), Henk Manschot (case 2) and Jaqui Goldin (case 3). I want to emphasize that each example reflects teamwork.²⁸ They illustrate that education involves collaborative transformation. They signal different strategies to rethink educational practice. In my role as professor of education and DEI, I see it as my task to help transform the UHS into a place where ecological awareness is inseparable from social justice, and where humanism is stretched beyond its blind spots of color-blindness and anthropocentrism.

Case 1: *Woke and Resistance*

The *Woke and Resistance* project (2022–2024) at the University of Humanistic Studies illustrates how DEI can be engaged as both a pedagogical and an institutional challenge. The project origins lie in a moment of disruption. In 2020, the student collective *Pluralistics* (*Pluralistiek*) published an open letter that showed a striking imbalance in the curriculum: only 3.4% of assigned texts reflected non-Western

²⁸ I am inspired by Latour's idea that philosophy and education flourish best as teamwork. See: Manschot, H. (2022) *Bruno Latour over ecologie en politiek. Teamwork als filosofische praktijk*. Waardenwerk (Journal of Humanistic Studies 2022 nr. 90-9. P.144-154

perspectives and just 5% was written by authors of color. Naming this as a form of institutional racism, the students challenged the university to align its humanistic ideals with its actual practices. Their critique was initially met with defensiveness, as staff debated the research design rather than its substance. However, the students' initiative raised fundamental questions: Whose voices and traditions shape our curricula? How do universities reproduce or disrupt patterns of exclusion? And what does it mean for a humanist university to confront its own complicity in these structures? (Suransky & Bot, 2025)

It was against this backdrop that the *Woke and Resistance* project was designed and awarded funding by a NRO Comenius grant.²⁹ The project³⁰ sought to create conditions where staff and students could face these questions together. In line with Bonjour, Van den Brink and Taartmans (2020), we recognized the significance of not only of 'fixing the numbers' but also of changing our institution and our knowledge practices. Its methodology was deliberately dialogical and research-driven: rather than offering ready-made solutions, it aimed to turn discomfort, resistance and disagreement into productive spaces for learning.

Its theoretical framework included Chantal Mouffe's notion of agonistic democracy, which insists that conflict and contestation are not failures of democracy but its lifeblood. Secondly, we learned from work by Sigal Ben-Porath (2018, 2023) on how universities, as democratic institutions, can navigate conflict and polarization by advancing a model of *inclusive freedom* that protects free speech while fostering

29 See: *Woke en Weerstand* | NRO. URL: <https://www.nro.nl/onderzoeksprojecten/woke-en-weerstand>

30 The *Woke and Resistance* project team consisted of Junior Lecturer Noortje Bot and students Farach Winter, Leen Kruithof, Marishelle Lieberwerth, Rebecca Lensink, Brechje Meijers, Rosanne van Bruggen and Carolina Suransky (project leader).

dignity, inclusion, and shared institutional norms. Thirdly, we drew inspiration from Achille Mbembe's critique of Eurocentric epistemologies and his call for epistemic decolonization. Fourthly, we turned to Anthony B. Pinn's advocacy for anti-racist humanism, which critiques the often colorblind character of mainstream humanism and insists on centering the lived realities of systemic racism. Finally, we paid attention to Susan Neiman's critique of woke-ism, which highlights tensions between identity politics, universalism and Enlightenment ideals. Our theoretical base provided a prism through which staff and students could work *with*, rather than *around*, the controversies at stake.

The two-year project unfolded in four phases: agenda-setting, design, curriculum renewal and evaluation. Each phase combined structured methods with openness to dialogue. In the initial phase, agenda-setting activities such as online forums, noticeboards and *Dialogue in the Canteen* sessions encouraged reflection on topics like institutional racism, freedom of speech and the meaning of wokeness. Examples of student comments³¹ include:

Woke means 'awake to discrimination'. I think some people have an unnecessary allergy to the term itself, which is a pity!

The 'woke' culture contributes to a certain sense of moral loftiness, which can sometimes miss the mark.

The term has been 'hijacked' and appropriated from all sides, which obscures its original meaning.

Is being woke a solution, or is it rather a term that fuels polarization?

