



# Turning the tide

Landscape analysis of an emergent  
economic movement in Europe

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# Executive summary

**C**aught between mounting criticisms of its intellectual premises and growing discontent with the environmental risks and economic inequalities it contributed to, the neoliberal project seems to be under pressure more than ever before. Yet, it persists as the entrenched hegemonic ideology of our time. Who are the actors driving efforts against neoliberal dominance and for a new economic vision of human and planetary wellbeing? And how are they contributing to economic paradigm change?

Aiming to provide a preliminary answer to these questions, this report is an effort to create a picture of the current status of activities in **new economic thinking across Europe**. We tell the story of the nascent movement by providing a bird's-eye view of the organisations that, through their thinking and action, are both **challenging the neoliberal paradigm**, and actively **contributing to building a new mainstream**.

We combined a desk study and interviews with a number of selected practitioners to generate a list of 128 new economic organisations and examine their different pathways for achieving impact. This analysis depicts the following:

- **A growing, yet small ecosystem of actors.**
- **A diversity of focus areas**, including proposed solutions and sectors of operation.
- **A marked geographic bias** in the density of actors towards Western Europe and especially the UK.
- **Differences in actors' theories of change**, including in relation to bottom-up versus top-down change, timescales, necessary political consensus, and argumentation.
- **Four tones of voice used to translate theories of change into action**, representing both different postures towards mainstream economic systems (from diplomatic to antagonistic) and different performance arenas (from closed doors to open arenas).
- **Eight transformational levers** used to enable or achieve impact upon mainstream economic systems, albeit with a focus on indirect levers (such as coalition-building) rather than direct (such as delivering) and enabling ones (such as funding).

Although we find much activity challenging the neoliberal economic paradigm, it would be misleading to call it a cohesive movement — at least as of now. The variety of focus areas and pathways to impact embraced by European actors demonstrates that pluralism is a key defining characteristic of this field. We see this pluralism of approaches as a strength, and combining our own views with those of our interviewees, we recommend that the movement play to this strength by preserving organisational autonomy whilst simultaneously aligning and synergising. We recognise two aspects to this recommendation:

- **Providing room for shared bottom-up action** balanced with top-down coordination — rather than the latter alone — to nurture an increased sense of purpose and mutual understanding between the actors. To do so, we emphasise the role of promoting collaboration, interdisciplinarity, imagination and experimentation (in addition to funding and diversity to support them) as key to address perceived gaps in the field.

- **Fostering the emergence of a shared ethos**, i.e. a distinguishing character, sentiment, and moral nature of the nascent movement that stands behind new economic thinking. This would help the actors to strike the difficult balancing act between alignment and autonomy, which is needed to make the most of their diversities in the quest of building a new economic paradigm. An ethos can build on pre-existing shared goals, accompanied by shared values and symbols, collaboration rather than competition, and exploiting the disruptive power of crises (such as COVID-19).

This report provides a step in the evolution of the European (and indeed global) movement of new economic thinking, not least by raising the awareness of its constituent actors to the neighbours surrounding them in the landscape. It can also serve as an invitation for self-reflection, collaboration, and finding common ground as well as the most useful strategic niches.

There is clearly a movement in the making. It has a formidable task ahead of it, and those with a vested interest in perpetuating the neoliberal status quo will not submit to a paradigm shift. However, fortifying and expanding the new economic movement in Europe and beyond — and making the most of current opportunities for economic transformation — is not only vital, but surely feasible through a determined, shared effort.

# Foreword

**T**here is a secret I want to share with you.  
As we speak, there are hundreds of teams working across Europe to design and implement new economic systems.

For the past years, you've most likely been worried about the lack of action to tackle the climate crisis or striking social inequalities. These are just two examples of urgent challenges defining our times. A future that is better than our past seems hard to envision. Let's face it. Current economic systems are at fault on many levels.

Our economic systems should solve our common problems. But during the past decades, instead of working for the benefit of people and the planet, we have seen our economic system be one of the causes of inequity and the climate crisis. Financial industries have grown detached from the real economy and wealth has accumulated at an unprecedented scale. Many people continue to feel excluded from opportunities within their societies. And the planet is still burning.

It can get better. The story that hasn't been told is more optimistic than what our daily news reminds us. Over the past decades, hundreds of organisations and thousands of individuals have started to work on imagining and building new and better economic systems. You might not have heard of them, but they are many. Their activities range from reforming financial sectors to rewriting economics education; from applying systems thinking to promoting economic democracy; and from global economic transformation to the establishment of more sustainable local economies. Some work with foundational ideas, others develop policies. Most importantly, they all share a drive to foster a better society in which our economies help us to solve our most pressing challenges.

If you haven't heard of this emerging movement, there is a good reason. The movement is remarkably diverse and pluralistic. There are no single leaders or organisations taking the limelight. But a shared ethos is beginning to emerge: a growing and shared understanding of what is needed to move forward.

This report — *Turning the tide* — tells a story of this nascent movement as it is today. The movement is a much more significant one than you would have guessed. It's a source of inspiration on many levels. But it is not yet a story of success.

Now that you've heard the secret, I have a request for you.

The new economy should not be imposed top-down. We should cherish the pluralism of the new economic movement. Instead of silver bullets or ready-made blueprints, our times call for imagination and experimentation. The pluralism characterising the movement provides plenty of opportunities for doing so. Occasionally, mistakes will happen. Some ideas won't work in practice. But with persisting commitment, we can figure out how to move forward and make new economic systems that fit our times come to life. We need to put our trust in the movement.

This report reveals this emerging landscape. Its time is now.

**Juha Leppänen**, Chief Executive, Demos Helsinki

# Introduction

*There is a growing movement challenging neoliberalism, but its direction is yet to be defined.*

**O**n April 14<sup>th</sup>, 2021, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) encouraged Eurozone countries to increase government spending rather than worry about fiscal deficits and implement austerity measures<sup>1</sup>. Such a proposition seemed radical for an institution known throughout its history as a vanguard of strict fiscal policy and limitations to government spending. But the statement did not stand out from the crowd. Rather, it exposed how the IMF was joining the ranks of multiple status quo economic institutions in questioning the value of an entrenched consensus in economic decision-making. The emerging message was clear: neoliberalism — the dominant economic paradigm of the past decades — while persisting as the essential core of our global and, to varying degrees, many national political economies, can increasingly be perceived as questionable and credibly contestable.

Critiques of the mainstream economic paradigm are not new. Indeed, an ever-increasing number of critical voices have entered the mainstream since the 2008 global economic crisis. As the problems stemming from the stubborn persistence of neoliberal institutional and policy thinking became increasingly visible during the 2010s, the political backlash of conservative populism that followed, showed the popular distaste of a neoliberal world order<sup>2</sup>. Prominent examples of such tendency were the election of Donald Trump as President of the US; the Brexit referendum campaign and, eventually, the actual detachment of the UK from the EU; and the rise of several far-right, conservative populist parties all over Eastern and Southern Europe. As the COVID-19 pandemic hit the global political economy at the onset of 2020, there was an urgent and broadly acknowledged need for a ‘state comeback’ to provide fast social and economic response to the crisis<sup>3</sup>. The Overton window seemed set to embrace a wide shift in global and national economic policy. Topping up the already formidable challenges faced by the neoliberal paradigm and its resulting economic status quo (see Text box 1), the appetite for more radical economic ideas seemed to spring from the fringe to the core of policy debates.

Increasingly questioned over its capacity to navigate and solve these challenges, and implicated in causing most of today’s crises in the first place, neoliberalism is certainly under pressure now more than ever. However, this does not necessarily imply its death; the new world, whatever it may look like, is yet to be born. Clearly, there is a growing interest in new economic paradigms. At a broader societal level, citizens’ climate movements manifest the popular demand for a structural change in how our economies work. And in the academic, specialised media and policymaking spheres, new narratives that question key elements of mainstream economic thinking have increasingly permeated public debates — such as the outdatedness of GDP as a proxy for economic development<sup>4</sup>, the role of the state amidst grand societal challenges, or the potential use of epistemic complexity tools and analysis within economics. Yet, while the renewed interest in public discourse around potential economic alternatives proves that there is appetite for change, the jury is still out on whether such appetite is effectively funneled into the policy space. While relevant, the OECD’s effort towards a global minimum corporate income tax

1 IMF (2021). *Transcript of April 2021 European Department Press Briefing*. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

2 Norris, P. & Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and authoritarian populism*. Cambridge University Press.

3 Mazzucato, M. & Quaghiotto, G. (2020). *The big failure of small government*. Project Syndicate, 19 May. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

4 Dasgupta, P. (2021). *Final report: The economics of biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review*. London: HM Treasury. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

is only a preliminary attempt at dealing with persistently unscrutinised capital flows<sup>5</sup>. In the US, as Biden's presidency marks a rupture with that of Trump in many respects, whether this will be reflected in a more daring or simply progressive-neoliberal economic agenda remains to be seen<sup>6</sup>. And within the EU, while ballooning national debts led to the suspension of the Stability and Growth Pact, it is not clear whether there will be political room for amending it<sup>7</sup>.

### Box 1: Reasons driving the challenge to economic status quo

#### **An intensifying environmental crisis.**

The stark reality of climate breakdown has been emphasised in recent months by numerous shocking examples of extreme weather and wildfires around the world. In order to keep temperature increases below 1.5°C and avoid further climatic destabilisation, global carbon emissions must be radically reduced and reach net zero in 30 years from now. Paired with inter-related environmental crises of biodiversity loss, soil degradation, pollution, and the recent COVID-19 pandemic, it is clear that the current economic system has not been able to address detrimental environmental impacts, which themselves are largely of neoliberalism's own making.

#### **The instability of the current political economy.**

Secular stagnation in industrialised countries of the Global North has undermined the promise of growth as a general proxy for progress. Combined with the growing detachment between financial and economic markets and fears related to the advent of novel technologies, this has decreased popular trust in the current economic system.

#### **The popular revolt against economic powerlessness.**

Economic inequality has been increasing in industrialised countries. In particular, wealth gaps within countries are growing. People affected by stagnating wages and uncertain labour markets are increasingly looking for political movements challenging the status quo of past decades.

#### **Fundamental shifts in a global geo-economic landscape.**

Economic power has been shifting in past decades, with power concentrating, for instance, in Eastern Asia (and particularly in China). In addition, new forms of private power are being born especially within new digital giants acting as powerful economic agents globally. These shifts are challenging the global landscape previously supportive of neoliberal economic systems.

5 OECD (2021). *International community strikes a ground-breaking tax deal for the digital age*. OECD Press Release. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

6 Eichengreen, B. (2021). *Bidenomics: Content and prospects*. *Intereconomics*: 56(4), 243–244.

7 Liboreiro, J. (2021). *Strict or flexible? Brussels kicks off debate to reform fiscal rules*. Euronews, 19 October. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

Something is brewing in the cauldron of new economic thinking. Yet, this does not mean that a major paradigm or policy shift will occur: after all, neoliberalism still persists as the entrenched hegemonic ideology of our time. Nor does this mean that any following paradigm change would necessarily be driven by new economic thinking actors. Moving in a fairer and more sustainable direction is not certain either — dominant digital platform monopolies based on ownership and control of data may come out as winners. Overall, there is a growing movement against neoliberalism and for an inclusive economy based on human and planetary wellbeing, but it is fair to say that its success is far from assured. But so is its failure.

## On new economic thinking

*New economic thinking* refers to a relatively heterogeneous array of thinking and action. This report is an effort to create a picture of the current status of activities related to it across Europe<sup>8</sup>. To do so, we focus on organisations that, by their thinking and action, are explicitly challenging the neoliberal paradigm, and actively contributing to building new alternatives to it. To select them, we include those actors and approaches whose work can be considered in line — at least to a considerable extent — with the ten first principles for a new economics established by the Global Assessment for a New Economics (GANE) through extensive review of new economic approaches<sup>9</sup>. These are organised into holistic, ecological economic, social economic, and political economic groupings:

- **Holistic principles:** (1) recognise that economies are embedded within societies and ecosystems and that the final purpose of economics is to support human and planetary wellbeing; (2) acknowledge complexity and the need for interdisciplinarity in addressing economic problems.
- **Ecological economic principles:** (3) acknowledge that economies have fundamental biophysical and biochemical limits to growth; (4) recognise that human-derived capital depends on nature; (5) design economies to be circular and regenerative.
- **Social economic principles:** (6) Embed a pluralistic model of values and behaviour, based on wellbeing, dignity, sufficiency and a positive understanding of freedom, in all economic thinking, decisions, and actions; (7) consider equity, equality, and justice as central questions of economic inquiry.
- **Political economic principles:** (8) embrace pluralistic, social, and relational approaches that support social enfranchisement, social needs, and the common good; (9) embed participation, deliberation, and cooperation as core to economic thinking and policy; (10) take post-capitalist, decolonised economic perspectives.

While this selection criteria clearly excludes organisations advancing neoliberal agendas, it is also clear that not every new economic actor will have the same understanding of or completely agree with the entire set of principles. Nevertheless, we believe it is useful to consider this heterogeneous group as a whole, as this helps us gain some useful insight into how neoliberalism can be challenged, and what type of coalitions can be formed — or what type of divergences may need to be mitigated — in the effort to foster the advancement of a new economic paradigm.

<sup>8</sup> Organisations were included in the study if they operated principally within Europe, had their headquarters in Europe, or (for some globally operating organisations) had a major European branch of their operations.

<sup>9</sup> Kenter, J.O., Buckton, S., Martino, S., Agarwal, B., Anger-Kraavi, A., Hejnovic, A., Kendrick, I., Mariara, J., Mukherjee, N., Waddell, S. & Waddock, S. (2021). *COVID-19 as a challenge to neoliberalism: A synthesis of new economic thinking*. Global Assessment for a New Economics (GANE). Forthcoming.

## Methodology of the landscape analysis

The geographic focus of this research stems in part from an interest in complementing pre-existing analyses of the landscape where US-based organisations focused on new economic thinking operate<sup>10</sup>. The purpose of our research is not academic in nature, but rather that of performing a robust landscape analysis to ultimately provide some *actionable insight* on potential ways forward for new economic thinking: that is, to help strengthen the nascent movement by sparking evidence-informed action in the field. The landscape analysis process was built on five main steps:

1. **Baseline research review:** A baseline research review was conducted by the Global Assessment for a New Economics (GANE). Through an inductive analysis of sources (journal articles, books, webpages, and reports), GANE mapped 38 new economics approaches present within Europe, and distilled a set of first principles for a new economics: that is, the commonalities shared by the identified 38 ‘new’ approaches to economics and in contrast with the ‘old’ one<sup>11</sup>. Building on these, we used them as the main criteria selection for our research.
2. **Actor mapping:** Secondly, we assembled a comprehensive longlist of 127 European organisations whose work is founded across the first principles. Organisations were identified from four sources: (i) Google web searches – using GANE’s own classification of 38 new economics approaches as main keywords until we reached saturation; (ii) member lists of major organisations that are active in the field – such as Forum for a New Economy; (iii) selected grey literature summarising key aspects of the European new economic landscape – such as Friends Provident Foundation’s UK Assessment<sup>12</sup>; and (iv) snowball-style sampling based on our interviewees’ own recommendations. In addition, we aimed to gather more granular knowledge about some of the most relevant cases found among these organisations in two ways:
  - **Interviews:** In addition, 27 interviews were conducted with key actors in the field to test hypotheses concerning the status of new economic thinking in Europe as well as to inquire into their own strategies and theories of change. The first round of interviews included membership-based organisations that play an important role in convening and coordinating the field. Instead, the following rounds of interviews included additional organisations identified and engaged through snowball-style sampling based on the first round<sup>13</sup>.
  - **Country deep dives:** Four country deep dives were conducted to shed more light on the state of new economic thinking in a set of European countries. The countries were chosen based on criteria of geographic and socio-economic diversity, and provided us with a more nuanced picture of how new economic thinking is advanced in different contexts (United Kingdom, France, Finland, and Greece) by bringing additional socio-historical depth to the actors’ work<sup>14</sup>.

10 See e.g. Wong, F. (2020). *The emerging worldview: How New Progressivism is moving beyond Neoliberalism*. New York: Roosevelt Institute.

11 Kenter, J.O., Buckton, S., Martino, S., Agarwal, B., Anger-Kraavi, A., Hejnovic, A., Kendrick, I., Mariara, J., Mukherjee, N., Waddell, S. & Waddock, S. (2021). *COVID-19 as a challenge to neoliberalism: A synthesis of new economic thinking*. Global Assessment for a New Economics (GANE). Forthcoming.

12 Laybourn-Langton, L. & Jacobs, M. (2017). *Moving beyond neoliberalism: An assessment of the economic systems change movement in the UK*. York: Friends Provident Foundation. Accessed 11 Nov 2021. See Annex 1 (Essential background literature).

