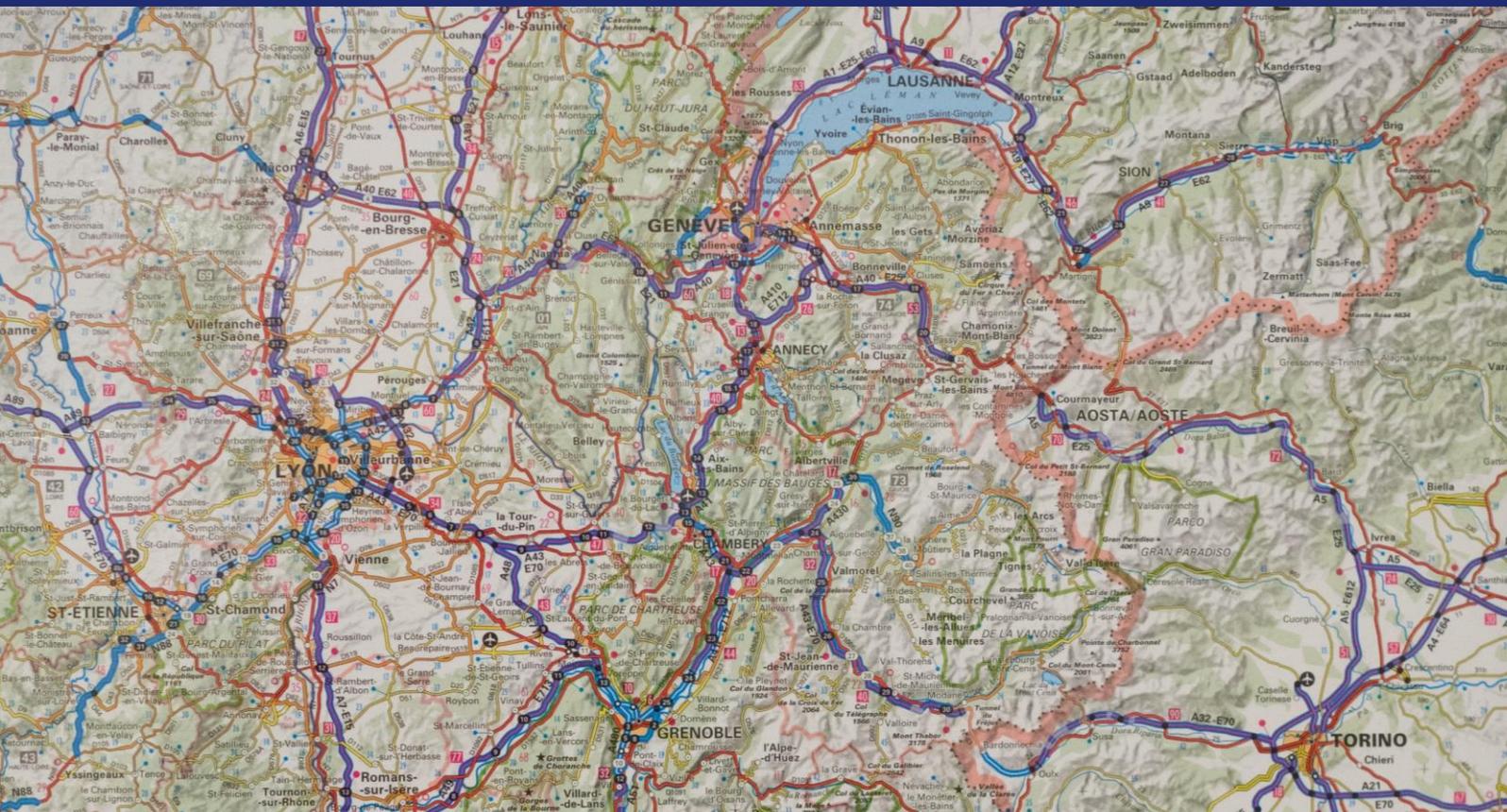


## Mapping Pluralist Research

An overview of research within the student movement for pluralism in economics



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oikos International

# Coming to Pluralism

2008 should have been a fascinating time to study economics. But oddly enough, the sudden disintegration of the financial system and the looming global recession were not a primary focus for most economics students. Economics education was built to answer different questions, so while the economic circus played out in newspapers and Main Streets around the world, the vast majority of economics students were hard at work drawing indifference curves and avoiding heteroscedasticity.