31 My translation of original comments in Dutch.

I've been in discussions where the term 'white men' is used as if they are responsible for all the world's evils, as though we're in some conspiracy to keep others down. Bizarre. As the saying goes: "As the host is, so he trusts his guests."

We are afraid of making mistakes, but I believe those mistakes are exactly what we need in order to learn.

Such remarks were integrated into Socratic Dialogues with students and staff, using Kessels' (2021) model. While often seen as a tool for reaching consensus, this model can also serve to examine difference, friction and power relations. From this perspective, it not only fostered common ground but also amplified divergent voices and affirmed epistemic diversity as valuable and legitimate.

The project moved from dialogue to exploration of possible changes. Workshops and lectures by the African American visiting scholar Anthony B. Pinn deepened participants' understanding of anti-racist humanism and epistemic justice. Pinn's interventions were particularly impactful: in one dialogue, he reminded participants, "*Don't ask me how to solve it; I didn't create the problem,*" thereby underscoring the shared responsibility of academic institutions to confront racism rather than outsourcing the work to those who are most affected by it. In his book *When Colorblindness Isn't the Answer* (2017), Pinn argues that humanist claims of 'colorblindness' do not dismantle racism but rather sustain it, because they deny the lived realities of racialized people and obscure structural inequities. He insists that real progress requires recognizing race as a social construct with profound material consequences and cultivating practices that acknowledge and redress systemic injustice. This perspective is particularly relevant at a humanist-inspired university. Humanism's commitment to dignity, justice, plurality and care cannot be realized if it fails to address the ways in which racism structures knowledge, access and belonging. Pinn's

critique challenges humanism to move beyond abstract affirmations of equality toward practices that confront historical exclusions and epistemic injustices. For the UHS, this means to recognize that DEI as essential to humanist identity. Pinn's call to reject colorblindness resonates deeply: to be true to humanist ideals, we must continue to develop an anti-racist, inclusive and self-critical humanism that creates space for all voices.

Workshops were offered for lecturers and student assistants who wished to revise or decolonize their courses. This involved critically reviewing syllabi, identifying biases and blind spots and supplementing courses. With the support of external experts³², we distinguished between diversity and inclusion, which often emphasize representation within existing frameworks, and decolonization, which seeks to fundamentally question and transform those very frameworks (Suransky & Bot, 2025). Importantly, lecturers were free to decide which approach they preferred as we aimed to engage a broad spectrum of staff. In the curriculum renewal phase, insights were translated into concrete changes. Courses were revised, reflexive practices were introduced to highlight the social and political dimensions of knowledge, and students were engaged through playful, participatory methods such as the *Caleidoscopia* card game³³, which makes DEI themes accessible and inviting.

32 the ECHO Center for Diversity Policy (See: About ECHO - ECHO. URL: <https://echo-net.nl/en/about-us>) and consultant Şeydâ Buurman-Kutsal (see Home - Seyda. URL: <https://www.seyda.nl/en>)

33 See: Aanbod — Collectief Caleidoscopia. URL: <https://www.caleidoscopia.nl/aanbod>



Photo above: During the online dialogue on colonial legacies between UHS and Stellenbosch students

A highlight was an international dialogue series with Stellenbosch University in South Africa, where Dutch and South African students compared their experiences of colonial legacies in education. While South African students emphasized that colonialism remains a pervasive reality in their curriculum and society, Dutch students noted that it often surfaces only marginally in their education. These differences sparked recognition of how context shapes what is seen and unseen in academic spaces and reinforced the value of cross-cultural dialogue in reimagining the curriculum.

The final phase coincided with the escalation of the war/genocide in Gaza, which reverberated through the university community and challenged the project group to confront the entanglement of global crises with local academic debates. Heated discussions emerged about neutrality, academic freedom and the university's role in political activism. Some staff and students demanded that the UHS cut ties with Israeli universities, while others emphasized the importance of

maintaining spaces for plural voices. These moments highlighted the difficulty of balancing openness with adherence to core values and they underscored the importance of cultivating 'brave spaces' where disagreement, discomfort and emotion could be engaged rather than suppressed.

