

Pari

Perspectives

"The future has an ancient heart"
CARLO LEVI

**Ideas in Science, the Arts,
Spirit and Community**



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Economy for Life!

PART ONE

How Pluralism in Economics Education Helps to Create a Flourishing World

SAM DE MUIJNCK and MAARTEN NIJMAN

We are the students of today attending the schools of yesterday, being taught by teachers educated in the past with methods of the Middle Ages to solve problems of the future.

Student (anonymous)

In the realm of economics education, there exists a profound disconnection with the world outside the classrooms. The landscape of economic learning has largely been shaped by conventional theories and methodologies. While economists exert influence on the economy, much like foresters alter the landscape, there's a significant emphasis on theories and models that often neglect the inherent dynamism of economic systems.

Consider economists as explorers traversing this economic landscape, seeking to understand its complexities: the trees, plants, and animals that represent various economic entities and factors. Their interventions involve policies, interpretations, and analyses that seek to shape outcomes. Yet, much like a forest landscape retains its intrinsic dynamics beyond human intervention—leaves falling and mushrooms appearing—the economy operates beyond the economist's scope. It evolves, influenced by myriad factors both human and natural.

This discrepancy is echoed in classrooms where young minds grapple with economic theories that seem distant from their daily realities. They face pressing concerns about climate change, housing, healthcare, and societal welfare, yet the economics curriculum often fails to bridge the gap between theory and the real world. Practical aspects, such as understanding tax systems or compre-



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hending the economic implications of their immediate surroundings, are noticeably absent.

The current approach to economics education predominantly propagates mainstream economic theories, leaving pluralistic perspectives and diverse economic ideologies unexplored until very late in a bachelors or even masters degree. This singular narrative shapes students' understanding and constrains their ability to question assumptions critically. It's akin to familiarizing a forester with just a single type of tree in a forest, neglecting the diverse species that could thrive and contribute to a more vibrant ecosystem.

Our New Economy recognizes this educational gap and advocates for a transformative shift. We work to empower both secondary and higher education institutions with resources that challenge the conventional framework. This involves reforming university curricula and supplementing secondary education with engaging lesson plans (economieles.nu for secondary school and teaching packs on economystudies.com for academics), fostering a broader understanding of economics beyond the confines of mainstream theories. With the book *Economy Studies*¹, we support academics on their way to reforming their economics curriculum.

The fundamental question should be: How can we reshape the economy to serve human well-being rather than force human lives to conform to economic systems? It's about expanding the definition of economics itself, transcending the traditional notion of managing scarce resources. It therefore should include resource extraction, waste disposal, culture, power relations, and the human element.

The aim is not solely to teach quantitative analytical methods or theoretical frameworks but to equip students with a comprehensive understanding of how economies function in reality. By imparting this knowledge, we aim to empower students to navigate the complexities of the modern world and its institutions, preparing them to engage meaningfully in shaping economic systems that prioritize human welfare and societal progress within ecological boundaries.

Pluralism in economics education isn't merely about introducing alternative theories; it's a focus shift that empowers individuals to critically evaluate, question, and influence economic systems that affect their lives and the broader global landscape. It's about nurturing a generation equipped with the tools and insights to forge a future where economics serves humanity's best interests, contributing to a more sustainable, equitable, and flourishing world. Just as we see a forest not as a resource, but also as nature we want to walk around in even in the distant future.

Endnote

¹ de Muijnck, S., & Tieleman, J. (2022). *Economy Studies: A Guide to Rethinking Economics Education*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press. p.468



ABOVE: American students in business class.



SAM DE MUIJNCK (Director of Our New Economy), completed an interdisciplinary research master's programme in Social Sciences at the University of Amsterdam in 2020. His scholarly contributions focus on the realm of new economies and the optimal governmental investments from a sustainable standpoint. Earlier, he co-authored the book *Thinking Like an Economist?* (2018) and collaborated with Joris on the publication of *Economy Studies: Proposing an Improved Economic Curriculum* in 2021. He held the position of chairperson at Rethinking Economics NL. Alongside his academic pursuits, he teaches breakdancing and is a hip-hop artist.



MAARTEN NIJMAN (Head of Outreach), graduated in 1996 with a degree in Social Science Informatics from the University of Amsterdam, focusing on heuristics and biases within knowledge-intensive systems. Following a 15-year tenure within the financial sector, he embarked on a career transition in 2010. Since then, he has remained engaged as an expert in process improvement (Master Black Belt) while actively volunteering within the local transition movement and serving as a board member for Transitie Nederland. Within ONE, he oversees operations and contributes substantially to the development of educational materials, serving as a co-author of the publication *Integration Beside Competition*. Beyond his professional engagements, Maarten is an accomplished vocalist and guitarist in the band AYCE.