Five years later, little in the classroom had changed and people were starting to ask questions. Policy makers questioned if economics students were “fit for purpose”<sup>1</sup>, and student groups like the Post-Crash Economics Society in Manchester responded with a resounding NO. Initiatives like the Post-Crash were popping up around the world and they eventually organized themselves into networks like the ‘International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics’ (ISIPE) and ‘Rethinking Economics’. These groups had a pretty straightforward request: the “real world should be brought back into the classroom” and a diversity (or pluralism) of theories and methods should be taught.<sup>2</sup>

This campaign for “pluralism” was, and is, a key rallying point for the various post-crash student groups. But it is by no means a new idea. Indeed, it is a bit of a game to see who can trace the campaign for pluralism back the furthest. In the German speaking world, the Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik comes out of a pluralist economics working group started in 2003.<sup>3</sup> This group was in turn inspired by a petition by French students in 2000 for a “post-autistic’ economics which embraced a “pluralism of approaches” that would lead to an “escape from imaginary worlds”.<sup>4</sup> Going further back is the 1992 ‘Plea for a Pluralistic and Rigorous’ economics, signed by a number of notable economists<sup>5</sup>, and going all the way back are the fights

of the 1960s and 1970s at the University of Sydney over teaching political economy.<sup>6</sup>

All of these groups came to a simple idea: economics education would be better if it were more intellectually diverse. And although they often didn’t frame it in exactly the same way, this was also a key point for other student groups like oikos, which since 1987 has been working to bring ideas about suitability into economics education. For quite a long time, students have found economics education lacking, and over and over they have concluded that adding new ideas, theories, and methods is the solution.

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<sup>1</sup> Coyle, 2012

<sup>2</sup> ISIPE, 2014

<sup>3</sup> Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik e.V., 2019

<sup>4</sup> Post-Autistic Economics Network, 2000

<sup>5</sup> Hodgson, Mäki, and, McCloskey, 1992

<sup>6</sup> Butler, Jones, and Stilwell, 2009

## Researching pluralism

When most students get mad about something, they don't do anything about it. If they do, they might organize a protest or hand around a petition. When economics students get angry they make spreadsheets. They conduct interviews. They collect data. They do research.

True to their training, the student movement for pluralism in economics education has been marked by an impressive amount of research: both on economics education itself and on more topical subjects within economics. They've published books. They've written reports. They've built websites.

But what they haven't done very well is keep track of it all! As of this writing, there is no central home for all the student publications that have come out of the young movement. Many students within the movement have a sense of what has been done already, but for newcomers or outsiders, it can take quite a bit of effort to get a good overview of what is out there.

The goal of this brief report is to put in one place some of the works that have come out of the movement to reform economics education. In defining research, I have taken a broad view, particularly to include the various teaching materials that the movement has developed, and some of the open letters it has written.

To keep this from becoming a comprehensive list of everything published about pluralism, I

have tried to stick to works done by students and recent graduates. I have also found it helpful to briefly introduce some of the main institutional players in the pluralist economics ecosystem. This is why major projects like the website Exploring Economics fall not under research (which it certainly is!) but instead under Organizations and Resources.

Publications are arranged chronologically and alphabetically by year, and organizations are arranged alphabetically. Where possible I have included links to websites or PDFs for the works in question, and I have also included suggested citations. Publications are in English unless otherwise noted.

This work comes out of my time as the oikos Associate in pluralist economics. If you're new to pluralist economics, or want a refresher on what it's all about, check out my first publication as Associate, the oikos Guide to Pluralist Economics [here](#).