13 See Annex 2 (Advisory board member and interviewees).

14 See Annex 3 (Deep dive into four European countries).

3. **Actor clustering:** Thirdly, we used the longlist of actors developed in the previous step to identify the actors' key focus areas of action. To do so, we performed a grounded-theory thematic analysis<sup>15</sup>. The final clusters reflect several dimensions, including the solutions and outcomes proposed by the organisations, and their policy targets or scale of action. In addition, actors were geographically mapped according to their main country or countries of operation.
4. **Analysis of "pathways to impact":** The fourth phase of the research aimed at identifying the "pathways to impact" used by the actors identified and clustered in the previous phases. As a baseline, we moved from the typology of "strands of activities" crafted by Laurie Layborn-Langton and Michael Jacobs in their analysis of economic systems change movement in the UK<sup>16</sup>. The typology was expanded using grounded theory to encompass the organisations' *theories of change*, four distinct '*tones of voice*', and eight *transformational levers* for stimulating change based on our own set of interviews (i.e. by asking interviewees about the role and underlying theory of change adopted by their organisations); country deep dives (i.e. take into account their socio-economic context); and one workshop with the research Advisory Board (to test and develop our initial results).
5. **Synthesis and recommendations:** A final synthesising analysis of the landscape of new economic thinking in Europe was conducted, including a gap analysis and a set of recommendations on potential ways forward for the nascent movement.

## Limitations of the landscape analysis

The study provides a relatively comprehensive mapping of the actors working in the field of new economic thinking in Europe. The main focus is on those who explicitly aim to change the *economic* system or specific sectors of it (such as the financial system). This leaves out many actors whose work is closely related to how the economy functions, but whose main focus is not on new economic thinking and action as we have defined it (e.g., many environmental organizations). In addition, we focus exclusively on those actors that are still active and relatively well-established, organised, and who have enough funding to sustain their operations.

The results of our actor mapping include main actors explicitly aiming to transform the prevailing economic paradigm on a systemic level in Europe. Although not fully inclusive, the mapping also provides a representative sample of the activities currently ongoing within different and more specific fields of action linked to the paradigm change — such as economics education aiming to change the underpinnings of teaching economics, or solidarity or local economy actors experimenting with alternative economic models. One potential bias that might have affected the actor mapping includes the narrow set of languages used in web searches (English, French, Greek, Finnish).

As for the clustering of the organisations' focus areas, it is worth noting that the clustering is based on a grounded-theory thematic analysis and thus built on findings *stemming from the empiria*. While the final clustering does not cover all possible thematic areas related to new economic thinking and might present some degree of overlapping within some of the organisations' focus, the result is faithful to the empirical findings of this study, and enables us to draw a picture of the main traits of the nascent movement in Europe.

15 Floersch, J., Longhofer, J.L., Kranke D. & Townsend, L. (2010). *Integrating thematic, grounded theory and narrative analysis: A case study of adolescent psychotropic treatment*. *Qualitative Social Work*, 9:407–425.

16 Laybourn-Langton, L. & Jacobs, M. (2017). *Moving beyond neoliberalism: An assessment of the economic systems change movement in the UK*. York: Friends Provident Foundation. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

In order to better understand the paradigm that new economic thinking aims to transform, we begin with a brief historical introduction to neoliberalism and its journey from the fringe to the core of economic thinking. Afterwards, we outline the main results of the landscape analysis by illustrating key descriptive and analytical insights on the characteristics of European new economic thinking, as well as the scope and activities of the new economic actors that are advancing it. Lastly, we conclude by leveraging the insights emerged from the research to provide potential steps forward.

# Context: The dominant economic paradigm

*How neoliberalism has successfully become an entrenched economic paradigm of thought and action.*

**C**aught between mounting criticisms of its intellectual premises and growing discontent towards the environmental risks and economic inequalities it contributed to, the neoliberal project seems to be under pressure now more than ever. Yet, neoliberalism is still alive and kicking. This chapter aims at uncovering why this is the case by reflecting on the historical trajectory of neoliberalism. How did it make the leap from the fringe to the core of economic thought and action? Diving into the efforts pulled by its advocates since the late 1930s, we first identify its essential characteristics through four layers of analysis; then we briefly show how and why it has successfully become a hegemonic paradigm; and, finally, we ask what the **nascent new economic thinking movement can distil from that experience**. In doing so, we hope to provide the essential context in which the need for new alternatives (and commitment of new actors in exploring them) emerged.

## Historical background

Although the blossoming of the neoliberal project on the global stage took place from the 1980s onwards, the origins of neoliberal thought can be traced back to the years between the Great Depression and the Second World War. Soon after the first and second US New Deals, the Lippmann Colloquium was held in Paris in 1938. The Colloquium saw 26 prominent liberal thinkers rejoin to renew classic liberalism against a growing appetite for interventionist and socialist ideas in economic thinking<sup>17</sup>. Among them, Friedrich Hayek had already publicly argued against John Maynard Keynes's policy advice for larger deficit spending measures to US and UK governments<sup>18</sup>. However, the demands of the war further reinforced the managed economy approach resulting in the development of interventionism during the previous decade. With the beginning of World War II, Keynesianism consolidated its place at the core of the post-war economic policy, relegating neoliberal ideas to the status of eccentric analytical paradigm.

Notwithstanding the fragility of neoliberal hopes at such a stage, Hayek published *The Road to Serfdom* in 1944<sup>19</sup>. The book sparked a broad political and economic debate in the US and UK, providing momentum and inspiration for the entire neoliberal movement. By 1947, Hayek convened 39 economists, philosophers, and journalists from the two sides of the Atlantic Ocean in Switzerland to found the **Mont Pelerin Society (MPS)**. Including thinkers of the likes of Ludwig Von Mises, Karl Popper and Milton Friedman, the MPS aimed “to contribute to the preservation and improvement of the free society” against the “essential moral and economic origins [...] of the present crisis”<sup>20</sup>. From this seed, over the following 30 years, a major philanthropic, organisational, and political effort was carried over to advance MPS ideas<sup>21</sup>: outlets were created to reach out to a broader public (e.g. Reader's Digest);

17 Reinhoudt, J. & Audier, S. (2018). *The Walter Lippmann Colloquium: The birth of neo-liberalism [sic]*, Springer.

18 Wapshott, N. (2011). *Keynes Hayek: The clash that defined modern economics*. Norton & Company.

19 Hayek, F.A. (1944) [2007]. *The road to serfdom: Definitive edition*. University of Chicago Press.

20 Mont Pelerin Society (1947). “*Statement of Aims*”, April 8, 1947. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

21 Kramer, L. (2018). *Beyond Neoliberalism: Rethinking political economy*. Hewlett Foundation: Public Board Memo, April 26, 2018. Accessed 11 Nov 2021

intellectual hubs were established in leading universities (e.g. University of Chicago); think tanks were set up to translate academic ideas into actionable policy recommendations (e.g. American Enterprise Institute); and large coalitions were built across manifold business communities, religious organisations, and broadcast media (e.g. Business Roundtable).

Yet, neoliberalism could not have conquered hegemonic status had Keynesianism not incurred a major crisis. Soon after the collapse of the Bretton Woods system, the 1973 oil crisis turned into an unforeseen macroeconomic condition referred to as **stagflation**: a mix characterised by high inflation and high unemployment, paired with skyrocketing interest rates. While Keynesianism seemed to provide no answer to the persisting crisis, Hayek's mentee Milton Friedman offered a clear solution – monetarism – and a recipe for economic recovery based on the drawback of the state and the restoration of free markets<sup>22</sup>.

Throughout the rest of the 1970s, neoliberalism gained full intellectual and political recognition. In 1974, Hayek won the Nobel Prize for his “penetrating analysis of the interdependence of economic, social and institutional phenomena”, which pinnacle with the publication of *Law, Legislation, and Liberty*<sup>23</sup>. In 1976, Friedman followed his mentor in receiving the same prize, this time for his achievements in consumption and monetary theory<sup>24</sup>. By the beginning of the 1980s, the newly elected UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and US President Ronald Reagan embraced their advice and mainstreamed it through their electorates, employing vigorous anti-state rhetoric. As of 1989, market fundamentalism had spilt over across Europe and in the international field, shaping what came to be known as the **Washington Consensus**<sup>25</sup>. Importantly, over time neoliberal ideology also fused elements of (neo)keynesian thinking with neoclassical thought about the functioning of markets, leading to the so-called new neoclassical synthesis that now underpins much macroeconomic policy<sup>26</sup>. This ability to morph and change over time reflects that neoliberalism is ultimately a political project that harnesses economic thinking for the sake of power, rather than a school of economics<sup>27</sup>.

## Cutting through the neoliberal paradigm

While acknowledging the multiplicity of controversies within neoliberal thought itself and the diversity of its actual realisations across different countries and contexts, we also deem it important to identify and define neoliberalism for what it represents in the current political and economic debate. From this standpoint, we understand neoliberalism as the dominant societal ideology, currently codified in a global structure of governance that is essentially based on the pursuit of free markets as the primary mechanism to achieve societal progress. To cut through the manifold forms of the neoliberal paradigm, we disentangle its key elements based on a four-fold nested structure. By illustrating how neoliberalism is currently entrenched across different layers of an economic paradigm, we hence highlight the need for the nascent movement of new economic thinking to fight against its dominance across all of them:

1. **Underpinnings.** Understood as its main conceptual and societal premises, neoliberalism's underpinnings can also be interpreted as *memes*, i.e. replicable ideas that, by continuously spreading through communication and reinterpretation across social spheres, eventually come to constitute

22 Friedman, M. & Schwartz, A.J. (1963) [2008]. *A monetary history of the United States: 1867–1960*. Princeton University Press.

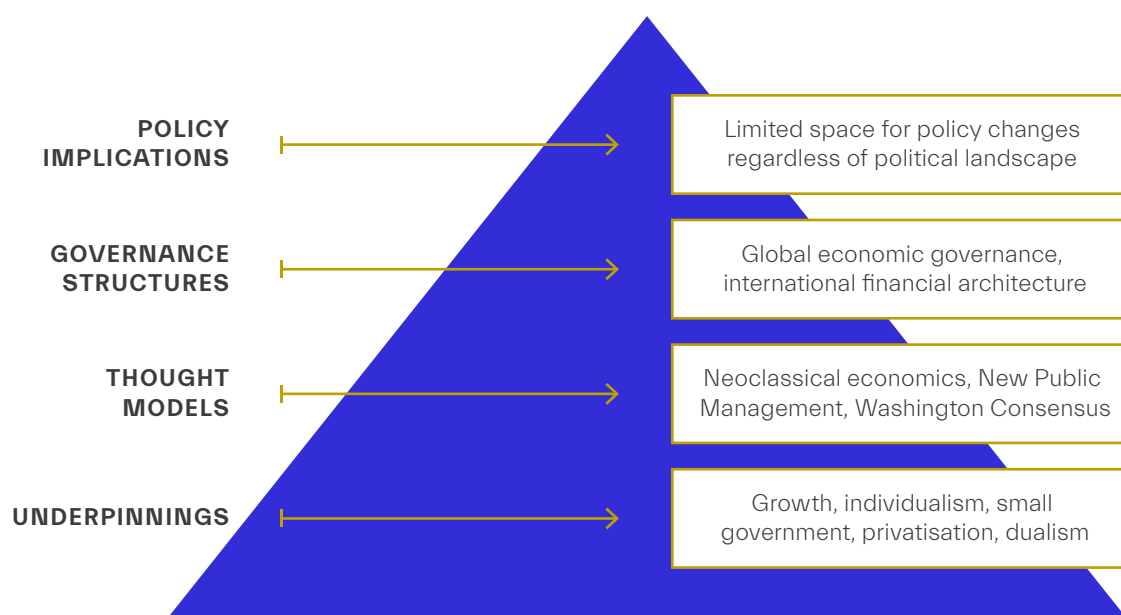
23 Hayek, F.A. (1973) [1983]. *Law, legislation, and liberty: Volume I, Rules and Order*. University of Chicago Press; and The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, 1974. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

24 The Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel, 1976. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

25 Williamson, J. (2009). *A short history of the Washington Consensus*. *Law & Bus. Rev. Am.*, 15:7–23.

26 Laffargue, J.P., Malgrange, P., & Morin, P. (2012). *The “New Neoclassical Synthesis”: An Introduction*. *Économie et Statistique*, 451–452–453: 31–44.

27 Mirowski, P. (2013). *Never let a serious crisis go to waste: How neoliberalism survived the financial meltdown*. London: Verso.

**Figure 1.** The four layers of the neoliberal paradigm

the basic content of the neoliberal discourse<sup>28</sup>. Economic growth, individualism, small government, private ownership and separation are such memes — finally culminating in the belief of mind over matter, and of humanity over a masterable, and exploitable nature.

2. **Thought models.** The underpinnings have been translated and adapted as main strands of economic thinking across different social spheres — such as in academia, public administration, business, and so forth. Arguably the most relevant thought model is represented by new neoclassical economics, i.e. the body of knowledge and theories that are currently taught in the vast majority of educational institutions worldwide and largely accepted by policymakers as a key logic for decision-making<sup>29</sup>. Other examples are represented by **New Public Management** (advocating reform of state action based on agencification, management by results, use of procurement market mechanisms)<sup>30</sup> and the **Washington Consensus** (prescribing a uniform policy programme for developing countries, which was strongly advocated in the 1990s–2000s by international financial institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank)<sup>31</sup>.
3. **Governance structures.** Neoliberal governance structures are reflected in key institutional arrangements and their relative operational premises of action. International organisations currently composing global economic governance<sup>32</sup> (i.e. IMF, World Bank, World Trade Organisation) and those constituting the core architecture of international capital flows<sup>33</sup> (i.e. Bank of International Settlements, key central banks) show how diverse institutional arrangements shape and constrain economic solutions. The same can be seen at a more granular level in their relative operational premises (i.e.

28 Riedy, C. (2020). *Discourse coalitions for sustainability transformations: Common ground and conflict beyond neoliberalism*. Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability, 45:100–112.

29 Arnsperger, C. & Varoufakis, Y. (2006). *What is Neoclassical Economics?* Panoeconomicus, 1:5–18.

30 Bezes, P. (2017). *The Neo-Managerial turn of bureaucratic states: More steering, more devolution*. In King, D., Le Galès, P. (eds). *Reconfiguring European States in crisis*. Oxford University Press, pp.251–278.

31 Williamson, J. (2004). *The Washington Consensus as policy prescription for development*. Lecture delivered at the World Bank on January 13, 2004. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

32 Önis, Z. & Güven, A.B. (2011). *The global economic crisis and the future of neoliberal globalization [sic]: Rupture versus continuity*. Global Governance, 17:469–488.

33 Major, A. (2012). *Neoliberalism and the new international financial architecture*. Review of International Political Economy, 19, 4:536–561.

open and liberalised national markets, the Basel Capital Accord, and central bank independence and mandates based on inflation-targeting) as well as in European macroeconomic governance<sup>34</sup> (i.e. EU treaties from Maastricht in 1992 to the Fiscal Compact in 2013).

4. **Policy implications.** Lastly, neoliberalism's policy implications — largely derived from a neoclassical framework — can be assessed through specific fields<sup>35</sup>. Fiscal and monetary policies push governments to prioritise balanced budget rules rather than investment. Welfare and labour policies are oriented towards a flexibilisation of job markets and tightly intertwined with each other. Industrial policies are based on the fear of *government failure* and the limitation of its role to address *negative externalities* that might emerge from phenomena such as pollution. Banking, finance, and corporate policies assume individual interest as a source of both allocative efficiency and maximisation of societal welfare, and neglect systemic risks posed by speculative bubbles. Trade policies argue that all barriers to free exchange should be dismantled regardless of deregulation in labour or environmental safeguards.

## Flash forward: How neoliberalism looks today

Critiques of neoliberalism have existed throughout its journey. However, the 2008 global financial crisis and subsequent economic recession brought to the surface an increasing number of critical voices. From that moment and throughout the 2010s, the problems stemming from major pitfalls in neoliberal thought became even more visible.

First, the global financial crisis directly challenged the assumptions on which mainstream consensus relied — compelling central banks such as the Federal Reserve in the US and the European Central Bank to deploy unconventional monetary policies at an unprecedented scale<sup>36</sup>. Thereafter, the tight implementation of austerity measures in South Europe failed to address ongoing distress in European bond markets, feeding into a double-dip recession that both exacerbated inequalities between (and within) European countries and further discredited neoliberal policy prescriptions<sup>37</sup>. By 2016, the political backlash of conservative populism in the EU and elsewhere in the Western world — such as with Brexit and Donald Trump's election — expressed popular distaste towards the world created by neoliberalism, and especially its role in furthering the existing wealth inequalities<sup>38</sup>. In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic catalysed a shift in economic policy that contributed to a reappraisal of the role of the state, and the expansion of the role of governments in market economies added to the growing stream of challenges currently faced by the neoliberal paradigm<sup>39</sup>.

