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2021 KU Leuven Facing the Future: "How to increase societal impact?"
<https://rega.kuleuven.be/cev/Symposium/facing-the-future/Program-2021>
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Proceedings of the parallel session "Honours Programme Transdisciplinary Insights" (TDI 2020-2021)

Program

17h15 – 17h20	Introduction by the Institute for the Future
17h20 – 17h45	STEAM+: Transforming higher education through collaborative play
17h45 – 18h10	InclusiVaart. (Re)defining shared neighborhood spaces
18h10 – 18h35	Conceptualising Open Science in the 21st Century
18h35 – 19h00	Coronavirus Pandemic Preparedness

Uprooting Deeper Causes of Belgium's Lack of Pandemic Preparedness in the Covid-19 Crisis

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Abstract

The challenge of the Coronavirus Pandemic Preparedness project was to explore gaps in the way Belgium addressed the COVID-19 pandemic as a path forward for learning how to be better prepared in the probable event of a future pandemic. A pandemic is more than just a health crisis; well-intentioned efforts to contain an epidemic resulted in mental health problems, an economic downturn and the impairment of learning, among other issues. To understand a complex or “wicked” problem, such as a pandemic, we deployed a transdisciplinary approach, engaging experts and stakeholders from a variety of fields. At the end of March 2021, we organised an online co-creation workshop on behalf of the transdisciplinary research team at the Institute for the Future (1), inviting societal actors to participate in a multilevel brainstorming discussion. The purpose of the workshop was to identify deeper causes underlying the gaps in Belgian pandemic preparedness, building upon earlier work of the research team. We engaged stakeholders from different sectors of society in interactive exercises to verify and challenge the work of the research team. As a result, our team unearthed plausible missing elements within the deeper causes underlying the Belgian lack of preparedness for the pandemic. The majority of gaps identified by the stakeholders could be traced to deeper causes interwoven

in our society’s fabric. Some key areas where improvement was suggested were greater political willingness to tackle more complex problems, an expansion of transdisciplinary knowledge and education across our institutions and trust-building among citizens, government and the scientific community. Our findings are summarised and presented in a short video output.¹ These findings can be taken up to formulate future objectives for pandemic preparedness in Belgium. This can in turn serve to create a more resilient and sustainable society.

Key words

pandemic preparedness, Belgium, future, transdisciplinary research, stakeholder engagement, co-creation workshop, COVID-19

References

1. https://rega.kuleuven.be/if/coronavirus_challenge

Title of the original challenge

“Coronavirus Pandemic Preparedness”
(<https://rega.kuleuven.be/tdi/tdi-challenges/coronavirus-pandemic-preparedness>)

¹ The video was presented at the Symposium ‘KU Leuven Facing the Future’, Leuven, 5 May 2021, and is available on https://kuleuven.mediaspace.kaltura.com/media/TDI_Coronavirus+Challenge+2020_2021/1_nvzqv1ik.