These lists are certainly incomplete, but I hope they can be helpful. I plan to update this document in the future, so if you know of something you think should be included, find anything I got wrong, or are having trouble with the links, let me know at:  
[j.christopher.proctor@oikos-international.org](mailto:j.christopher.proctor@oikos-international.org).

## Research and publications

### **Tell Your Faculty About Sustainable Development (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition)**

2005

Mathieu Régnier and Geneviève Tremblay M.

This illustrated guide gives advice for campaigning for curriculum change at universities. Created by oikos International, it is specific to sustainable development, but remains very relevant to the broader pluralist economics movement.

[Link](#)

Régnier, M., Tremblay, G. (2005). Tell Your Faculty About Sustainable Development (Second Edition). oikos International. St.Gallen

### **The oikos Case Study Collection**

2007, 2011, 2014, 2015  
oikos International

Since 2003, oikos has run a competition to identify outstanding case studies (and associated teaching notes) related to sustainability. All of the winning cases are available online, and a selection have been published into four edited books.

[Link](#)

Hamschmidt, J. (Ed.). (2007). Case studies in sustainable management and strategy: the oikos collection. Greenleaf. Sheffield.

Hamschmidt, J., Pirson, M. (Ed.). (2011). Case studies in social entrepreneurship and sustainability: the oikos collection volume 2. Greenleaf. Sheffield.

Gabriel, J.V. (Ed.). (2014). Case studies in sustainable management: the oikos collection volume 3. Greenleaf. Sheffield.

Pirson, M. (2015). (Ed.). Case studies in social entrepreneurship: the oikos collection volume 4. Greenleaf. Sheffield.

### **An international student call for pluralism in economics**

The International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics

2014

This letter was written collaboratively by a large group of economics students and serves as a concise and eloquent argument for pluralism in economics. This is a key document for understanding the aims of the student movement for pluralism.

[Link](#)

ISIPE. (2014). An international student call for pluralism in economics. The International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics.

### **CSEP Survey of Economics Students: Is it Time for Change at Cambridge?**

The Cambridge Society for Economic Pluralism

2014

A survey of current and former Cambridge economics students which found that respondents wanted more real world applicability, interdisciplinary, and career skills.

[Link](#)

The Cambridge Society for Economic Pluralism (2014). CSEP Survey of Economics Students:

Is it Time for Change at Cambridge? Cambridge.

### **Economics, Education and Unlearning: Economics Education at the University of Manchester**

The Post-Crash Economics Society

2014

This 60-page report details the Post-Crash Economics Society's critique of economics education at the University of Manchester. It analyzes the content of a Manchester economics education, builds an argument for pluralist reform, and lays out a set of specific

suggestions to improve the degree. It also provides a set of principles which a pluralist economics degree should be built around.

[Link](#)

The Post-Crash Economics Society (2014). Economics, Education and Unlearning: Economics Education at the University of Manchester. Manchester.

### **The case for pluralism: what French undergraduate economics teaching is all about and how it can be improved**

PEPS-Economie

2014

This report provides a curium review of French economics degrees and proposes an alternant pluralist curriculum.

[Link](#)

PEPS-Economie. (2014). The case for pluralism: what French undergraduate economics teaching is all about and how it can be improved. Int. J. Pluralism and Economics Education, 5 (04) pp. 385-400

### **From terrible to terrific undergraduate economics curricula**

PEPS-Economie

2015

This is a shorter summary version of PEPS' 2014 report. It was initially presented at the INET Plenary conference in Paris in 2015.

[Link](#)

PEPS-Economie. (2015). From terrible to terrific undergraduate economics curricula. 2015 INET Conference Paper. Paris.

### **A survey of undergraduate economics programmes in the UK**

Christian Westerlind Wigstrom

2016

This report gives a good descriptive summary of the content of economics programs in the UK.