On the one hand, the neoliberal project seems therefore to be under pressure now more than ever. On the other hand, neoliberalism is still alive and kicking. Part of the reason behind its resilience certainly comes from its cohesiveness — which, as it has been shown above, succeeds in advancing “a full set of seemingly unrelated political proposals” dealing with “short-, medium-, and long-term horizons of action [and] combining regimes of knowledge and interim outcomes” in such a way that the result of their entrenchment is “the inexorable movement [...] ever closer to the eventual goal[s]” set by the paradigm

34 Fitoussi, J.-P. & Saraceno, F. (2013). *European economic governance: the Berlin–Washington Consensus*. Cambridge Journal of Economics, 37, 3:479–496.

35 Macfarlane, L., Laybourne-Langton, L. & Jacobs, M. (2019). *The times they are a-changin? Exploring the potential shift away from the neoliberal political-economic paradigm*. Working Paper No.02/2019, Forum for a New Economy. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

36 Guerini, M., Lamperti, F. & Mazzocchi, A. (2018). *Unconventional monetary policy: between the past and future of monetary economics*. European Journal of Economics and Economic Policies, 15, 2:122–131.

37 Celi, G., Guarascio, D. & Simonazzi, A. (2019). *Unravelling the roots of the EMU Crisis. Structural divides, uneven recoveries and possible ways out*. Intereconomics, 54, 1:23–30.

38 Norris, P. & Inglehart, R. (2019). *Cultural backlash: Trump, Brexit, and authoritarian populism*. Cambridge University Press.

39 Mazzucato, M. & Quaggiotto, G. (2020). *The big failure of small government*. Project Syndicate, 19 May. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

itself<sup>40</sup>. From this point of view, the seemingly unobstructed intrinsic logic of neoliberalism resembles the case of monoculture farming: the cultivation of only one type of crop which, time and again, persistently sucks up essential nutrients from the soil of mainstream economic thinking without replacing them.

Cutting through these concerns, it has been debated whether the pursuit of overthrowing neoliberalism with a new, more sustainable and just economic paradigm may find inspiration in the efforts of the fathers of neoliberalism itself: i.e. the Mont Pelerin Society and its descendants<sup>41</sup>. After all, the societal and economic worldview that emerged out of that convention gave birth to a successful and enduring hegemony. Thus, we believe it is a worthwhile exercise to take stock of the neoliberal journey from the fringe to the core of economic thinking to ponder what we can learn from it, and what not to replicate.

On the one hand, the case of the Mont Pelerin Society provides a relevant example of how its operational underpinnings allowed them to work across short-, medium-, and long-term temporalities in creating a new economic paradigm. Around forty years were needed for neoliberalism to move from the fringe to the core of global economic policy, and become a hegemonic paradigm. Throughout this time, three elements allowed the vision of the Mont Pelerin Society to be sustained and pushed forward: (i) a long-term vision disconnected from momentary electoral dynamics and protests; (ii) an effort towards the construction of an ideological infrastructure which proved capable of penetrating an evolving political debate; and (iii) the consolidation of an organisational form – the think tank – enabling its advocates to transpose neoliberal strategies to local conditions, all the while ensuring alignment of purpose between individuals coming from different societal spheres<sup>42</sup>. All these elements certainly provide insights into how economic paradigms might evolve, and overthrow established logics of action. At the same time, **this does not mean that new economic thinking should simply replicate the neoliberal modus operandi.**

Indeed, the neoliberal journey also shows how the premises defined by the Mont Pelerin Society were at last translated and enforced by its descendants into the blueprint of a recognisable orthodoxy – notably, beyond its stated aims<sup>43</sup>. The case of Lewis Powell – a conservative Associate of the US Supreme Court between the 1970s and 1980s – provides an example. In 1971, Powell was commissioned to write a confidential Memorandum by the Education Director of the US Chamber of Commerce to restore the “American Free Enterprise System” against the diffusion of progressive ideas. Distilling core strategies and tactics for a triple attack on pedagogic, public, and political arenas towards such goal, his Memo represents well how neoliberal premises were then turned into operational blueprints that explicitly aimed to eradicate diversity of thought and breed a “policy monoculture”: i.e. a culture of economic policymaking based on one-size-fits-all prescriptions<sup>44</sup>.

With the incredibly difficult task at hand to dismantle neoliberalism’s monoculture, the increasingly populated world of new economic thinking has yet to fully blossom: each of its actors may reflect a different focus area, and play different roles in crafting and advancing a novel paradigm. Who are they, and how do they contribute to economic paradigm change? Would their efforts actually benefit from a uniform policy programme, as in the spirit of the Lewis Powell Memorandum? Aiming to better understand the field and scope a preliminary answer to these questions, the next chapter focuses on mapping its actors and their characteristics.

40 Mirowski, P. (2013). *Never let a serious crisis go to waste: How neoliberalism survived the financial meltdown*. London: Verso, p.332.

41 Mirowski, P. (2013). *Never let a serious crisis go to waste: How neoliberalism survived the financial meltdown*. London: Verso.

42 Srnicek, N. & Williams, A. (2015). *Inventing the future. Postcapitalism and a world without work*. London: Verso.

43 “The group [...] seeks to establish no meticulous and hampering orthodoxy. It aligns itself with no particular party. Its object is solely, by facilitating the exchange of views among minds inspired by certain ideals and broad conceptions held in common, to contribute to the preservation and improvement of the free society.” Mont Pelerin Society (1947). “*Statement of Aims*”, April 8, 1947. Accessed 11 Nov 2021

44 Powell, L.F. (1971). *Confidential memorandum: Attack on American Free Enterprise System*. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

# Landscape: New economic thinking in Europe

*European new economic actors are growing, diverse, and active in using different levers of change. However, they are not yet a coherent movement.*

New economic thinking was not born in a vacuum. Rather, it developed out of decades of contestation of the neoliberal policies described in the previous chapter, as well as from successive waves of activism that during the last 20 years often resulted in global protests. Around the turn of the century, a considerably diverse array of civic and societal actors from all corners of the world joined forces against neoliberal globalisation, feeding both into mass manifestations (such as the Seattle WTO Conference in 1999, or the G8 in Genoa in 2001) and alternative platforms (such as the 1996 First international encounter for humanity and against neoliberalism in Chiapas, or the 2001 World Social Forum in Porto Alegre)<sup>45</sup>. A second wave of protests broke out during the early 2010s, with the Occupy Wall Street movement taking the spotlight in the fight against the structural inequalities that had been magnified throughout the global financial crisis, providing the key vocabulary and symbols for hoards of activists from South America to North Africa<sup>46</sup>. Across Southern Europe, the double-dip recession that followed that crisis fed into popular discontent expressed against austerity measures, fuelling in turn the rise of parties that put in question the principles behind European macroeconomic governance (such as SYRIZA in Greece and Podemos in Spain)<sup>47</sup>.

While certainly challenging the legitimacy of neoliberalism as the dominant economic paradigm, these experiences rarely fed into a structured consolidation of new alternatives to it. Quite the opposite, most of them met increasing difficulties soon after their initial momentum faded – sometimes, even contributing to a shared feeling of powerlessness against the enduring persistence of neoliberal dogmas<sup>48</sup>. Nowadays, who is taking their commitment and testimony forward? And how is neoliberalism actually challenged in the European context?

In order to respond, a way forward is to identify and analyse in depth those actors that are explicitly working to nurture a comprehensive economic transformation at different levels of our societies. This chapter does so by depicting a bird's-eye view of the landscape of new economic thinking in Europe. To do so, we collated a dataset of 128 new economic actors working in the continent. Combining a desk study assessment of those organisations with interviews of selected practitioners, we show the thematic breadth of the operations conducted in the new economic thinking field, provide an overview of the geographical distribution of actors and unveil a growing and diverse set of roles.

45 Seoane, J. & Taddei, E. (2002). *From Seattle to Porto Alegre: The anti-neoliberal globalisation movement*. Current Sociology, 50:1, 99–122.

46 Calhoun, C. (2013). *Occupy Wall Street in perspective*. British Journal of Sociology, 64:1, 26–38.

47 Della Porta, D., Andretta, M., Fernandes, T., Romanos, E., O'Connor, F.P. & Vogiatzoglou, M.. (2017). *Late neoliberalism and its discontents in the economic crisis: Comparing social movements in the European periphery*. Springer.

48 Fisher, M. & Gilbert, J. (2013). *Capitalist realism and neoliberal hegemony: A dialogue*. New Formations, 80–81(13), 89–101.

Most importantly, we show how European new economic actors are pursuing impact in their economic systems by means of three analytical tools that help us frame how they connect thought and action to impact. These are:

- **Theories of change:** identifying the logic of how actors choose to pursue different activities; to implement them; who to involve in them; where and when to carry them.
- **Tones of voice:** identifying the rationale through which actors translate their theories of change into different interventions, representing the essential juncture between how actors understand change, and how they aim to provoke it.
- **Transformational levers:** identifying interventions perceived by different actors as key to foster economic paradigm change and propagate new economic thinking.

As a result, the emerging landscape resulting from the research depicts a growing, yet small ecosystem of actors characterised by wide thematic diversity but considerable geographic gaps. While each of them makes use of distinctive levers and tones of voice in order to achieve impact, actors seem to have no shared strategy for how to steer the new economic thinking movement as a collective towards economic paradigm change – a fact reflected in the (often implicit) variance of opinions on how transformation should be pursued.

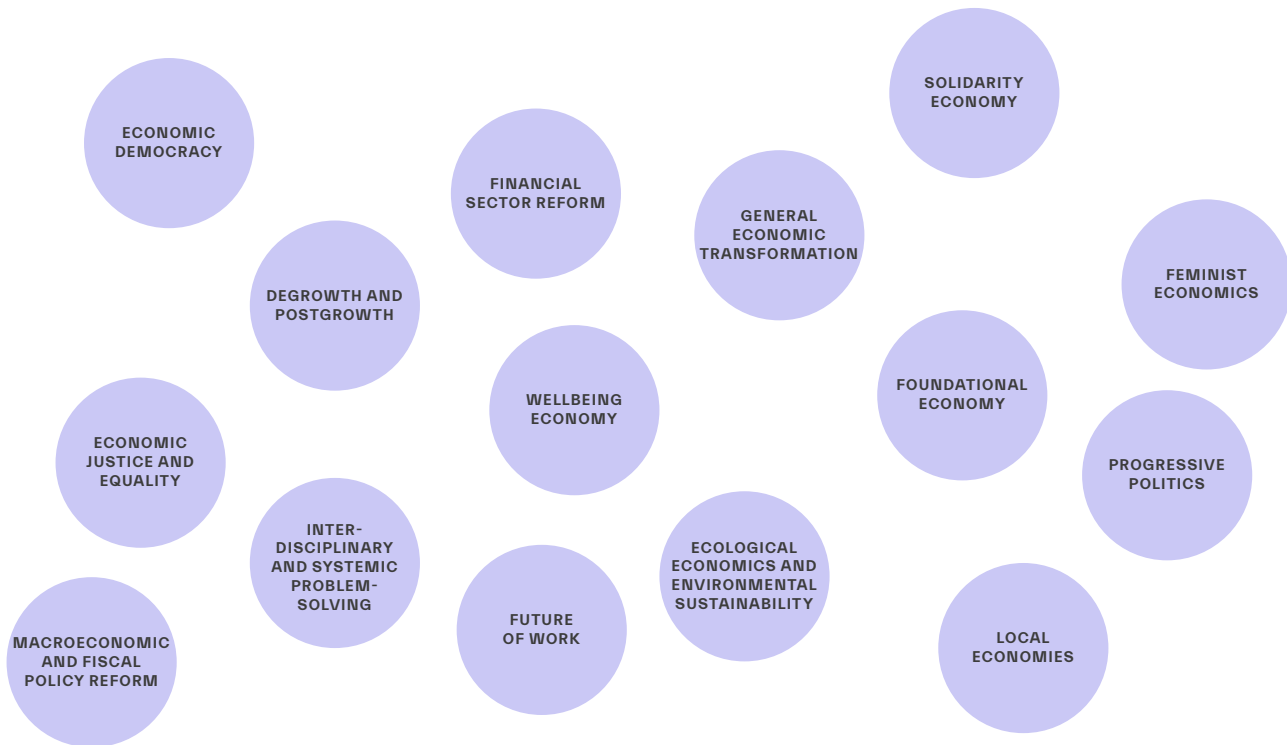
## Mapping the field – a small but growing group of diverse actors

Throughout the past decades, the growth of interest around a transformation of the economic system, described in the introduction, corresponded to a growth in the number of organisations that are actively pursuing such a change. This observation cannot be fully corroborated by our research, since systematic longitudinal data about this are not available. However, the fact that new funders have recently moved into the space and a considerable proportion of the 128 organisations mapped were founded in the last ten years suggests that the field of new economic thinking and action is growing.

Although new economic thinking is gaining momentum, the relative number of organisations working in this field in Europe is still rather small. Additionally, the typical size of organisations within the space is fairly small. Exceptions are clear, and there are larger organisations such as the New Economics Foundation or the University College London Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose (UCL IIPP) but overall a typical organisation in new economic thinking has only two to five employees. Finally, the amount of funding in the space is small in comparison to other sectors of action: as an example, according to a recent study, only 2% of climate funding from foundations is funnelled into new economic work<sup>49</sup>. These observations showcase the fact that new economic action is still a relatively small area of action.

To get an overview of the focus areas of new economic actors in Europe and to see whether clear points of gravitas emerge from the landscape, we conducted a grounded-theory thematic analysis, and landed on 15 clusters based on the actors' observed key focus areas – whether that was an area of operation, school of thought or policy target. The analysis shows that the landscape is considerably rich and diverse, and no single clear focus area of operation emerges. Actors span from solidarity economy campaigners to financial sector reform, to primarily ecological economics viewpoints, and from economists working on degrowth models to movements focused on building local economic decision-making practices.

<sup>49</sup> Roeyer, H., Desanlis, H., and Cracknell, J. (2021). *Foundation funding for climate change mitigation: Europe spotlight*. Climateworks, European Foundation Centre, The Hour is Late. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

**Figure 2.** Observed focus areas of new economic actors in Europe

## New economic actors focused in Western Europe

Mapping the geographical distribution of new economic actors reveals where new economic thinking is present most powerfully and where gaps exist. The mapping shows a clear geographical emphasis of actors concentrated in Western Europe and especially the UK, with less presence in Eastern Europe and Scandinavia. This may be in part produced by a methodological bias in search languages used and the knowledge and connections of our research team. However, it is corroborated by comments from our interviewees that the UK is a major hub for new economic thinking, with multiple and diverse actors approaching the sphere from different directions. Interviewee comments also testify how in general terms UK actors seem to be far better networked with each other than actors in other parts of Europe. A potential interpretation of why the UK has become a key “hotspot” of European new economic thinking can be related to the fact that neoliberal thought and action took a firmer hold there than in other European countries. Conversely, the opposite could be hypothesised with respect to Southern and Nordic European countries – in which broader policy space for progressive left parties might have allowed new ideas to grow incrementally upon existing intellectual traditions. A different but equally relevant interpretation of these findings is that the UK enjoys a stronger acquaintance with the think tank organisational model (as well as to their related funding), resulting in a main repository of new economic ideas that policymakers can refer to. Additionally, UK (and particularly London) Universities dominate economic thinking in Europe in general at least as measured by the geographic distribution of editors of economic journals<sup>50</sup>. While providing a definitive answer to these questions goes beyond the scope of this research, these contrasts mean that different strategies for supporting new economic actors are required in order to adapt to the characteristics of different regions of Europe. Some of these contrasts are illustrated by the four country deep dives summarised below (see Box 2).

<sup>50</sup> Angus, S., Atalay, K., Newton, J., & Ubilava, D., (2021). Editorial boards of leading economics journals show high institutional concentration and modest geographic diversity. VoxEU.org. Accessed 15 Nov 2021.