Across its two years, the project faced real challenges: resistance to change, disagreement around wokeness, the risk of tokenism and entrenched hierarchies that threatened to shape dialogue. Yet these challenges themselves became pedagogical. They revealed that DEI requires a deeper transformation of institutional cultures and epistemic foundations. The project showed that discomfort, when acknowledged and facilitated, can catalyze growth; that polarization, when held open, can deepen understanding; and that curriculum change, to be meaningful, must be embedded in wider organizational practices and commitments.

Some of the outcomes of *Woke and Resistance* are tangible. Curricula have been revised in several programs, dialogical capacities among students and staff were strengthened and DEI became more firmly embedded in the university's organizational culture. A national closing conference, with keynote speaker Professor Gloria Wekker on intersectionality, placed the project in dialogue with broader higher education debates in the Netherlands. The open access *Woke and Resistance Toolkit*, published in Dutch and English³⁴, distilled its methods, reflections and practical strategies, thus making them available to other institutions.

34 See: Comeniusproject Woke en Weerstand - Universiteit voor Humanistiek (URL: <https://www.uvh.nl/projecten/comeniusproject-woke-en-weerstand>) and Comenius Project Woke and Resistance - University of Humanistic Studies (URL: <https://www.uvh.nl/en/projects/comenius-project-woke-and-resistance>)

Looking back, the project's most important contribution may lie not in the immediate curriculum changes but in its demonstration that universities can treat DEI as a site of ongoing, agonistic engagement. Rather than resolving conflict, *Woke and Resistance* modeled how to live with it: how to try to transform antagonism into agonism, resistance to reflection and discomfort into opportunities for institutional learning. In this sense, the project stands as a reminder that meaningful change in higher education requires courage, creativity and a willingness to embrace the uncertainties of dialogue.

Case 2: *The Atelier Inspired by the Philosophy of Bruno Latour*

Considering the ecological and epistemic challenges of the 21st century, the Latour-inspired *Atelier* offers an educational space in which students and citizens are invited to fundamentally rethink the human–Earth relationship (Suransky & Manschot, in press, 2025). Drawing on Latour's view of the Anthropocene, the *Atelier* is not a traditional learning environment, but a process of collective meaning-making regarding the human position within what Latour calls the Critical Zone (Latour & Weibel, 2020). The *Critical Zone* refers to the fragile, thin layer of the Earth where all life takes place. The concept reflects a shifting scientific and epistemological framework to understand and imagine human's place on Earth:

[It...] is a way to bring different disciplines together and thereby breathe new life into the study of the thin skin of the living Earth. [...] What the different meanings of 'critical' have in common is that they emphasize that the planet Earth — in an astronomical or geological sense — does not suffice to determine where we truly reside. [...] We need a different framework to situate all the phenomena that are crucial for us — that is, for us humans and for all other life forms. (Latour & Weibel, 2020: 2–3)

This shift in perspective breaks with the iconic image of Earth as the *Blue Marble*:

Haven't you ever wondered that, when you say the Earth is a planet [...], you actually have to mentally position yourself as if you were observing it from space? [...] But humans don't live there [...]. That's why 'Critical Zone' is such a useful term: it helps us free our imagination from the pull of the all-too-famous Blue Marble. We live within a thin biofilm [...] from which we cannot escape — and the 'Critical Zonists' would add, whose reactions [...] remain largely unknown. (Latour & Weibel, 2020: 3)

Thus, the Critical Zone is both a physical and a political-philosophical concept that emphasizes a radical entanglement of humans with earthly life. Rather than departing from an abstract distinction between the local and the global, *Ateliers* begin with a specific local context in which diverse life-worlds, epistemologies and experiential knowledge come together.

Ateliers aim to be spaces where locally grounded and historically marginalized knowledge practices can be re-signified. Participants map their concerns, stories, and observations through cartography and geo-stories (Latour, 2017), in which both human and more-than-human actors are part of the narrative, in line with Latour's plea for 'symmetrical composition.'

In this example too, the plurality of perspectives is not smoothed away into consensus, but acknowledged as a source of agonistic learning (Mouffe, 2005). Latour's notion of geo-pathy, a sensitivity to the reciprocal influences between humans and more-than-humans, guides

this process. Through collaboration with artists, scientists, and local experts, a new language emerges to articulate what had previously remained invisible:

The connection between lived experiences, scientific knowledge, and artistic dimensions creates possibilities to become more attuned to what we experience but often lack the words to express (Suransky & Manschot, in press, 2025).