[Link](#)

Wigstrom, C.W. (2016). A survey of undergraduate economics programmes in the UK. INET report. Oxford.

### **Pluralism in economics teaching in Germany – evidence from a new dataset**

Hannes Fauser\* and Myriam Kaskel

2016

A paper which uses the methods developed in the PEPS-Economie 2014 paper to analyze economics education in Germany. Part of the “EconPLUS” research program (more below).

[Link](#)

Fauser, H., Kaskel, M. (2016). Pluralism in economics teaching in Germany – evidence from a new dataset. Hans-Böckler-Foundation paper.

### **The Econocracy: The Perils of Leaving Economics to the Experts**

Joe Earle, Cahal Moran and Zach Ward-Perkins

2016

A book published by three University of Manchester graduates that explains the intellectual backing for calls for pluralism in economics and connects pluralism to the idea of democratizing economic decision making. The book also contains an extensive curriculum review of economics degrees at several top UK universities which shows a stark lack of ‘critical thinking’ in economics assessments.

[Link](#)

Earle, J. Moran, C. Ward-Perkins, Z. (2016) The Econocracy: The Perils of Leaving Economics to the Experts, Manchester University Press. Manchester.

### **Economics: An illustrated timeline**

Heske van Doornen

2017

This illustrated timeline gives a comprehensive overview of the history of economic thought from 1710 to 2008.

[Link](#)

van Doornen, H. (2017). Economics: An illustrated timeline. Economic Question. URL: <https://economicquestions.org/history-economics-made-simple/>. Accessed 8 March 2019.

### **Micro, Macro, Maths: Is that all? An International Study on Economics Bachelor Curricula**

Arthur Jatteau and Elsa Egerer

2017

This study, conducted by the ISIPE network, applies the method used in the PEPS 2014 report to 13 countries. The study confirms the dominance of the “MMM courses”—macro, micro and math—at the expense of reflexive courses like the history of economic thought. This citation is a conference paper, with a full article on the study forthcoming.

[Link](#)

Jatteau, A. Egerer, E. (2017). Micro, Macro, Maths: Is that all? An International Study on Economics Bachelor Curricula. FMM Conference 2017 Working Paper. Berlin.

### **Rethinking Economics: An Introduction to Pluralist Economics**

Liliann Fischer, Joe Hasell, J.Christopher Proctor, David Uwakwe, Zach Ward Perkins, Catriona Watson

2017

A short, edited book created by members of Rethinking Economics and leading academics which introduces students to nine different schools of thought. Ideal for use in introductory economics courses alongside standard textbooks.

[Link](#)

Fischer, L., Hasell, J., Proctor, J.C., Uwakwe, D., Ward Perkins, Z., and Watson, C. (Ed.). (2017). Rethinking Economics: An Introduction to Pluralist Economics, Routledge. Milton Park, U.K.

### **Anders wachsen! Von der Krise der kapitalistischen Wachstumsgesellschaft und Ansätzen einer Transformation**

Maximilian Becker and Mathilda Reinicke

2018

“Grow differently!” is an edited volume created by members of oikos Leipzig which examines the crisis of the capitalist growth society.

[Link](#)

Language: German

Becker, M. and Reinicke, M (Ed.). (2018). Anders wachsen! Von der Krise der kapitalistischen Wachstumsgesellschaft und Ansätzen einer Transformation. oekom verlag, Munich.

### **CORE n'est pas une réponse aux attentes des étudiants!**

PEPS-Economie

2018

This short article came out of a much larger effort by PEPS to systematically review the content of the CORE textbook project. The review concluded that CORE is only a partial answer to students demands, as it does little to introduce theoretical pluralism.

[Link](#)

Language: French

PEPS-Economie. (2018). CORE n'est pas une réponse aux attentes des étudiants! pepseconomie.org. URL: <http://pepseconomie.org/?p=836&fbclid=IwAR3ThqnHpFAMrXN8oGrFFKEvevXkl7lkyZSSw3R2NMnpRBVhFLPk7h3qjR8>. Accessed March 8 2019.