# Geographical distribution of new economic actors in Europe

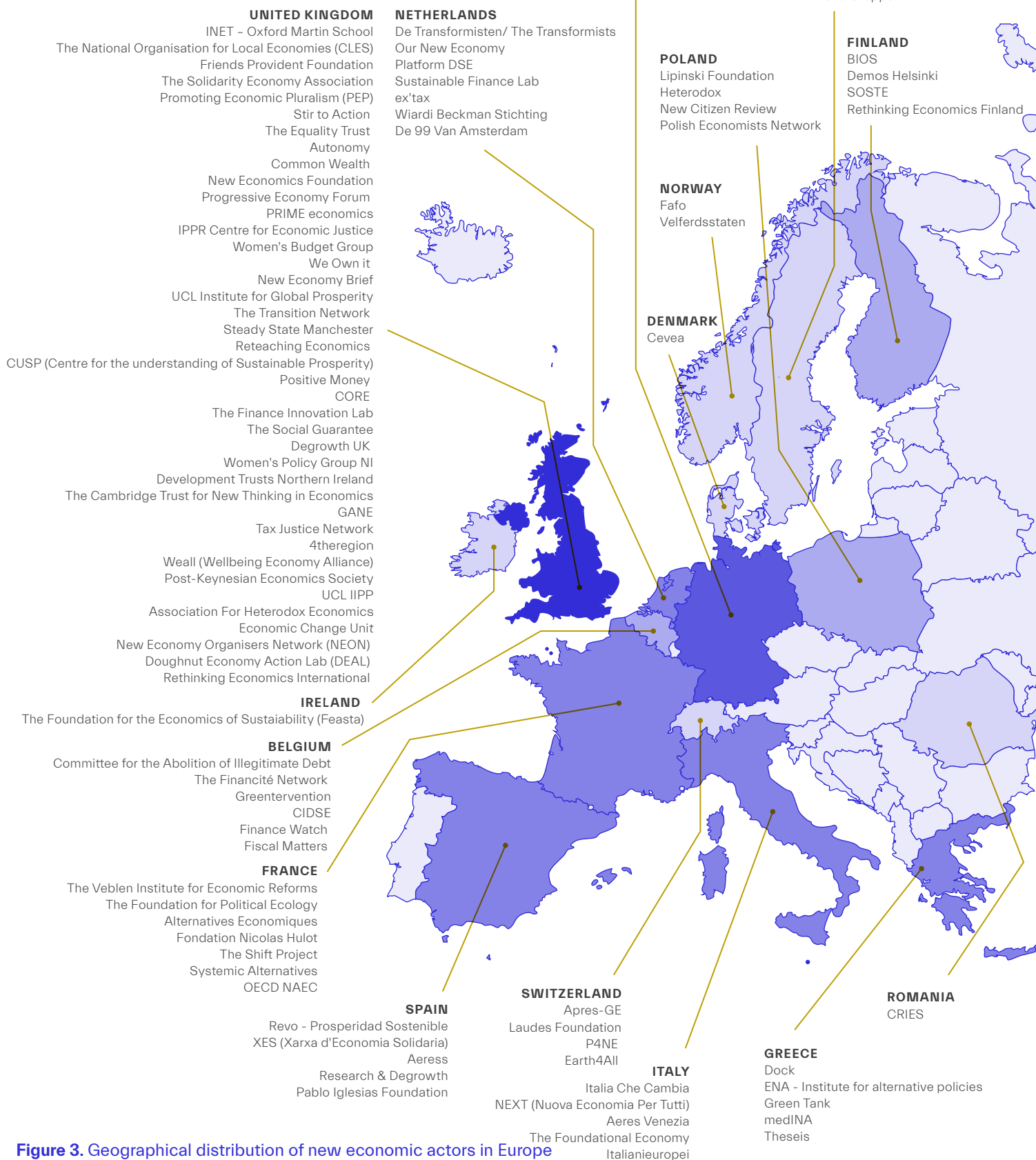


Figure 3. Geographical distribution of new economic actors in Europe

## Box 2. Deep dives into the new economic thinking of four European countries (summary)<sup>51</sup>

*Four country deep dives were conducted to provide a more nuanced picture of new economic thinking in the chosen countries, and to give a socio-historical context to the actors and activities in the field. The countries were selected on the basis of geographic diversity, different (assumed) perspectives on how they challenge the economic paradigm, and to showcase countries in which we expected efforts to transform economic paradigms, due to socio-historical contexts.*

### United Kingdom

As close to 25% of the actors mapped through this research are based in the UK, the country can be seen as a primary hotspot of new economic thinking in Europe. These actors include several think tanks (e.g., The New Economics Foundation, IPPR UCL, Autonomy, CommonWealth), organisations aiming to transform economics education (e.g., Reteaching Economics, Rethinking Economics, Promoting Economic Pluralism), or organisations more focused on specific issues (e.g., Positive Money, The Social Guarantee, The Equality Trust), to name but a few. Within this large group, better established channels of communication and networking between each of the actors can be also observed — at least relative to other mapped countries — even if this only infrequently feeds into joined-up coordination.

Notably, among the actors trying to accelerate collaboration and mutual understanding within the country are the Economic Change Unit (ECU) and the New Economy Organisers Network (NEON). Their efforts reflect a genuine appetite within the UK to harness the nation's diverse actors into a better-structured movement. Overall, it is largely evident that dynamic new economic actors continue to both emerge and connect with one another inside the UK. This suggests that even if new economic thinking has not properly established itself into a cohesive movement across the UK, this does not feel like a reality that is too far away.

### France

In France, the field of new economic thinking can be described as small, dispersed, and mostly concentrated upon a number of specific issues. Actors working on holistic, system-level changes in the economic system are still rare. The field consists mostly of academic organisations and networks (e.g., Research & Degrowth, Association Française d'Économie Politique) and a few think tanks (e.g., the Veblen Institute, Fondation Nicolas Hulot, Shift Project) and sector-oriented NGOs that are heavily focused on environmental and sustainability issues (e.g., Réseau Action Climat, France Nature Environnement). Born in the 1980s to challenge the famous neoliberal claim that “There Is No Alternative”, the monthly magazine and website *Alternatives Économiques* has nowadays become a well-established media outlet, aiming to bring to the discussion perspectives that differ from mainstream economic thinking.

The country has a rich intellectual life when it comes to critically discussing economics, even though general public discourse and policymaking still happen within the neoliberal cadre. One reason behind this is that heterodox economics is still very weakly established in French academia, which is mostly reproducing existing economic dogmas. The existing funding structures seem to be a core reason behind the small number and detachment of actors working on systemic change of the economic system: the funding is mostly sector-based, and a lack of investment in systemic, cross-sectoral vision-building is apparent.

<sup>51</sup> See full country deep dives in Annex 3

## Finland

Finland can be characterised as a country with a tight elite, which allows only limited room for alternative thought to grow. Although this long-established characterisation has started to crumble in recent decades, economic thought is still emblematic of a consensus-driven past: mainstream discussion is fairly uniform and largely follows neoliberal economic dogma. There has not been room nor funding directed to many organisations working directly on building a new economic movement. Notable exceptions include BIOS (an independent research institute pushing for and accompanying a comprehensive green transformation and economic paradigm shift) and Demos Helsinki. In addition, the Finnish system has independent but party-affiliated think tanks funded by each parliamentary party, out of which the Kalevi Sorsa Foundation can be seen to advocate for alternative economic policy.

While the number of independent new economic actors is relatively low, much of the Finnish new economic thinking movement is channelled through formal institutions — i.e., labour unions, Finnish universities, and political parties. However, these efforts have not translated into a lasting change in the societal landscape, and Finnish societal discussions are still coloured by abidance to neoliberal dogmas. Yet, the small dimension and cohesiveness of Finland as a country provides an opportunity to examine how rapid changes in public discourse might open up new openings for broader impact.

## Greece

In Greece, there is a traditionally strong attachment to alternative movements, motivated both by the perceived incompetence of governments, and the country's intellectual richness. Yet, even as essential needs are not met, societal unrest is not translated into a vision. The focus of most grassroots actors is mainly the pre-emptive fight for rights (for immigrants, workers, etc.). This means that, whatever is accomplished through grassroots movements, stays tightly within the constraints of neoliberal dogma. Still, the level of theoretical sophistication of anti-neoliberal thought is high. Greek heterodox economists are internationally renowned for offering prolific critiques of current economic paradigms. While research funding is still close to non-existent, new alternative think tanks have started to emerge, translating heterodox economic theory into advocacy (e.g., ENA Institute).

As with most countries in our research, the climate crisis presents a dynamic opportunity for new economic thinking in Greece. First, it is a topic that gathers global interest, which facilitates the exchange of knowledge. Second, it has given room to experimentation with new modes of production, consumption, and ownership, as with the case of community-owned renewable energy. As one of our interviewees put it, Greece seems to be permanently “pregnant”: there are always signs of life growing in its womb. With birth simply too far away, the signs of discomfort may be natural but they also may indicate a need for intervention. Guidance and collaboration could usher Greece into the frontlines of new economic thinking.

## Collaboration between actors

Finally, the bird's-eye view of new economic actors in Europe suggests that personal and operative connections between the organisations working in the space are partial at best. Within thematic areas, it is possible to identify consolidated links among several of the actors mapped – e.g., organisations focused on *General economic transformation*, which are bonded by both formal and informal ties (see section on coalition-building below). However, we found only limited evidence of organisations linking up with actors working in other societal spheres – e.g., climate or civil rights movements (see section on campaigning below) despite the need for this being widely agreed upon by interviewees.

Most importantly, many of the European new economic actors that were interviewed appear to only have limited active links with organisations outside of Europe, and with the Global South in particular (again, with exceptions, such as the Club of Rome). Although collaboration between actors working in the same geographical area is understandably easier, the widespread lack of more north-south linkages poses the risk of mirroring some of the neocolonial aspects of neoclassical economics. Firstly, this means that actors aiming to build fair and sustainable economic systems might omit important viewpoints on the effects of current economic systems upon the lived reality of the large majority of the global population. Secondly, this means that, as many approaches and countermovements in new economic thinking have originated in countries outside of Europe<sup>52</sup>, actors may fail to incorporate diverse ideas for different economic paradigms, and lessons learned from new economic action happening elsewhere.

## Pursuing impact in economic systems: three observations

If the rise of neoliberalism has been accompanied by the use of operational blueprints, we found that European new economic actors are carving their own ways forward through the use of more diverse, organic, and creative tools that help them frame how to connect action to impact. Indeed, diversity is observed on at least three levels: the organisations' **theories of change**, their **tones of voice**, and the **transformational levers** through which they attempt to impact mainstream economic systems. Awareness of such diversity can help us better define the state of the nascent movement of new economic thinking, as well as identify challenges, gaps, and, most importantly, opportunities.

### Observation 1: Diverse theories of change

As with any organised effort to effect change, the actors we examined all have their own implicit and explicit theories of how economic paradigm change could (or should) happen. In general terms, theories of change influence how organisations choose to pursue different activities; how to implement them; who to involve in them; where to carry them; and what timescales are needed. Based on our interviews, we identified five core dichotomies that showcase the diversity of the (either implicit or explicit) theories of change that we have found in the movement:

#### 1. *In what direction does change happen? Top-down or bottom-up.*

Whereas some organisations aim to initiate change from the bottom-up using the power of grass-roots movements, there are also multiple new economic actors who are trying to push for economic transformation through those already in power.

<sup>52</sup> Kothari, A., Salleh, A., Escobar, A., Demaria, F. & Acosta, A. (eds.) (2019). *Pluriverse: A post-development dictionary*. Tulika Books. Accessed 15 Nov 2021.

2. **On what timescale could/should change happen? Short-term or long-term.**

Some organisations see the economic paradigm shift as a decades-long project, whereas others push for change in the short term.

3. **What kind of political consensus is needed for change? Partisan or commonsensical.**

Some organisations imply that we need to mobilise the political left in order to achieve change. Others argue that we need to frame economic transformations as apolitical and commonsensical solutions to societal problems.

4. **What is the nature and depth of the change needed? Transformative or incremental.**

Whereas many actors are pursuing inherently transformative arguments (such as advocating de-growth), other actors believe in more incremental change.

5. **What spatial scale of action is most appropriate for change? Local or global.**

Working on a local/municipal scale is the chosen preference for many organisations, while others choose to focus on national, European, or global pathways of change.

Our sample does not seem to share an alignment on all of the potential elements of change. Rather, it illustrates the wide diversity in the space, alluding to multiple concurrent activities taking place at various levels. These divergences are not necessarily a bad thing per se: organisations can — and should — pursue change by developing and exploiting different approaches, so as to seize the opportunity to produce complementary outcomes across systems. However, our interviewees acknowledged that being more explicit about such differences would most likely help new economic actors in manoeuvring around potential sources of disagreement.

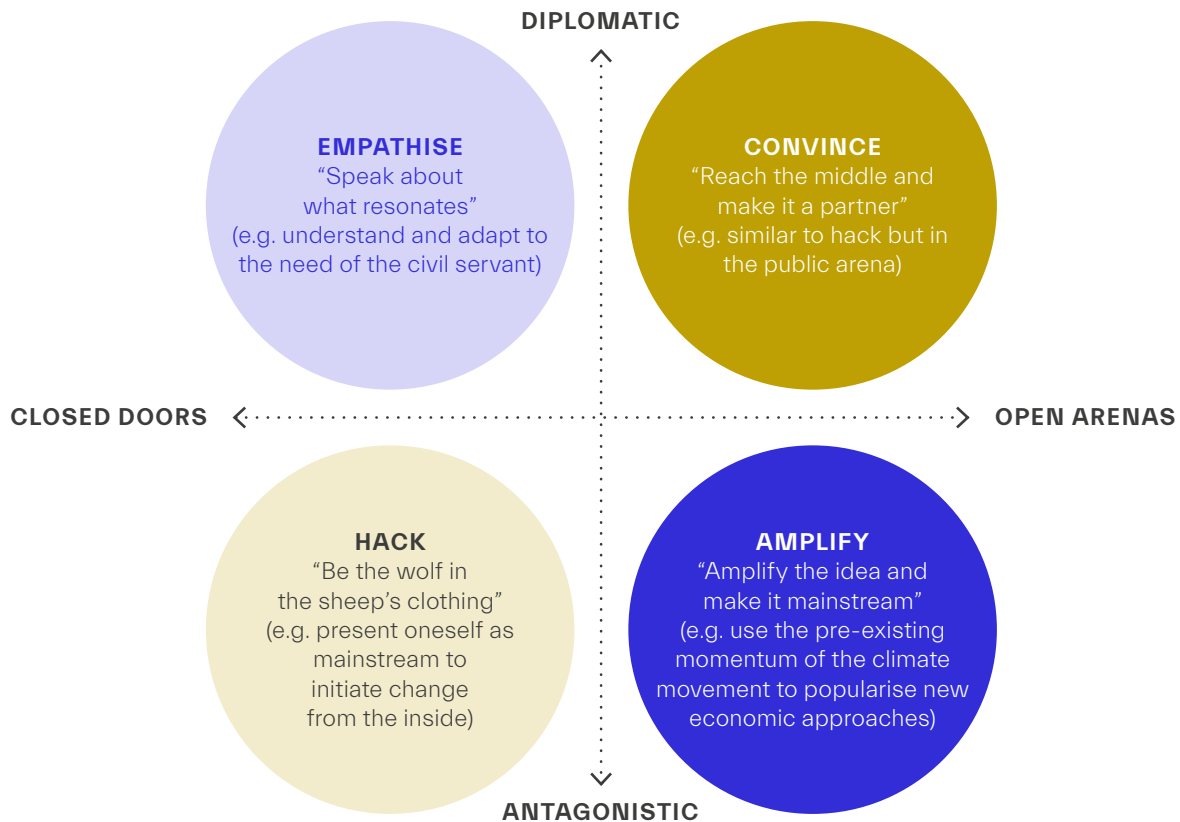
## Observation 2: Four tones of voice

While there are differing levels of agreement in all the aforementioned dichotomies, we were able to identify two essential dimensions of variance in how actors translate their theories of change into specific interventions. These provide us with an additional layer of analysis which helps us comprehend the current state of European new economic thinking. These dimensions are:

- their **posture towards the mainstream economic system and its defenders** — ranging from *diplo-matic* to *antagonistic* in how they aim either to achieve their own buy-in in new economic thinking or, conversely, challenge mainstream beliefs; and
- their **performance arenas** — ranging from the *closed doors* of policy networks or academic debates to the *open arenas* of political debate and public discourse.

Following these two key dimensions, European actors are representative of a wide spectrum of approaches, which can be framed around four tones of voice (Figure 4)<sup>53</sup>. Tones of voice can be seen as rationales through which the organisations translate their distinctive theories of change into different interventions. Despite being largely implicit, they are found to be internally shared within new economic organisations, and to permeate their activities and decisions in consistent ways. As a result, tones of voice represent the essential juncture between how actors *understand* change, and how they aim to *provoke* it.

<sup>53</sup> The four tones of voice overlap with more established characterisations of new economics change strategies (particularly, Waddell, S. (2018). *Four strategies for large systems change*. Stanford Social Innovation Review 16(2): 40–45), but also diverge. The *Empathise* and *Hack* tones overlap with Waddell's strategies of co-creating and directing change respectively. Waddell's forcing change (warrior) and doing change (entrepreneur) strategies were less evident in our sample, which was more clearly differentiated around the dimension of arenas.