The Atelier aligns with Latour's call for epistemic plurality. It also aims to foster democratic competencies, not only through participation, but by redefining who or what counts as an actor, including rivers, landscapes, animals, and climate systems.³⁵

In my teaching, this took shape in an exercise on a conflict at Tata Steel in IJmuiden, where in roleplay students assigned roles not only to human actors, such as the CEO or labor unionist, but also to more-than-human actors, including dunes and groundwater. The simulation made visible how diverse interests, bodies and environments are entangled, which resonates with Gaia thinking, where the Earth itself is understood as an actor. Ateliers can help us learn to situate ourselves not as abstract individuals, but as dwellers of vulnerable local life-worlds, offering space for the development of cosmological, pluralist and connective narratives (Manschot & Suransky, 2021: 18).

³⁵ Henk Manschot and I participated in an Atelier organized by S-Composition in Sevrans, near Paris, where the closing event brought citizens together to share their insights on local issues and their wider entanglements through interactive and artistic forms.

Case 3: *Diamonds on the Soles of Their Feet: Citizen Science and Disrupting Knowledge Inequality*

The project *Diamonds on the Soles of Their Feet* (DSF) is a citizen science initiative that began in 2018 in South Africa’s Limpopo province. This is a region that is marked by deep social inequality, limited infrastructure and restricted access to clean water. Led by Prof. Jaqui Goldin, academics from the University of the Western Cape (UWC), collaborate with governmental agencies, civil society based organizations, local citizens, schoolchildren and teachers to monitor surface water, collect ecological data and enhance water literacy through local engagement.

DSF is profoundly collaborative and driven by an ethos of *slow science* and bottom-up learning-by-doing (Goldin & Suransky, 2024: 132). The project demonstrates that citizen science can be more than data collection: DSF seeks to create learning environments that acknowledge social differences and power inequalities between participants (Goldin & Suransky, 2024: 127). By facilitating collaboration between academics, local citizens and other stakeholders, traditional hierarchies are disrupted. As Goldin et al. write, the aim is to “take science out of libraries and laboratories and bring it into everyday life” (Goldin et al., 2023, cited in Goldin & Suransky, 2024: 127). Instead of starting from the assumption that valuable and legitimate knowledge comes exclusively from universities and needs to be applied locally, DSF recognizes the importance of local expertise:

Without the knowledge and experience of the citizen science team, we would not have known the characteristics of certain water bodies: when the rivers flow and when they don’t. (Goldin & Suransky, 2024: 139)

At the same time, local participants acquire technical skills, such as measuring chemical compositions. This reciprocal exchange leads not only to enriched knowledge, but also to trust, pride and a renewed sense of dignity and hope (Goldin & Suransky, 2024: 132).

Yet the story of Ruth, a citizen scientist in Limpopo, also illustrates the difficulties of gaining formal recognition of citizen expertise within university structures (Goldin & Suransky, 2024). Despite her enormous commitment and crucial contribution, she went unpaid for many months because she did not fit into the university's employment classification system: she held no formal degrees and lacked a for the university identifiable administrative status. Ruth explains:

I took a great knock when I was not paid for my efforts, and [...] a lot was required to get paid for my service requested. [...] The nearest big town is 120 kilometers from my place. I had to drive to town every day to meet your requirements to be paid only after five months. (Goldin & Suransky, 2024: 138)

Ruth's story painfully illustrates how deeply the hegemony of Western knowledge regimes is embedded in institutional structures and how complex and time-consuming it is to revise those structures. As noted, bureaucracies resist change "in order to ensure their survival [while at the same time acknowledging that] transformative experiences require transformative measures" (Goldin & Suransky, 2024: 137).

DSF shows that knowledge production is inseparable from broader power relations, also in local collaborations. The project seeks to disrupt dominant Modernist assumptions by no longer imposing scientific knowledge from above as universal and objective, but by approaching it as relational and situated. In this context, structural injustices become more visible and open to challenge. Citizen science

thus holds a double potential: it can help to empower local communities while also challenging universities to reimagine themselves and reposition their societal role.