### **“Democratising economics in a Post-truth world” and “Rethinking Economics for a New Economy” in *Economics for the Many***

Antonia Jennings and J.Christopher Proctor

2018

These two chapters were included in an edited collection presenting ideas for a new economy. The first chapter builds the case for a democratized economics, while the second shows the limits of neoclassical economics and argues for pluralism in economic teaching and research.

[Link](#)

Jennings, A. (2018). Democratising economics in a Post-truth world. In McDonnell, J. Economics for the Many. (p.1-11). Verso. London.

Proctor, J.C. (2018). Rethinking Economics for a New Economy. In McDonnell, J. Economics for the Many. (p.174-185). Verso. London.

### **Diversifying the economic toolkit: An oikos introduction to pluralist economics**

J.Christopher Proctor

2018

A short, illustrated guide that gives 2-page summaries of 9 different schools of economic thought. It is intended to be as accessible as possible, and useful in role-playing workshops on pluralist economics.

[Link](#)

Language: English, [Italian](#)

Proctor, J. (2018). Diversifying the economic toolkit: An oikos introduction to pluralist economics. oikos Associate Report. St. Gallen.

### **Educating Economists? A Report on the Economics Education at Durham University**

Sally Svenlén, Eirc Sargent, George Tyler, and Ola Pedersen

2018

This report applies a number of previously developed methods—looking at course content, teaching/testing methods, and surveying students—to the Durham University economics program. The report also lays out a robust set of principles on which an economics education should be built. There is currently work ongoing to update the report annually.

[Link](#)

Svenlén, S., Sargent, E., Tyler, G., and Pedersen, O. H. B. (2018). Educating Economists? A Report on the Economics Education at Durham University. Durham Society for Economic Pluralism. Durham.

### **Employers' Report 2018**

Allana Yurko

2018

This report is based off of a series of interviews with employers—primarily in the UK—about their needs from economics graduates. The report finds that employers are looking for graduates with better real world analysis skills and communication skills, and suggests that curriculum be adapted to fit these needs.

[Link](#)

Yurko, A. (2018). Employers' Report 2018. Rethinking Economics. Manchester.

### **How economists see the world: An introduction to economic methodology**

Durham Society for Economic Pluralism (DSEP)

2018

This short guide explains the basics of economic modelling and providing much needed context for students starting their economics degrees. It also deals with ideas such as rationality, equilibrium, and marginalism which are typically embedded in most first-year economics models.

[Link](#)

DSEP. (2018). How economists see the world: An introduction to economic methodology. Durham Society for Economic Pluralism. Durham.

### **Italo-Swiss Student Call for Pluralist Economics**

Rethinking Economics Switzerland and Rethinking Economics Italia

2018

This short letter was created collaboratively with groups from Rethinking Switzerland and Rethinking Italia. It calls for the creation of a course in pluralist economics and provides examples in an appendix of what such a course could look like.

[Link](#)

Language: English, Italian, French, German

Rethinking Economics Switzerland and Italia. (2018). Change.org. URL:

<https://www.change.org/p/rethinking-economics-italo-swiss-student-call-for-pluralist-economics>. Accessed March 8 2019.

### **Rethinking Finance**

Liv Anna Lindman, Abel Crawford, Marie Storlie and Sunniva Mellbye

Rethinking Economics Norway

2018

This publication comes out of a 2018 conference of the same name hosted by Rethinking

Economics Norway. The report gives fresh views on various topics in finance.

[Link](#)

Lindman, L.A., Crawford, A., Storlie, M., Mellbye, S. (Ed.). (2018). Rethinking Finance. Rethinking Economics Norway. Proceeding of Rethinking Finance conference. Oslo.

### **The teaching of economics and the issue of pluralism: a qualitative and quantitative study**

Michela Ciccotosto

2018

This master's thesis compares several economics programs within the University of Turin—some which embrace pluralism and some which do not—through an extensive survey of students. The study shows that students in the pluralist programs were more satisfied with their education, more aware of various topics related to the economy, and were more confident in their abilities as economists. The thesis also provides an extensive literature review and bibliography on pluralism.