**Figure 4.** The four tones of voice used by European new economic actors to achieve impact***Empathise***

This tone aims to persuade targets behind closed doors — such as key civil servants within a public administration — who are dealing with economic challenges first-hand. The strategy depends on the new economic actors’ capabilities to connect with key defenders of the current economic paradigm, understand their most urgent needs, and elaborate solutions with them that build on economic alternatives.

The *Empathise* tone is exemplified by the ZOE Institute — a Germany-based think-do-tank working on EU economic policy. In order to bridge the gap between new economic ideas and policymaking, the Institute aims to build networks of civil servants committed to listen to innovative solutions, leverage them to solve their own problems, and involve other peers in their administration. Crucially, the ZOE Institute achieves this goal by using transformative ideas from new economic thinking while also looking to understand the reality and challenges faced by policymakers. Seeking to have a grasp on who they are, and how to help them implement solutions inspired by new economic thinking with methods ranging from evidence-based argumentation to co-creation, the ZOE Institute intentionally strives to leverage cognitive empathy towards policymakers’ needs and goals as the key ingredient enabling them to access powerful change pathways.

### ***Convince***

This tone aims to persuade targets within the open arenas of public debate, such as progressive (or even moderate) media and politicians, who do work on urgent societal challenges and may be interested in mobilising alternative approaches to solve them. The strategy builds on new economic actors' capabilities to reach out to key figures beyond "usual suspects" (i.e. people that are not yet already committed or even persuaded by new economic thinking), convince them by offering winnable arguments, and partner up with them to leverage their audiences.

While embracing a posture towards the gatekeepers of mainstream economic systems that is not far from the logic of *Empathise*, the *Convince* tone expands the scope of the actors to the open arenas of public debate. Organisations looking to convince their audiences tend to leverage the changes in political environment (as the shock of COVID-19 exemplified) — in which political appetite for scoping innovative solutions to economic issues is leveraged as an opportunity to attract progressive (and to some degree moderate) politicians' audiences to legitimise novel ideas. While this gives them room to test different messages and craft unified narratives for new economic thinking, it is also well noted that doing so requires a minimum agreement on the general direction of the movement.

### ***Hack***

This tone aims to push new economic thinking within the closed doors of the arenas where the neo-liberal paradigm is most deeply entrenched, such as those of key mainstream academic debates in economics. The strategy builds on new economic actors' capabilities to frame their own work as substantially mainstream, gain access to neoliberal epicentres, and nurture change from the inside.

Unlike the previous two tones, *Hack* emerges from the assumption that change can start from the penetration of institutional boundaries characterised by the prevalence of neoliberal ideas, and challenge them from within the mainstream economic system itself. Accordingly, *Hack* organisations instead use the vocabulary and standards that are employed within hegemonic epicentres in order to achieve recognition, establish themselves, and then leverage available opportunities for shifting the rules of the game. According to one interviewee, this is most evident in academia, where methodological quandaries and reputational concerns can play a major role in determining the development of different research streams.

### ***Amplify***

This final tone aims to push new economic thinking into the open arenas of general public discourse (e.g., throughout civil society and its organisations) where people experience first-hand the social, economic or environmental consequences of neoliberalism. The strategy builds on the capabilities of new economic actors to connect proposed economic alternatives to vital needs of citizens and communities, and leverage their involvement to amplify new economic ideas in mainstream debate.

According to one interviewee, the *Amplify* tone helps to avoid the risks posed by advancing proposals that are disconnected from societal needs, and leverages the pressure on politicians that might arise from urgent socio-environmental challenges. Climate change is one such challenge, where the need to save our planet meets the increasingly widespread realisation that mainstream economic tools are not helping in this endeavour, and indeed eventually even exacerbate the crisis.

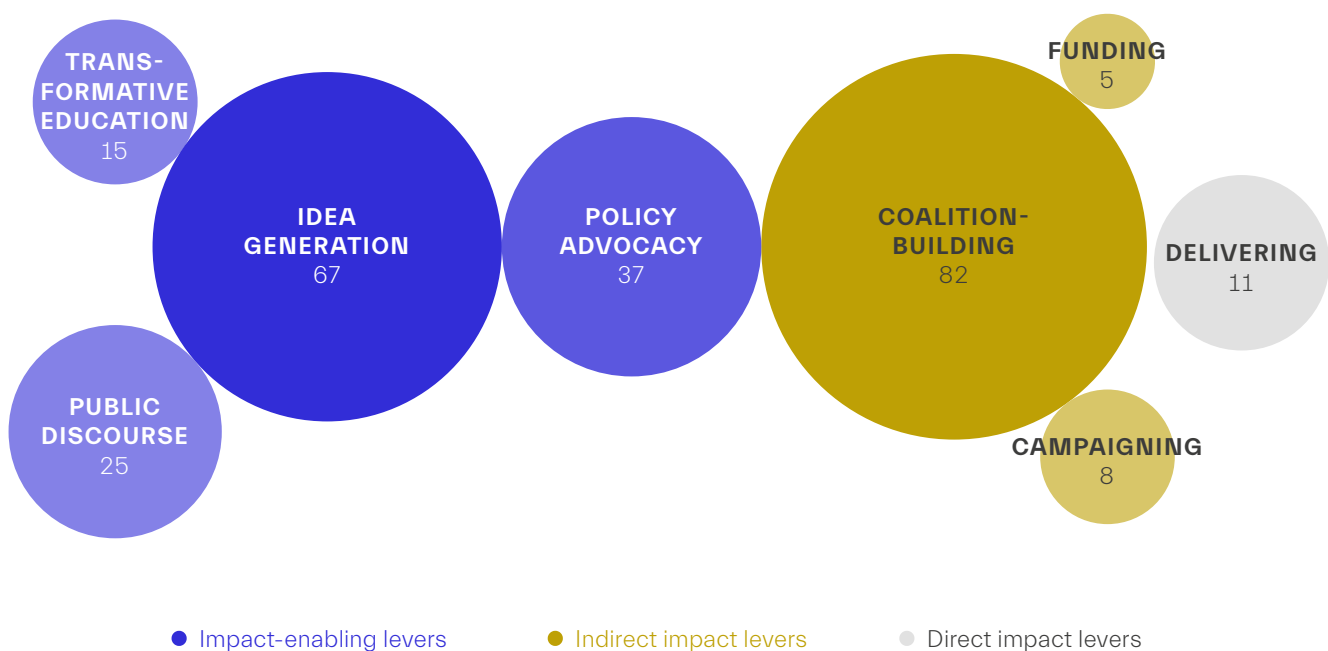
### Observation 3: Eight transformational levers

The analysis resulting from our mapping process revealed a more intricate picture of how the actors **pursue their activities** based on their respective theories of change and tones of voice. Activities can be defined in terms of **transformational levers**<sup>54</sup>: i.e., interventions perceived by different actors as key to foster economic paradigm change and propagate new economic thinking. This definition directly recalls the one found in the work of Donella Meadows on leverage points – thereby described as places within a system where an intervention (the ‘lever’) is expected to have a disproportionate power in changing the system<sup>55</sup>. Based on our findings, we created a typology of eight levers, which can further be grouped into three overarching categories:

- **Indirect impact levers**: pushing for change mostly on large scales by targeting key stakeholders holding positions of power in different societal spheres. Stakeholders include civil society organisations; academics; civil servants; and politicians.
- **Direct impact levers**: implementation of policy or institutional alternatives inspired by new economic thinking, typically on a small scale.
- **Impact-enabling levers**: helping actors achieve indirect or direct impact by securing and nurturing their connections, resourcefulness, and cohesiveness.

Figure 5 shows the proportion of each of the eight levers identified by our dataset. The levers are described in detail below to showcase how they contribute to a transformation of economic systems in practice, and what challenges they face or imply.

**Figure 5.** Eight transformational levers employed by new economic actors in Europe



54 Chan, K.M.A., Boyd, D.R., Gould, R.K., et al. (2020). *Levers and leverage points for pathways to sustainability*. *People and Nature*, 2:693–717.

55 Meadows, D.H. (1999). *Leverage points: Places to intervene in a system*. Sustainability Institute. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

## A. Indirect impact levers

### 1. Transformative education: from knowledge-sharing to curricula reform

The transformative education lever mainly refers to two areas of action: (i) educating new economic actors and (ii) transforming economics education more broadly.

Educating new economic actors refers to knowledge-sharing between these actors, and particularly to the training of community organisers aimed at understanding the linkages between their own work and new economic thinking, as well as to increase the accessibility of the key thoughts and concepts used in new economic thinking for a broader public of students. New Economy Organisers Network (NEON) and Konzeptwerk Neue Ökonomie are examples of organisations that employ this lever. This lever can also be interpreted as aiming to broaden the network of stakeholders involved in new economic activity, and hence as a peculiar way to act over the lever of coalition-building (described below in the chapter). Transforming economics education, on the other hand, aims at changing mainstream pedagogical institutions and curricula to expand their focus which is excessively attached to neoliberalism. The underlying theory of change implied by this action is that by diversifying curricula and career paths within economics, positions of power will eventually be occupied by heterodox economists. To achieve such a goal requires dismantling the dominant position of (new) neoclassical economics in economic education – mimicking and overturning the successful hegemonisation by neoliberal think tanks and universities.

Within the organisations active in transforming education, a few different focus areas can be identified. Some organisations (such as Rethinking Economics and CORE Project) advocate bottom-up (or student-led) reform of economics curricula, while others aim at developing support structures for young heterodox scholars (such as in the Young Scholars' Initiative supported by INET), and hubs for education and research on heterodox economics (such as INET-Oxford and the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity, CUSP). While all of these organisations are changing the landscape in their areas of action, with such a demanding task ahead of them, clearly more organisations (as well as conspicuous growth in the existing ones) would be needed.

In addition, strengthening the enabling infrastructure for transforming economic education would be key. This can refer to (i) establishing economic journals more open to heterodox economic thinking, such as in the case of the journal *Research Policy* and the very well established journal *Ecological Economics*; (ii) providing funding for heterodox PhD project proposals, as done by INET-Oxford; or (iii) developing heterodox undergraduate-level textbooks. However – beyond the noticeable exception of UCL IIPP's Master of Public Administration in Innovation, Public Policy, and Public Value, and various programmes in the ecological economics field, we were unable to identify other actors aiming to change professional training (e.g., public policy schools, business schools, or mid-career/executive education programmes). Therefore, overall, this lever appears to be a relatively underexplored yet very promising long-term intervention to impact.

## 2. Idea generation: building and proof testing foundations of new economic thinking

As new economic thinking revolves around building new ideas that aim to inform solutions to build a more sustainable and equal economy, generating the ideas that could replace established economic dogmas is the core activity of multiple actors working in the space. The idea generation lever spans a wide array of organisations:

- At one end of the spectrum, there are individuals<sup>56</sup> and organisations focused on introducing new ideas to public discussions for both increasing their potential adoption, but also expanding the imagination for alternatives. One example is Autonomy UK, which is working to develop the concept of four-day work weeks.
- On the other end, there are organisations — usually university-affiliated or think tanks — striving to build a tangible evidence base on the potential benefits of new economic ideas and practical steps towards their real-world implementation. In clear overlap with the policy advocacy lever (see below), examples of these organisations are the Forum for a New Economy, UCL IIPP, and the Veblen Institute.

Balancing the credibility and novelty of new ideas and concepts is a repeated challenge among organisations aiming to build the idea base of new economic action. In the academic world, credibility of thought is often sought through adhering to mainstream economic practices, such as mathematical representation, languages of justification, value discussed in terms of preferences, and welfare in terms of GDP, and accepted policy frameworks, such as the Sustainable Development Goals. In multiple contexts, neoclassical economists can therefore be seen as gatekeepers to arenas where new economic thinking could otherwise be propagated — for instance, through formal roles (e.g., editors and reviewers of publications and membership of funding panels and boards of professional organisations) or informal roles (e.g., media personas). Organisations such as UCL IIPP and Forum for a New Economy have been able to deal with this obstacle by combining strong arguments, mathematical reasoning, and conceptually innovative work — showing, as a result, how new ideas can link to new economic policy rationales and carve their pathway in the mainstream. However, these means of gaining credibility would also need to be combined with broader diversity in terms of *who* is involved in generating new economic ideas: without a heavier focus on both diversity of background and approaches, there would be a fair risk of repeating the gendered and racial disparities of neoclassical economics<sup>57</sup>. Indeed, this lever is where broader collaboration could prove essential, with the involvement of, for example, feminist economics, the Global South, and non-economic movements.

## 3. Policy advocacy: influencing and reshaping the policy process

While clearly not the only way to transform economic systems, policy change is one of the relatively direct pathways to impact. Therefore, multiple European organisations are advocating new economic approaches by aiming at: (i) gaining substantial influence on policymakers to tilt public action in a more transformative direction (as exemplified by the case of ZOE Institute); and (ii) advancing new governance models to structurally change the policy making process and provide room for more radical policy transformation (as with the Progressive Economy Forum). This lever spans across multiple levels of governing.

- Most policy advocacy organisations in the new economic landscape work in a primarily national context where much economic policy is governed. Moreover, distinctive examples of organisations working with municipal and regional governments demonstrate a way to complement long-term national policy advocacy with more straightforward and impactful local change. Indeed, organisa-

<sup>56</sup> While the focus of this research has been primarily to map organisations active in new economic thinking, it is important to note that especially within idea generation (and to some extent affecting public discourse), the role of individuals is strong. Many authors can be seen as having an instrumental role in introducing and popularising new ideas, and possibly building organisational efforts around them — such as in the case of the Doughnut Economy Action Lab (founded by Kate Raworth) and UCL IIPP (founded by Mariana Mazzucato).

<sup>57</sup> Ghosh, J. (2021). *Mainstream Economics & Gender*. INET series on Feminist Economics. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

tions such as the Doughnut Economics Action Lab (DEAL) and The Social Guarantee have identified leverage points for policy change on a municipal/regional level: firstly, because local levels of government are claimed as more open to transformative policy suggestions; secondly, and most importantly, because municipal-level work can provide powerful proof-of-concepts for transformative economic models that can be then tested on a broader scale.

- We identified only few organisations advocating new economic policy for European international organisations including the European Commission; the work led by the ZOE Institute and Club of Rome being notable exceptions. This observation is concerning because key institutional boundaries framing national decision-making are determined at the EU level (e.g., monetary policy and fiscal boundaries).

Regardless of where policy making takes place, policy advocacy evidently requires a substantial degree of specificity for policy proposals to be successfully taken into consideration. Policy proposals must be capable of answering both: (i) the specific needs of politicians, with respect to the general policy framing, and its capability to offer winnable arguments; and (ii) the specific needs of civil servants, for whom quickly implementable adaptations of new policy ideas are needed in a tight timeframe. From the perspective of new economic actors, meeting these demands entails both a capability to tailor one's own policy suggestions to such needs, and capacities for doing so rapidly whenever a window of opportunity opens. At the same time, the need for acceptability of policy suggestions calls in turn for that of not allowing the idea to be overly watered down — therefore demanding actors to strike a balancing act. This means that, as well as engaging with specific policy needs, there is also a need for engagement of decision makers in terms of challenging neoliberal framings and advocating first principles and narratives of new economics. A successful example is the constitution of the All Party Parliamentary Group on Limits to Growth in the UK, administered by CUSP at the University of Surrey.

#### **4. Public discourse: still in search of a voice (and opportunity) for transformation**

Decades of active work by mainstream media, think tanks, and advocates has resulted in a situation in which dominant neoliberal paradigms seem commonsensical to the public. Widespread institutionalisation of neoliberal thinking (e.g., the need for embedded austerity in national policymaking of several EU countries) seems an important barrier to economic transformations. Hence, several European organisations are now trying to shift the wider public discourse beyond specific contexts — such as academia or policymaking circles — to incorporate new economic thinking, with the hope that this will increase openness towards new economic thinking and facilitate transformation.

The number of new economic actors actively working on this lever in Europe is still limited. One relevant example is the French media outlet *Alternatives Économiques* — a monthly magazine and daily e-news website aiming to provide viewpoints on economics that differ from the more mainstream discourse. There are nonetheless interesting efforts to establish media platforms dedicated to new economic thinking not only in traditional, but also at times in newer media channels. This is the case with, for instance, podcasts (e.g., *True Currency: About Feminist Economics*), or popular Instagram accounts (e.g., @upstreampodcast and @feministintentional).

Building enticing narratives that are capable of both catching the attention of the general public and linking specific policy-level suggestions to a cohesive worldview is key for this lever — for example, by engaging established media outlets that are open to critiques of neoliberalism generally but are not cognisant of broader new economics narratives and solutions. Yet, success in this endeavour would require sustained long-term commitment and broader coordination. Beginning to consolidate media capabilities in the field of new economic thinking, as well as linking with established media, would

support this work. In the UK, for example, the Economic Change Unit is coordinating media training and “meet and greets” with established journalists. At the same time, simply acknowledging that affecting public discourse is an important objective in its own right would be useful for new economic actors (and especially funders) in order to truly grasp the long-term nature of the effort and investment required for economic transformation.