8. Concluding Reflections and Looking Ahead

In this address I have sought to show how education stands at a critical crossroads in our time. We live in the Anthropocene, marked by ecological fragility, intensifying inequalities and deepening polarization. I argued that in such a landscape, education cannot be neutral: it is entangled with ideological struggles that shape our societies and the futures we imagine. My Chair is situated within this horizon. It affirms the humanist traditions of our university, but also stretches them to become more responsive to ecological entanglements and epistemic plurality.

I argued that DEI is more than representation or fairness. It is a pedagogical and ethical horizon that compels us to ask: Whose voices count? Which knowledge systems are recognized? And how do we imagine responsibility in an interdependent and fragile world? DEI requires epistemic humility, that is, the recognition that our knowledge is always partial and in need of dialogue with others. Such humility opens spaces for pluralism, disagreement and encounter and strengthens the very ethos of a humanist-inspired university.

In closing, I want to briefly return to the two threads that are woven through my address. The first was pluralism, which I approached as more than a singular idea: it is at once a pedagogical practice that embraces discomfort and not-knowing, an analytical lens that resists binary thinking, an epistemological stance that honors diverse and suppressed traditions of knowledge and a political horizon where epistemology and politics meet. The second thread is justice, which

I framed as inseparable from both ecological and social concerns. Against populist narratives that portray diversity and climate action as threats to national identity, I drew on decolonial thought to show a different picture. Inequality and ecological destruction, I argued, are sustained by the same Modernist systems, and education can help to make these entanglements visible.

Taken together, these two threads form the backbone of my plea for engaged humanistic education. Such an education cultivates an ethos that affirms human and ecological plurality and turns tensions into fertile ground for ethical and pedagogical imagination. I illustrated my commitment through three actual practices: *Woke and Resistance* showed how discomfort and disagreement can become conditions for institutional learning; the Latour-inspired Atelier exemplified how students and citizens can reimagine the human–Earth relationship; and *Diamonds on the Soles of Their Feet* explored how valuing local knowledge alongside academic expertise, can disrupt hierarchies and nurture dignity, care and ecological responsibility.

Looking ahead, these insights will guide my work in this Chair.

In my research, I will work through partnerships that actively engage marginalized voices and confront colonial legacies and structural inequalities. These include cooperation with Stellenbosch University, the DSF project and the S-Composition collective in France.

In national collaborations, I look forward to continue my work with the Humanist Association (Humanistisch Verbond) and contribute to the development of eco-humanism, strengthen their education and training programs and support their initiatives to counter polarization.

In international exchanges, I will bring our insights into global scholarly debates. Together with my colleagues in the Department of Education, I will co-host an international conference in May 2026 to mark the launch of our book *Education for Transformation: Humanistic Perspectives on Flourishing in the Anthropocene*. This event will not only serve as an academic gathering, but will also open spaces for hybrid contributions such as art-based research, the voices of educational practitioners and perspectives of civil society based organizations on education in the Anthropocene.

At the institutional level, I will continue to advance DEI by strengthening professionalization and community building, fostering an organizational culture where pluralism is embraced as a vital condition for learning. This work builds on the experiences of *Woke and Resistance*, initiatives by colleagues, the efforts of the Steering Committee on DEI and the contributions of other committees that shape the UHS strategic agenda.

In education and mentorship, I will support new scholarly work and accompany PhD students and academics as they chart their own academic paths. I consider it a privilege to work alongside the next generation, knowing that they will carry forward the questions and commitments of this Chair in new directions. At the University of Humanistic Studies, we are fortunate to have a community of staff who bring not only talent, but also creativity, energy and courage. This collective spirit gives me great confidence that together we can strengthen our university as a place where innovation continues to take shape.

I have spoken – Ik heb gezegd.

Thank You

In conclusion, I would like to express my gratitude to all who have made it possible for me to share the ideas set out in this booklet. I am grateful to the Executive Board of the University of Humanistic Studies, to Joke van Saane and Paul Logtens, and to my colleague Doret de Ruyter for creating this Chair in Education and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, and for their encouragement and trust in me to take up this position.

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