[Link](#)

Language: Italian, English executive summary forthcoming

Ciccotosto, M. (2018). The teaching of economics and the issue of pluralism: a qualitative and quantitative study. Unpublished master's thesis. Turin.

### **Thinking like an economist? A Quantitative Analysis of Bachelor Curricula in the Netherlands**

Joris Tieleman, Sam De Muijnck, Maarten Kavelaars, and Francis Ostermeijer.

2018

This 130-page report give a holistic overview of economics education in the Netherlands. It starts with an extensive examination of the purpose of an economics education, focusing on the distinction between training professional vs academic economists. It then details the content of all the economics degrees in the Netherlands, providing both country-wide results and university-specific breakdowns. The results are also available in an interactive format online at [economicseducation.org](http://economicseducation.org).

[Link](#)

Tieleman, J. De Muijnck, S. Kavelaars, M. and Ostermeijer, F. (2018) Thinking like an economist? A Quantitative Analysis of Bachelor Curricula in the Netherlands. Rethinking Economics NL.

### **An Open Letter to the Dean and all Economics Professors of the School of Business and Economics at Maastricht University (UM)**

Pluralism In Economics – University College Maastricht (PINE Maastricht)

2019

An open letter detailing the problems with how banking and finance are taught at the undergraduate level, specifically critiquing the loanable funds model and the idea of a money multiplier.

[Link](#)

PINE Maastricht. (2019). An Open Letter to the Dean and all Economics Professors of the School of Business and Economics at Maastricht University (UM). Maastricht, Netherlands.

# Organizations and resources

## Student groups

**oikos International** is a student group that aims to integrate sustainability into economics and management education. Founded in 1987 it now has over 50 local groups globally, and a staff team headquartered in St.Gallen, Switzerland. oikos hosts an online Research Hub where young researchers can publish their work, and since 2003 has run a case study competition to promote the use of case studies related to sustainability. More info about oikos [here](#).

**PEPS-Economie** is a Paris-based student group for pluralism in economics education. While smaller than the various networks of student groups, PEPS has had an outsized research footprint (as seen above) and was very involved in ISIPE, hosting the 2015 General Assembly. More info [here](#).

**Rethinking Economics** was formed in 2013 as a network of local student groups working towards pluralism in economics education. Rethinking now has over 50 groups around the world and a staff team in Manchester, UK. The network has produced two books, and helped create *Economy*. More info [here](#).

**The International Student Initiative for Pluralism in Economics (ISIPE)** is a loose network of groups which have signed on to the ISIPE open letter of 2014. There were a number of ISIPE General assemblies (the most recent in Paris in 2015), but the network has remained essentially a communication platform since then. More info [here](#).

**The Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik** is a network of German-speaking student groups which are campaigning for pluralism in economics. The Netzwerk has roughly 35 associated groups, and has originated a number of projects including *Exploring Economics* and PluraloWatch. More info [here](#).

**The Young Scholars Initiative (YSI)** is a support network of economics students and young researchers doing new and critical economics. YSI groups are organized topically and regularly organize in-person conferences as well as online webinars. YSI is an initiative of the Institute for New Economic Thinking, and has a small staff team based in New York City. More info [here](#).

## Other groups

**CORE-Econ** is a project to provide open access economics textbooks which put the real world (and real world data) at the center of an economics education. CORE's flagship book, *The Economy*, has been translated into Italian and French, and is used in universities around the world. More about CORE [here](#).

**Economic Policies in the Age of Globalization (EPOG)** is a consortium of universities which offer a joint economics master's degree from a pluralist perspective. Students can specialize in topics such as innovation, political economy and development, and a number of students from pluralist student groups have joined the EPOG program. More info [here](#).