## B. Direct impact levers

### 5. Delivering: real change stemming from the bottom-up

For an economic paradigm change to materialise, new economic thinking must not only conceptualise but also implement concrete solutions capable of addressing policy issues and transforming established governance models. Such a task entails a *direct* (rather than *indirect*) impact on mainstream economic systems. The delivering lever is thus represented by organisations that deliver the real-world implementation of new economic ideas. Within this scope, it is possible to distinguish several types of approaches:

On the one hand, there are grassroots organisations working at local scales to fundamentally shift the nature of economic relationships in targeted networks or communities. A case in point is the Dutch De Transformisten: a socio-cultural organisation that, in collaboration with over 40 peer associations, experiments with wellbeing economy-inspired ideas through projects that promote sustainable lifestyles at the local level.

On the other hand, there are instead more structured “action labs”, in which different institutional designs are developed and tested with key partners in order to address systemic challenges faced by our economic systems. An important example is Dark Matter Labs: a multidisciplinary design team focusing on societal transitions, working with both public and private sector organisations and supporting a more democratic, fair, and sustainable future.

Although implementable and timely solutions to societal challenges would seem paramount for the success of new economic thinking, only a small portion of the organisations reviewed was identified as acting on this lever. Arguably, this might be related to the uncertainty implied by experimenting with more radical policy approaches; to the related scarcity of policymakers buying in for their adoption; as well as to the implementation challenges that can arise from projects that are certainly more complex than those implied by other levers (e.g., idea generation). This is reflected in the nature of the two approaches described above, that overcome such obstacles either by working at a sufficiently small scale or by working exclusively with already committed partners. In light of this, a next step forward would be to coordinate efforts on the policy advocacy lever with the delivering one, so as to nurture stronger connections with decision-makers open to daring new approaches. Important leverage points may be: first, for those actors that are rich in new economic ideas generation (those ‘thinking change’), to engage more actively with on-the-ground change makers such as social entrepreneurs (those ‘doing change’); and second, how more diverse change making initiatives can be more effectively engaged with each other to build critical mass to catalyse transformation.

## C. Impact-enabling levers

### 6. Coalition-building: widespread, but scattered efforts

The most common lever employed by the organisations identified in our dataset refers to coalition-building: i.e., building bridges between different actors working towards economic paradigm change. Most often, this work is built on the assumption that networking between actors with different roles and

competencies increases their individual and collective power to achieve impact and expand their opportunities for doing so. Whether this goal is achieved by combining policy work and campaigning – e.g., in the case of the New Economics Foundation – or by bringing together a broad group of new economic actors to jointly coordinate their efforts – e.g., in the case of the UK's Economic Change Unit – coalition-builders take multiple forms in order to nurture different kinds of ties within the field. Spanning from formalised relationships to informal personal connections between key individuals, we have identified four principal coalition-building modalities:

- Membership-based organisations are set up by design as coalitions of actors that work with similar premises, topics, or goals. The Wellbeing Economy Alliance (WEAll) and Réseau Intercontinental de Promotion de l'Économie Sociale et Solidaire (RIPESS) are primary examples of membership organisations acting as a convenor and point of reference for its members, and supporting them in their efforts.
- Advisory boards and fellowships are established formal roles for individuals coming from peer organisations and whose help can enable mutual support between actors. Ties of this sort serve a major role in disseminating information across organisational boundaries and acting as a powerful mechanism for nurturing alignment within new economic thinking.
- Hosting events and establishing platforms for action or debate are more time-bound and opportunistic ways for new economic actors to collaborate. Co-hosting, speaking, or even simply participating in peer events is important for exchanging ideas and jointly working over key issues and differences within the field. Moreover, events can be useful for showcasing a nascent network or movement to a broader audience, and potentially enlarging it. Good examples are the Fiscal Matters Week or the Rethinking Economics Festival.
- Lastly, informal coordination is based on personal ties between individuals acting within the new economic community and acts as a substantial underlying factor of most coalition-building initiatives. Simultaneously lowering the barrier of contact and increasing trust, interpersonal links can be seen both as an initial prerequisite and an outcome of (eventually) more formalised coalitions. Forms of informal coordination include social media, mailing lists, and close groups of reviewers providing peer feedback on outputs such as research papers, reports, or policy briefs.

There are informal and structural reasons that might make the coalition-building lever particularly challenging to pull.

- On the one hand, while informal relationships are an integral part of creating a working coalition, there is always a possibility that close ties between a narrow set of actors might lead to internal analytical or strategic biases. While this seems not to be a major issue currently in the new economic landscape, it may be an important challenge whenever a specific case of new economic thinking is particularly novel and the community is small.
- On the other hand, as organisations tend to have natural audiences and diverging roles affecting their preferred language and concepts used, there is a risk that even similar organisations might distance themselves despite clear potential for collaboration. A case in point is the gap that is occasionally found between more academic-oriented think tanks and research institutions at one end, and grassroots organisations on the other, with academic jargon acting as a repelling force.
- Moreover, balancing between organisational and movement objectives is a constant challenge – organisations are often in competition with each other, e.g., for funding or media exposure, which can make coalition-building an uphill battle. At the same time, collaboration can increase the chance of obtaining additional funding or media exposure – e.g., by working jointly on bids, or sharing network resources.

- Finally, there are tensions around different views on key issues of political economy and economic policy (e.g., around the role of the state, large corporations, economic growth or government debt) across the spectrum of ideologies (e.g., actors' attitudes towards capitalism and socialism), strategic audiences (e.g., influencing the left vs a cross-spectrum approach), and strategic framing (e.g., in terms of the four voices).

However, the field also suggests how to mitigate these pitfalls. As an example, the New Economics Foundation aims to create and deepen inter-organisational trust among an expanding group of actors that, despite not all necessarily identifying as new economic organisations, do share some overall goals – such as trade unions, climate movements and tenant organisations – and can further develop them through establishing shared language and knowledge. Agreeing on the objective of coalition-building (e.g., sharing information or coordinating action) and the timeframe of focus (e.g., working on a long-term change pathway or coordinating short-term work) can also increase success of coalition-building. Moreover, coalition-building could be further aided by identifying and resourcing 'free agent' roles: i.e., key individuals explicitly acting as connectors between organisations, or creating and expanding shared databases, as well as policy repositories or insights on the new economic thinking at large (The New Economy Brief provides a promising example).

## 7. Campaigning: learning how to rally around policy change

Mobilising broader popular support around new economic objectives is another key method of enabling broader consensus on new economic thinking and achieving policy change. The campaigning lever aims to increase the pressure on policymakers by organising key stakeholders to organise public marches or protests. There are several interesting examples of such campaigns – ranging from campaigns aiming to coordinate different groups in society to push collectively for transformation of our current financial systems (such as #ChangeFinance organised by Finance Watch) to efforts to ensure that structural economic inequality is prioritised by governments as part of their covid-19 recovery plans (such as the Equality Trust in the UK). However, there still seems to be a gap between the wide range of actors aiming for economic transformation, and campaigning groups manifesting at the ground level to achieve it (such as Italia Che Cambia).

Campaigning is an area where increased collaboration between new economic organisations and groups across the spectrum of societal transformation could be beneficial. Through Europe, the most popular campaigns in recent years have been the climate, feminist, and direct democracy movements; supporting these in pushing broader economic objectives seems therefore a promising path. Recent examples in the COVID-19 context include the demands of Black Lives Matter for rent moratoriums and food sovereignty<sup>58</sup>, and of Occupy and Extinction Rebellion for moving beyond capitalism<sup>59</sup>. The New Economics Foundation has been quite successful in this type of campaigning, and NEON has been very active in nurturing the organisational capacities of collaborating movements. Yet, it is clear that there is a need for more work aiming to connect new economic thinking to action, as well as succeeding in converting popular mobilisation into actual policy change.

## 8. Funding: learning how to pull the strings

Funding is certainly a critical resource to support new economic actors working on any of the levers identified above, and ensure the long-term sustainability of their efforts. However, the relevance of the funding lever goes well beyond simply providing money to these organisations. Indeed, there are a number of cases in which organisations acting as funders of new economic thinking and action end up

58 Barlow, N., Hepp, C., Herbert, J., et al. (2020). *A degrowth perspective on the coronavirus crisis*. *Visions for Sustainability*, 14:24–31.

59 Nelson, A. (2020). *COVID-19: Capitalist and postcapitalist perspectives*. *Human Geography*, 13:305–309.

playing a pivotal role in coalition-building — as in the lever highlighted above. As a result, funders can contribute significantly to building the *immaterial infrastructure* that should channel and accelerate the circulation of new economic ideas and policy solutions.

For example, the Friends Provident Foundation explicitly aims to nurture an ecosystem of organisations developing a fair economy at the local level in the UK. At a different scale, a regular convening among some of the core funders in the space has fostered stronger relationships and trust between new economic actors, e.g. by connecting key individuals working in the field and envisioning structured processes for facilitating their alignment. Similarly, the Omidyar Network seeks both to organise peer funders and to find opportunities for collaboration between new economic actors — notably, doing so not by forcing organisations together, but by exploring where appetite for joint work might lie.

While the number of funders active across Europe is increasing over time, their geographic distribution seems to be considerably skewed towards the UK. Moreover, the very nature of how funding is allocated presents critical issues that determine its capacity to effectively support new economic actors and their efforts:

- On the one hand, funding not only enables, but also *constrains* organisations as it can shape their agendas. Weary of this, funders should pay more attention to the importance of preserving the organisations' autonomy and the rich diversity in the new economic field. At the same time, they should also seek new ways to address the relative fragmentation of their priorities and collaborate more widely: e.g., by designing more nuanced, cohesive, and yet balanced granting strategies both in their own respect, and in close cooperation with other funding institutions.
- Another problem of the current funding landscape is that it often comes through a narrow and usually short-term basis of project work. Building endowments (or other forms of unrestricted funding) and de-risking action planned in a long-term horizon (e.g., through developing tailored loan guarantees or insurance products) could help diversify the way in which new economic thinking is supported. Scoping alternative forms of social financing could attract more private capital into the space (there is currently little) increasing the sustainability of new economic actors' operations.
- Finally, the organisational capacity of new economic actors could and should be supported more effectively. There seems to be a common understanding that the small size of many organisations limits the sophistication of their efforts. To tackle this problem, attaching funding to services for organisational growth, such as mentoring, could improve the capability of new economic actors.

## Overall reflections on the levers

Analysed one by one, the levers noted in this report show new economic actors' chosen interventions for impact, their related pitfalls, and potential ways to navigate them. However, analysed collectively, they also make evident that actors are leaning towards using indirect impact levers (e.g., targeting key stakeholders in positions of power, such as civil servants, politicians, or civil society actors) rather than direct ones (e.g., experimenting with real-life implementation of their policy ideas). This suggests that there is a broader need for more resources and capabilities for policy experimentation, as well as more efforts in mobilising different societal spheres to the cause of comprehensive economic paradigm change.

On one hand, the need for policy experimentation is only partially reflected in efforts that are mostly at a local scale. On the other, the need for broader societal collaboration is only partially addressed by coalition-building and campaigning efforts that, nonetheless, usually find strong difficulties in scaling up their scope. With respect to both issues, it is plausible to assume that a major barrier preventing

new ways of researching, collaborating, and working towards making alternatives come to life might stem as well from the broader lack of trust in established policy making and governance processes, and – accordingly – from a resulting lack of efforts in proactively addressing them.

## The emerging landscape

Following our analysis, we can therefore summarise the distinctive nature of the European new economic landscape in four main points:

- **A growing yet small ecosystem of actors characterised by wide thematic plurality but considerable geographic gaps.**

Although the growth of new economic thinking in Europe in the past ten years has been remarkable, there is a persistently small number of organisations and a heavy bias towards Western Europe (especially the UK) with only limited links to actors in other geographic areas (in the Global South in particular). Nonetheless, there is a rich and diverse array of approaches and themes tackled.

- **An ecosystem with divergence in theories of change.**

Multiple theories of change are represented among European new economic actors in their striving to achieve impact. These include: (i) how change happens; (ii) the timescale over which change should happen; (iii) what kind of political consensus is required for change; (iv) what depth of change is required; and (v) on what spatial scale change should occur. While a certain degree of disagreement on these issues should be welcome, promoting higher awareness of their sources (as well as envisioning ways to channel the debate upon them in constructive ways) would be key in order to make them fruitful for the movement.

- **An ecosystem using four different tones of voice.**

Our analysis shows that organisations employ different *tones of voice* in advancing their goals. Based on their posture towards the defenders of the mainstream – i.e., from diplomatic to antagonistic – and their locus of action – i.e., from closed doors to open arenas – the four tones of voice illustrate a spectrum of different approaches that are used by actors to achieve economic paradigm change.

- **An ecosystem using a variety of different levers to achieve impact.**

We identified eight levers representing European actors' distinctive interventions to achieve impact, embodying different views on how to achieve it. Nonetheless, the actors' efforts seem to concentrate upon coalition-building whilst neglecting other levers, such as public discourse, campaigning, and especially funding.

Overall, our research suggests that there is a new economic movement in the making, but it is still rather small and unconnected. On the one hand, acknowledging this picture should help new economic actors and their supporters to recognise the need for fostering shared learning and peer reflection, and thereby begin a more explicit dialogue on how to manoeuvre around potential risks and opportunities for advancing their work. On the other hand, it also helps appreciate with fresh eyes the complexity of building, nurturing, and sustaining a movement. Aiming to take stock of these insights, the next chapter provides potential ways forward for the development of this nascent movement.

# Conclusions and recommendations: Shared action as a way forward

*The nascent but pluralistic movement needs to play to its strengths.*

**T**his landscape analysis of European new economic thinking reveals much activity challenging the neoliberal economic paradigm. However, it would be misleading to call their activity a movement — at least for now.

The variety of focus areas and theories or strategies of change embraced by European actors shows that pluralism of approaches is a key defining characteristic of this field. As discussed above, actors do not all share a strategy on how to form and steer a cohesive multitude of actions inspired by new economic thinking. While most of the interviewees appreciated the perceived pluralism of the movement, there was a simultaneously stated request for a shared direction for new economic actors. Some explained that, as many organisations focus on more narrow goals — instead of aiming to build a joint vision — they might end up competing for scarce funding, eventually pitting one against the other and thus weakening the movement. Others identified a lack of ready-made, implementable solutions to some of our most urgent economic challenges as a key obstacle to building a powerful movement, questioning the usefulness of salient diversity of current approaches in face of the stronger need to develop practical ways forward. Overall, a commonly shared wish emerged that all the various attempts to change the economic status quo should build on something shared which all actors can commit to — from narratives to strategy.

Previously, we have unveiled how neoliberalism has successfully become an entrenched economic paradigm of thought and action by superseding Keynesianism. The replacement of Keynesianism by neoliberalism has been explained by two factors: the former's incapability to solve the 1970's oil crisis *and* the latter's theory and narrative which had been carefully nurtured for over forty years, and articulated a comprehensive ideological infrastructure supported by a forceful method of global expansion<sup>60,61</sup>. Now, it is evident that neoliberalism, in its turn, failed to deliver — thus the increasingly felt need and momentum for a new economic paradigm to emerge. The remaining question is: does that effort require a uniform policy programme in the spirit of the Lewis Powell Memo previously discussed<sup>62</sup>?

Our preliminary answer is no. The world we live in and the socio-economic threats we face today are more complex than in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century world: in such a context, blueprints simply do not work. Detailed blueprints usually result in rigid and unrealistic processes that clash with the twists and turns faced by real-life practitioners who test their way forward in the unexplored territory of paradigm

60 Kramer, L. (2018). *Beyond Neoliberalism: Rethinking political economy*. Hewlett Foundation: Public Board Memo, April 26, 2018. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

61 Srnicek, N. & Williams, A. (2015). *Inventing the future. Postcapitalism and a world without work*. London: Verso

62 Powell, L.F. (1971). *Confidential memorandum: Attack on American Free Enterprise System*. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

change. Most importantly, the diversity of the actors involved means that it would be difficult to elaborate a shared strategy without incurring the same dynamics which characterised the birth of the neoliberal “policy monoculture”.

The good news is that this might not be such a problem. Quite the opposite. Instead of asking *what* a shared blueprint for global expansion may look like, the nascent movement could reflect more on *how* to lead and nurture a collective identity as pluralistic as the one which has been illustrated in this landscape review. In other words, the quest for a shared strategy should be guided by the search for common methods of action, rather than by the definition of blueprints based on carefully considered, but ultimately challenged theories of change. In respect to this, as shown above, the experience of the Mont Pelerin Society provides us both with two important lessons<sup>63</sup>. The first is that too much alignment might harm the diversity constituting the real wealth of European new economic thinking — as shown in the case of the Powell Memo and “policy monoculture” as its eventual corollary. The second is that flexibility — be that defined in mere organisational terms (as in the case of neoliberal think tanks), or in substantive terms (as in the case of new economic thinking’s intrinsic diversity) — can fuel the chances of the nascent movement to penetrate public debates, and adapt to the evolving circumstances faced by a counter-hegemonic venture.

In practical terms, this means that one promising strategy for the nascent movement would be to play to its strengths: i.e., to enhance the impact of its pluralism by balancing out the equally important need for organisational autonomy and movement alignment. On the one hand, organisational autonomy is key to preserving the diversity of approaches which can be seen in the field, and constitutes the best antidote to the flaws of the neoliberal “policy monoculture”. On the other hand, movement alignment is essential to ensure that each actor is provided with the personal connections, financial resources, peer support, and partnership opportunities needed in order to maximise the impact of the movement as a whole. Accomplishing both is not an easy task. However, recognising this principle would provide a promising first step to start leveraging opportunities for joint action, and enable the movement to effectively recognise where the gaps lie on which intervention would be most needed.

The differences in how European new economic organisations pursue impact — their theories of change, tones of voice and transformational levers — is therefore not a bad thing, but a key resource. Indeed, systems science also shows how multiple interventions can transform complex ecosystems more effectively than single interventions — for example, due to the fact that one action may remove barriers preventing another from having impact<sup>64</sup>. Similarly, Steve Waddell’s ‘four strategies for large systems change’<sup>65</sup> (which bears some similarities to our tones of voice framework) emphasises that multiple strategies can work together to achieve a shared outcome. But how to orchestrate such efforts? How to balance out the need to protect and invigorate organisational autonomy while ensuring movement alignment?

As many actors in the field are looking for a shared *direction* to start building a convergence among them, we believe that the best way to interpret and respond to this need is to provide them with room for shared *action*: i.e., by empowering them with opportunities not only for discussing or elaborating their innovative ideas, but also for mutual recognition as part of a common movement, and tactical collaboration in real-life engagement with the mainstream economic system. In other words, we believe that a new economic movement can only be born by acting as such.

63 Srnicek, N. & Williams, A. (2015). *Inventing the future. Postcapitalism and a world without work*. London: Verso.

64 IPBES (2019). *Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*. (Brondizio E, Settele J, Diaz S, Ngo HT, editors).

IPBES Secretariat, Bonn, Germany. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

65 Waddell, S. (2018). *Four strategies for large systems change*. Stanford Social Innovation Review 16(2): 40–45.

## Regenerating economic thinking

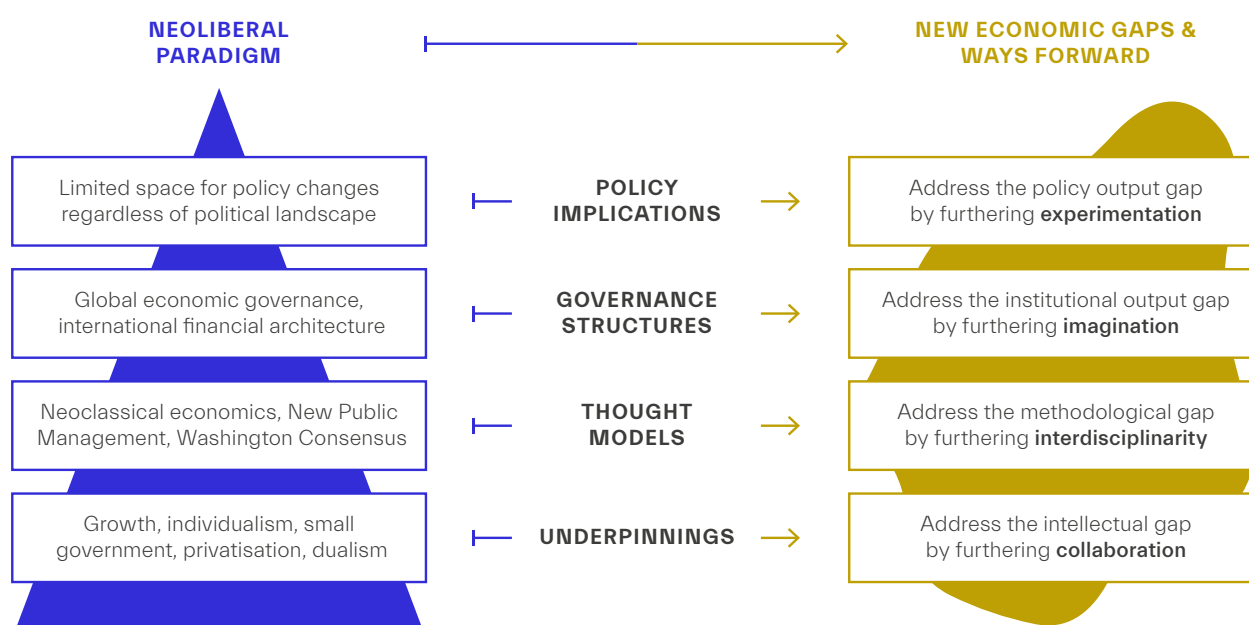
Previously, we have disentangled neoliberalism's basic components into a four-fold nested structure: (i) underpinnings; (ii) thought models; (iii) governance structures; and (iv) policy implications. The assessment showed how, notwithstanding differences in how it has been enforced across different contexts, the neoliberal paradigm is characterised by a strong internal consistency and powerful backing.

In this respect, we believe that **the nascent movement of new economic thinking should not aim to coalesce against the current monoculture only to establish a new one.** We believe it should **embrace its intrinsic pluralism**, and aim to strengthen common understandings and meanings of their efforts explicitly on the basis of diversity. In doing so, new economic thinking could therefore oppose the neoliberal 'policy monoculture' by following the example of *regenerative agriculture*: i.e. by developing a way of advancing new ideas, approaches, and solutions by prioritising the fertility of its own soil in the very first place — all the while striving to foster positive synergies, wherever feasible, between its crops. If this is the case, how could a caring farmer do so?

Based on the picture of the nascent movement emerging from our research, we believe that regenerating economic thinking can only stem from a **balanced combination** of bottom-up action and top-down coordination — rather than the latter alone — and, most importantly, nurtured with an ever-increasing sense of mutual understanding and purpose. For the caring farmer to strengthen such a movement, one way forward could be to challenge the monolithic premises of neoliberalism in each of the four layers seen above by nurturing and facilitating mutual recognition and tactical collaboration in the movement.

So far, looking through the lenses of neoliberalism, society has understood and analysed the economy mainly as a closed and self-referential system of thought. To tilt it into an open and regenerative system of action, there are four gaps that need to be addressed. While emerging from the needs perceived by our interviewees, these gaps represent some promising ways forward to steer and orient new economic action towards a paradigm change. In the paragraphs that follow, we briefly dwell on each of them to identify examples of practical steps forward.

**Figure 6. Foundations of neoliberalism VS. ways forward for new economic action**



### ■ Further collaboration to address the gap in new underpinnings

The first gap concerns the opportunity to nurture a potentially larger intellectual alignment within the nascent movement. On the one hand, interviewees often identified a sense of fragmentation within new economic thinking which weakened their faith in the opportunity of mainstreaming them effectively. To overcome this potentially relevant obstacle, we argue that a stronger commitment to collaboration would provide a first tangible step forward. To build truly new underpinnings, the nascent movement at this point stands a lot to win from *prioritising collaboration of action*, rather than *seeking consensus of thought*. This implies leading consistent and intentional efforts by new economic actors at partnering with and supporting each other's activities at all costs — notwithstanding ideological or tactical disagreements — so as to fuel the essential human interactions standing behind the nascent movement with trust. In turn, this commitment would ensure that new economic actors already pose a threat to the main neoliberal underpinnings by their mere existence and distinctive method of action: i.e., by replacing the dogmatic “policy monoculture” and narrow view of “human nature” proposed by neoliberalism with a greater openness to intellectual and human diversity.

On the other hand, it is indeed quite evident that the underpinnings needed to define a new movement might already have been identified: fairness, sustainability, diversity, relationality, and so forth. A concrete example of a shared set of principles is provided by the ten first principles for a new economics identified by GANE (see Introduction), which nonetheless leave room for different positions to be held within the nascent movement in terms of framing, emphasis, strategy, and specific concepts or policy solutions proposed. Shared underpinnings could provide new economic actors with a sense of common purpose. Much progress can indeed also be made by coalitions gearing towards shared subsets of these principles without necessarily fully embracing all of them. Repeated articulation of the basic principles (by whatever way they are phrased or strategically framed) can generate an echo chamber that is essential to give rise to a critical mass towards the broader recognition of new economics as a viable, potential new mainstream within public and policy consciousness.

#### Examples of practical steps forward

- Create a public and shared commitment of collaboration among key new economic actors.
- Foster the emergence among new economic actors of a shared language and mutual understanding on how to advance the nascent movement by involving them in broad co-creative processes (e.g. workshops, bootcamps, seminars, forums).
- Include the explicit articulation of their outcomes in communication strategies as a way to amplify core new economics discourse within public and policy consciousness.
- Invest in the creation of new platforms for shared action between new economic actors both at the strategic level (e.g. conventions, gatherings, or conferences) and at the tactical one (e.g. collaborative research projects or media and communications efforts).
- Include collaboration between new economic actors (and different societal stakeholders) as a prerequisite to apply for e.g. research or project funding.
- Double down on the pluralism of the movement by including actors from the Global South and other societal movements in events, networks, and shared projects.

## ■ Further interdisciplinarity to address the gap in new thought models

The second gap concerns the methodologies developed and deployed within the nascent movement. Neoliberal thought models are widely acknowledged by new economic actors as fundamentally misleading with respect to the characteristics of individual and social behaviour. Yet, whereas a variety of new economic thinking explicitly aims at building valid alternatives to them (e.g., complexity, ecological, and feminist economics), there is still a difficulty in translating this knowledge into action. Thoroughness comes with a price. Reflected at times in the failure to produce easily implementable policy recommendations, as argued by some interviewees, addressing this gap would call for committed investments in inter- and transdisciplinarity of new economic thinking at different levels, as well as for more intentional connection different knowledge fields and disciplines with policy. This would imply incorporating insights from a wider range of social sciences; diversifying the expertise of the individuals involved in these streams of research; investing in bold, unlikely collaborations; and enhancing the accountability of such methods for economic policymaking through the involvement of the general public.

At its simplest, this may imply a need to find new ways for steering research funding in new directions, as well as devising new interfaces aiming to foster knowledge brokering and exchange between scientific, policymaking, and societal stakeholders. Research, innovation, and knowledge exchange funding for new economics within public programmes are frequently challenged by orthodox economists who currently censor different perspectives. For example, circular economy funding is typically contextualised within the context of green growth, excluding degrowth or steady-state models. New economics funders can make strategic interventions to develop knowledge infrastructure in new economics at relatively low cost through funding knowledge synthesis, review, scoping, networking, pilot and knowledge exchange projects, match-funded studentships and fellowships. There may also be a disproportionate benefit from supporting a new high-impact, cross-disciplinary, pluralistic new economics journal with an editorial board drawn across different new economics approaches and geographies, because of the potential towards the improved engagement, integration and cohesion between the many strands of new economics.

### Examples of practical steps forward

- Strengthen the knowledge base for concepts, models and methodologies in new economic thinking by creating new points of accumulation and promoting (networks of) new academic departments and powerhouses (e.g. as in the case of UCL IIPP).
- Invest in research developing greater pluralism in methods of mathematical modelling – e.g. in models that do not rest on general equilibrium assumptions and that cross disciplines (e.g., coupled ecological-economic and institutional economic models).
- Encourage inter- and transdisciplinarity of economic thinking through the establishment of more publishing platforms for inter- and transdisciplinary research outputs (e.g. journals, reviews, forums, knowledge exchange venues).
- Ensure provision of funding aimed at strategically undermining the neoclassical dominance in gatekeeping knowledge (e.g. PhD bursaries, fellowships, and summer schools).

### ■ Further imagination to address the gap in new governance structures

The third gap concerns the institutional output of the nascent new economic community. A defining characteristic of neoliberalism has been its poverty of imagination with respect to human and societal premises of action — as notably seen in the reliance of its governance structures (i.e., global economic governance and financial architecture, as well as European macroeconomic governance) on operational assumptions largely derived from (new) neoclassical economics. In the recent decades, its predominance prevented any attempt to question the framework in which key economic activities (i.e., valuation, production, distribution, consumption) are embedded, as well as the usefulness of economic dogmas (i.e., fiscal austerity). However, multiple crises have exposed how fragile we all are if we take our institutions for granted and fail to consistently reimagine them — or even imagine new ones<sup>66</sup>. As such, the nascent movement has a great opportunity to push beyond the boundaries of what is currently perceived as “a given”. In actionable terms, this would imply leveraging new economic actors’ efforts to increase and facilitate debate around the need for new institutional and governance solutions — including ways to scope and provoke more political demand for them. This could be done not only by funding projects aiming at cutting-edge and practice-oriented research on how to fill this gap, but also by motivating each actor to take care of its media relations — so that organisations advocating new ideas can more effectively populate the debate through thought-provoking, bold op-eds and articles that might eventually build appetite for their ideas within public and policy debates.

#### Examples of practical steps forward

- Consider new ways of linking new economic actors’ thoughts and proposals with the need of European political economies to become net-zero welfare states from now to 2030 (e.g. by providing specialised consultancy services to the most proactive national governments).
- Convene new economic actors (e.g. by means of bold and collaborative research projects) to brainstorm and develop new hypotheses on how global governance should be reformed, reinvented and redesigned in order to build a fair, just, and sustainable global economy.
- Benchmark, connect and leverage the lessons learned about implementing new governance models from novel governance solutions tested at the local level before mainstreaming them at a larger scale (e.g. by ensuring knowledge accumulation within the movement).
- Showcase what new economic thinking should mean and imply in the everyday life of people (e.g. by means of foresight and scenario work, or inspirational media and communications).

66 Mulgan, G. (2020). *The Imaginary Crisis (and how we might quicken social and public imagination)*. Demos Helsinki. Accessed 15 Nov 2021.

## ■ Further experimentation to address the gap in new policy implications

The fourth gap concerns the policy output of the nascent new economic community. In order to overcome the lack of impactful opportunities felt by several interviewees, it would be important to direct stronger efforts towards proactive experimentation with novel policy solutions. Matching the need for imagination in designing new governance structures with the possibility of testing novel ideas in practice, doing so would allow the nascent movement to make the seemingly unfeasible become at least plausible, and bring valuable real-life demonstrations of new ideas to the address of urgent everyday challenges and the attention of citizens, policymakers, and other stakeholders. At its simplest, doing so would imply that each actor makes a proactive effort or is provided with the tools for reaching out to key policymakers and politicians, and provide them with well-informed responses to the problems they are facing.

In this respect, the existence of a small but growing set of place-based experiments based on the premises of new economic thinking already constitutes a major potential resource. They substantiate how novel solutions might play out in real-world settings, instead of just as policy buzzwords or narratives. Currently, most of the groups standing behind these experiences are small, fragmented, and under-resourced. However, their relevance as active grounds for experimentation will likely be increasing as more and more crises occur. New economic actors could pay more attention to these “pockets of future”, and leverage them in more systematic and effective ways.

### Examples of practical steps forward

- Strengthen the knowledge base for policy ideas, strategies and solutions in new economic thinking by establishing clear points of knowledge accumulation (such as policy labs as well as public sector innovation labs) and novel communities of practice by networking similar but geographically dispersed experiments (e.g. as in the case of Universal Basic Income).
- Benchmark, connect and leverage the lessons learned about implementing new governance models from novel policy solutions tested at the local level before mainstreaming them at a larger scale (e.g. by ensuring knowledge accumulation within the movement).
- Focus on developing solid proof-of-concepts designs and impact evaluation of new policy solutions in order to lower the risk-aversion of policymakers.

In order to address the aforementioned gaps, interviewees identified two overarching gaps that must firstly be filled: a **funding gap** and an **inclusion gap**.