**EconPLUS** is a joint project of the Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik, the Hans Böckler Foundation and the University of Kassel to study the state of economics teaching in Germany. The project led to a number of papers, and a book (in German). Info on the book [here](#) and more on EconPLUS [here](#).

**Reteaching Economics** is a network of early career academics who want to improve economics education. They are closely aligned with the goals of Rethinking Economics and are also based in the UK. More information [here](#).

**Promoting Economic Pluralism** (PEP) is an organization looking to support diverse thought in economics. PEP is in the process of creating an accreditation system to formally accredit educational programs as pluralist. It also launched The Mint magazine (more below). More on PEP [here](#).

**The Institute for New Economic Thinking** is an initiative started in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis intended to promote new ideas in economics. It has a large fund which it uses to award research grants, invest in teaching initiatives, host high profile conferences, fund the Young Scholars Initiative, and employ staff and in-house researchers. It is headquartered in New York City. More info [here](#).

## Websites and resources

**Economic Questions** is an online magazine that publishes understandable articles on major economic issues. Started by grad students at the Levy Economics Institute of Bard College (USA) it was originally known as 'The Minskys'. More info [here](#).

**Economics Education** is a website built to accompany the launch of '*Thinking like an economist?*' by Rethinking Economics NL in the Netherlands. The website includes the results of the study, including two-page fact-sheets for each university in the Netherlands, and a number of other resources like reading lists. More info [here](#).

**Economy** is a campaign to create 'understandable economics' which grew out of Rethinking Economics in the UK. Economy's

flagship product is its news and entertainment platform [ecnmy.org](#), which regularly publishes content related to the economy. The organization also runs workshops and 'crash courses' on economics (info [here](#)) and conducts research on economics literacy (examples [here](#) and [here](#)). Visit Economy [here](#).

**Exploring Economics** is an open source e-learning platform for pluralist economics which grew out of the Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik. Exploring includes a large 'orientation' section which serves as an online textbook on various schools of economic thought and a 'discover' section which is regularly updated with third party content. Exploring also organizes a Summer Academy and other in-person events. More info [here](#).

**The Heterodox Economics Directory** contains lists of study programs, journals, newsletters, blogs, teaching materials and websites related to heterodox economics. It also publishes its own newsletter (every two weeks). More information about the directory [here](#), and subscribe to the newsletter [here](#).

**The Mint** is a new British magazine offering 'fresh thinking in economics'. It is a project of Promoting Economic Pluralism (PEP) and has published articles by a number of high profile economists. You can find The Mint [here](#).

**The Pluralist** is an economics periodical published by the Durham Society for Economic Pluralism. You can find issues of The Pluralist [here](#).

## What's next?

As you can see, a lot's been done already! And there's even more in the pipeline. In Italy, work is ongoing to conduct a national survey of economics students, in the Netherlands a follow up report to Thinking like an Economist is underway which will help people design their own pluralist economics courses, and in Manchester research has started on a new book about diversity in economics.

The sky is the limit for what comes next, but a trend I would like to see expanded are the curriculum reviews of single universities. There is now a good framework in place for looking at the types of classes being taught (via PEPS's 2014 report), and a good framework for looking at *how* classes are taught in the Econocracy. Repeating these studies at the local level is not only a great way to see how one's university compares to others, but can be a great campaigning tool to get attention and build an argument for local change. Repeating these studies everywhere also creates a huge base of data from which we can draw broader conclusions.

There's also work to be done in creating pluralist teaching materials which can reach new audiences. If you're an economics student who really wants to learn about different economic theories, you can find them, thanks in part to the hard work of the student movement so far. But the vast majority of university students still have no idea these other theories exist. We need to publish things that can reach these students, as well as the high school students and members of the public who dip into economics less intensely. It's no easy task, but it's valuable work for students and groups who are willing to take it up.

We've accomplished a lot in the last five years, and if 2018 is an indication we're not slowing down anytime soon. Research is a core part of economics—it's only fitting it is also a core part of the student movement for pluralist economics!

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