## ■ Create trust in support mechanisms to address the gap in funding

The first overarching gap concerns the need for an increased quantity of and more carefully designed funding mechanisms. Indeed, as explored in the landscape analysis, funding does not merely represent the principal lever supporting new economic actors: crucially, it can also serve as a critical tool for building incentives for collaboration between actors, and to steer them towards filling the gaps seen above across all the four layers of an economic paradigm. In the last decade, the global far-right has been considerably more effective than the progressive movement in establishing funding networks that are capable of supporting entirely new ecosystems of organisations, as well as activities that are connected to a cohesive worldview despite their diversity (e.g. from opposing abortion and LGBTQ+ rights to advocating for libertarian economic policies; and from promoting ethno-nationalist views, to advocating for increased militarization and policing)<sup>67</sup>. These funders have been capable of cooperating while making long-term unrestricted investments to the groups they support, whereas the progressive funders seem to be more dispersed. Acknowledging this gap could help funders of new economic thinking begin putting in place more effective tools to ensure organisations' (individual and joint) impact. Doing so, in turn, would imply leading an intentional effort to place higher trust in the whole nascent movement and its actors on at least four levels:

- **Trust in their *commitment*** — rewarding individual career choices within the field of new economic thinking (e.g., by providing steady and sufficient financial resources).
- **Trust in their *collaboration*** — facilitating knowledge-exchange, cross-pollination and tactical coordination between different actors (e.g., by changing funding criteria).
- **Trust in different *temporalities*** — maturing awareness of the need to enable action across many timeframes (e.g., by securing both short- and long-term funding).
- **Trust in their *development*** — supporting new economic actors during organisational development processes (e.g., not only through funding, but also capacity-building).

### Examples of practical steps forward

- Ensure coordination between different funders in order to properly diversify their efforts and investments, while also maximising their synergy and overall potential impact.
- Design novel funding instruments that embed clear and relevant incentives for collaboration (e.g. by means of clauses or by envisioning shared roles between organisations).
- Invest in the creation of processes that can help foster the emergence of a shared language and mutual understanding among new economic actors (e.g. co-creative sessions, conventions, forums, convenings).
- Provide long-term funding opportunities for the establishment of clear points of knowledge accumulation within academia (e.g. new departments) and policy networks (e.g. policy labs) as well as for organisational development processes.

67 Fitzgerald, M. & Provost, C. (2019). *The American dark money behind Europe's far right*. OpenDemocracy. Accessed 15 Nov 2021.

## ■ Expand the movement to address the gap in diversity

Second, the nascent new economic thinking movement could benefit from opening up to groups that are active in other parts of the world and in other areas of social transformation, and strengthening efforts of power-building among these groups. For example, building relations and shared assets with other social movements (e.g. climate and feminist movements) and being serious about including currently marginal economic actors in relatively more established networks could bring fruitful strengths and diversification opportunities to the overall new economic thinking. Practically speaking the new economic movement needs to build towards diversity of both approaches and viewpoints. Focusing on establishing stronger links to the Global South strengthens both the analysis and legitimacy of new economic action. Strengthening new economic actors in Eastern and Southern Europe addresses the geographical bias of new economic actors in Europe. Not building real collaboration and exchanges with marginalised groups and actors risks perpetuating neocolonial practices and delegitimising the nascent movement.

### Examples of practical steps forward

- Establish long-term links with social movements to communicate the comprehensiveness of societal transformation (e.g. by means of targeted media & communications work).
- Strengthen links of European new economic actors with those that are active across the Global South to diversify understanding of alternative models of thought (e.g. by establishing new exchange programmes and transnational research projects).
- Communicate potential for funding new economic action especially in areas where there is a scarcity of new economic actors (e.g., Eastern and Southern Europe, connections and coalitions between European and Global South actors).

## Nurturing a shared ethos

In this chapter, we argued that one promising strategy for the nascent movement would be to play to its strengths, and enhance the impact of its pluralism by balancing out alignment and autonomy among new economic actors. Above, we identified four gaps that represent promising ways forward to steer and orient new economic action towards paradigm change and impact: collaboration, interdisciplinarity, imagination, and experimentation. On top of those, we identified two overarching gaps that represent key preconditions for the previous four to be successfully implemented: funding and inclusion.

These recommendations already provide concrete and actionable points. However, while potentially impactful in their own merit, we believe that they might not be enough. For the nascent movement to align without reverting to building a uniform direction, in addition to coordinating actions pragmatically, it would be important to ensure that disparate initiatives are implemented with a common purpose in mind.

This purpose should be to develop a shared ethos: i.e., to nurture the distinguishing character, sentiment, and moral nature of the nascent movement that stands behind new economic thinking. Fostering a sense of belonging between new economic actors would help them strike the difficult balancing act between alignment and autonomy which is needed to make the most of their diversities. In turn, the

development of a shared ethos would therefore help them make the most of their attempts to address the four gaps, and maximise their effectiveness.

But how to foster its emergence? And how to nurture the shared ethos which should bolster and propel it?

Part of the challenge is that, while serving as an important enabler of movement building, a shared ethos is also the most important long-term outcome of the shared efforts we pointed at through the four gaps. However, there are already excellent examples of how the shared alignment and trust between new economic actors that propel it can be nurtured in the short term, and these might be further strengthened (see e.g. the section on the coalition-building lever). Moreover, the nascent movement may also draw on examples seen in other transformative social movements. Some directions forward include:

1. **Committing to uncompromised collaboration.** As argued above, it is of critical importance that the nascent movement does not aim to replace the neoliberal “policy monoculture” with a new one, but rather challenges it by playing to its own strengths. To truly challenge neoliberalism, new economic actors must become an embodiment of its ideological shortcomings, and embrace the intrinsic pluralism of the nascent movement to regenerate economic thinking — and its view on human nature — through uncompromised openness to intellectual and human diversity. This is all but an easy task, as it entails leading consistent and intentional efforts at partnering with and supporting each other’s activities at all costs despite any potential disagreement. The shared discussion of new narratives or principles (such as GANE’s) can certainly provide relevant opportunities to join forces and explore common ground for action. At the same time, these should be used so as to enable collaboration of action, rather than seek consensus of thought — and therefore leave room for different positions to be held within the nascent movement in terms of framing, emphasis, strategy, and specific concepts or policy solutions proposed. A first step would be for new economic actors to work together in explicitly pointing out the failures of neoliberalism within the wider public debate, communicating convincing social representations of what a better economy looks and feels like<sup>68</sup>.
2. **Rallying behind shared symbols.** By symbols, we mean anything which by shared convention represents or stands for something else. In the past, movements that have achieved transformative goals often gained popular support through identifiable symbols. For example, in the case of climate change, the image of Greta Thunberg holding the sign “Skolstrejk för klimatet” (School strike for climate) in 2018 became soon the catalyst of widespread, intergenerational efforts in scaling the salience of this issue across public debates. Another example is that of the LGBTQ+ flag, which in turn exemplifies well how to bring together a pluralistic movement through symbols which implicitly articulate shared and enticing narratives much better than carefully considered, but compromised blueprints.
3. **Developing incentives and tools for collaboration and support to actors’ organisational growth.** Without building incentives for working as a movement, new economic actors will always be at risk of reverting back to single-minded organisational priorities and — potentially — to a competitive attitude. Moreover, without providing them with the tools for increasing the efficiency and professionalism of the operations led in the field, it will be easy for the smallest of these organisations to eventually make an impact. For example, as indicated in the gap analysis performed above, providing long-term funding opportunities attached with clear (and sensibly designed) incentives for collaboration, as well as promoting platforms enriched with shared decision-making, knowledge-sharing, and peer mentoring support might strengthen the movement as a whole.

68 Monbiot, G. (2017). *Out of the wreckage: A new politics for an age of crisis*. New York, NY: Verso Books.

4. **Exploiting the disruptive power of crises.** As explored in the Introduction, multiple crises are putting pressure on neoliberalism like never before. In particular, the COVID-19 pandemic has exposed with terrifying clarity the flaws of neoliberalism, from its fatal underinvestment in the foundational economy to the realisation that a strong state is vital and that humanity is not in dominion over nature, refuting neoliberal dogmas. At the same time, people have gained renewed appreciation of the things that new economic actors strive for, including the importance of essential services, community, local supply chains, wellbeing and flexible working. The recently leaked report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change which stated the unsustainability of growth-based capitalism shows how the environmental crisis could help to mainstream economic transformation<sup>69</sup>. At the same time, the key recommendations from the recent G7 Panel on Economic Resilience advanced a new ‘Cornwall Consensus’ openly challenging the Washington Consensus, and reflecting the felt need to put global governance in line with our times<sup>70</sup>. Challenging neoliberalism requires challenging power, and crises are apt moments to do so.

69 Bordera J, Valladares F, Turiel A, et al. (2021). *Leaked report of the IPCC reveals that the growth model of capitalism is unsustainable*. In: Monthly Review. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

70 G7 Panel for Economic Resilience (2021). *Global economic resilience: Building forward better*. October 2021. Accessed 11 Nov 2021.

# Epilogue

**T**he secret is out. In these pages, we met and engaged with the hundreds of teams working across Europe to design and implement new economic systems. We discovered their basic morphology: thematic, geographic, as well as strategic and tactical features that helped us perceive and appreciate the pluralism of the landscape that emerged from the research.

We hope this report contributes to the evolution of the new economic movement in Europe and beyond, not least by raising the awareness of its constituent actors to the neighbours that surround them.

At its best, the report could serve as a “transformation catalyst”. In it, new economic actors may find the tools to orient themselves within this landscape, important connections, and the shared actions thus nurturing the ethos we believe the nascent movement needs to maximise its impact. This is an invitation for self-reflection, collaboration, and finding common ground.

Transformations neither are nor can be linear. We are invigorated and inspired by the “pockets of action” that we were able to discover through this study. We therefore hope that two things will happen moving forward. First, we hope that we continue to deliberate on what we need from our economies. Second, we hope that this nascent movement will present an example that will completely disprove that pragmatism equals pessimism. We are on the right track. But an economic transformation will require a transcendence of ego: a commitment to the cause that we can only approach through curiosity, intention, and humility.

From promise to practice, the emerging landscape we have uncovered has an incredible window of opportunity to establish itself as a movement. Let’s put our trust in it, but let’s also hold ourselves accountable for our collective future—that of our planet, and generations to come. Our time here may be limited, but our moment is now.

Let’s make it matter.

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# ANNEX 1 – Essential background literature

Source	Brief explanation
Wong, F. (2020). <i>The Emerging Worldview: How New Progressivism Is Moving Beyond Neoliberalism</i> . New York: Roosevelt Institute.	Comprehensive landscape of ‘new progressivism’ especially from a US perspective. The report maps out key strands of thought currently challenging neoliberalism in policy debates.
OECD (2020). <i>Beyond Growth: Towards a New Economic Approach</i> . Paris: OECD Publications.	The report captures analytical work done by the OECD in response to the economic challenges of the 21st century, and proposes a framework for building new conceptions of economic progress, new frameworks for economic theory, and new approaches to economic policy.
Riedy, C. (2020). <i>Discourse coalitions for sustainability transformations: Common ground and conflict beyond neoliberalism</i> . In <i>Current Opinion in Environmental Sustainability</i> , 45:100–112.	Riedy’s academic journal article lays out a framework for understanding the core premises of a neo-liberal discourse and the main parts of a growing counter-argument (i.e., a discourse coalition), mentioning a wide array of new economic approaches.
Boston Review (2019). <i>Economics After Neoliberalism</i> . Forum. URL: <a href="https://boston-review.net/forum/suresh-naidu-dani-rodrik-gabriel-zucman-economics-after-neoliberalism">https://boston-review.net/forum/suresh-naidu-dani-rodrik-gabriel-zucman-economics-after-neoliberalism</a>	The issue provides a useful gateway for understanding the contemporary debates within the academic discipline of economics on new frameworks and methods of analysis challenging neo-classical thinking.
Friends Provident Foundation (2017). <i>Moving Beyond Neoliberalism: an assessment of the economic systems change movement in the UK</i> .	This review provides a comprehensive assessment of the key actors within new economic thinking in the UK. Furthermore, it provides a useful framework for understanding the roles and relationships between different types of organisations.
INET (2010–2021). <i>Working Paper series</i> . For a comprehensive list of papers & publishers, see URL: <a href="https://www.ineteconomics.org/research/research-papers?=&amp;more=true">https://www.ineteconomics.org/research/research-papers?=&amp;more=true</a>	The Institute for New Economic Thinking (INET) has published influential papers for over a decade on topics such as the intellectual foundations of (new) economics, historical analyses of various relevant themes, and papers bringing underrepresented lenses into policy discussions (e.g. gender and racial equality).

# ANNEX 2 – Advisory board members and interviewees

## Advisory board members

**Rainer Kattel**, UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose

**Peter Jones**, OCAD University

**Jane Mariara**, University of Nairobi

**Nibedita Mukherjee**, Brunel University London

**Evan Steiner**, One Project

**Sandra Waddock**, Carroll School of Management

## Interviewees

**Radhika Balakrishnan**, Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University

**Jonathan Barth**, ZOE Institute

**James Avraam Beck**

**Eric Beinhocker**, INET Oxford

**Parker Blackman**, Parker Strategies

**Ben Callegari**, Club of Rome

**Marion Cohen**

**Anna Coote** and **Maeve Cohen**, The Social Guarantee

**Christine Corlet**, CUSP (Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity)

**Jérémy Dousson**, Alternatives Economiques

**Miatta Fahnbulleh**, New Economics Foundation

**Felicia Wong**, Roosevelt Institute

**Thomas Fricke**, Forum for a New Economy

**William Hynes**, OECD NAEC

**John Irons**, Siegel Endowment

**Michael Jacobs**, Economic Change Unit

**Laurence Jones-Williams**, Rethinking Economics

**Wojtek Kalinowski**, The Veblen Institute

**Phoebe Koundouri**, SDSN Greece, Athens University of Economics and Business

**Ioanna Liouta**, DiEM25

**Johannes Lundershausen**, Environmental Justice Institute

**Mathew Lawrence**, Common Wealth

**Yiannis Milios**, Theseis, National Technical University of Athens

**Evan Steiner**, One Project

**Elena Tzamouranou**, DOCK

**Chris Vrettos**, Electra Energy

**Tracy Williams**, Omidyar Network

# ANNEX 3 – Deep dive into four European countries

To shed light more broadly on the state of new economic thinking in chosen European countries, four country deep dives were conducted. Firstly, the country deep dives provide a more nuanced picture of new economic thinking in the chosen countries and, secondly, give a socio-historical context to the actors and activities in the field.

The countries were selected based on three criteria: firstly, to provide some geographic diversity; secondly, to provide different perspectives on strategies (based on initial hypothesis); and thirdly, to showcase countries in which we assumed to see efforts to transform economic paradigms, due to their socio-historical context. The countries are:

- **The United Kingdom.** The UK has a long history of actors pursuing transformative economic agendas, and it has a large number of think tanks and advocacy organisations explicitly aiming for a transformed economic system. In addition, UK-based actors can be seen to have an influence on new economic thinking beyond the country, as many of the actors are influential in setting the agenda of economic debates more broadly.
- **Finland.** Finland is a small country with a relatively strong welfare state, which provides an interesting setting for understanding efforts for renewing economic policy. There are growing political efforts into transforming the premises of economic policymaking, but they are met with a lack of public debate on economic paradigms and strong institutional embeddedness of the economic status quo.
- **Greece.** With a heavy economic crisis following the 2008 global financial crisis, substantial austerity measures were imposed on Greece by international organisations. This led to the expansion of a comprehensive anti-austerity movement with strong popular support in the 2010s that culminated into party politics through an anti-austerity government in 2015. Ultimately the movement was unsuccessful, and therefore local new economic actors have needed to shift towards more gradual paths of transformation, making Greece an interesting deep dive.
- **France.** Neoliberal policies were never adopted in France on the same scale as in the Thatcherian era UK and post-Keynesianism remained relatively strong. The country has a long history of resisting the neoliberal wave and rich intellectual life with several international superstars of heterodox economics, e.g. Thomas Piketty or Esther Duflo.

## UNITED KINGDOM: Neoliberalism and new economic thinking in the UK: A curious paradox

Diving into the dynamics of new economic thinking within the UK reveals an intriguing paradox. On the one hand, the nation can be seen as a historic bastion of the neoliberal economic paradigm, with Margaret Thatcher's Conservative government of the 1980s fashioning the analyses of Hayek and Friedman into a mainstream policy agenda for decades to come. This commitment to market fundamentalism has continued as a powerful driving force that underscores both UK politics and its society more broadly. On the other hand, as much of our research has attested, the UK has also emerged in recent years as a lively and intricate hub for New Economic Thinking. Perhaps, as one interviewee based in the UK suggested, this surge in new economic actors simply reflects the scale of the task at hand when it comes to dismantling the embedded neoliberal ideologies that have become so baked into the UK's economic system.

### Emerging coalitions

In total, 25% of the actors mapped through this research are based in the UK. These include think-tanks (e.g. The New Economics Foundation, IPPR, Autonomy, CommonWealth), organisations aiming to transform economics education (e.g. Reteaching Economics, Rethinking Economics, Promoting Economic Pluralism), or more specific mission-focused organisations (e.g. Positive Money, the Social Guarantee, the Equality Trust), to name a few. Within this large group — comparative to other mapped countries in Europe — there were also found to be more established channels of communication and networking between each of the actors. However, interviewees were also quick to emphasise that these types of connections are in many ways a recent and developing process. For example, an informal WhatsApp group between the leads of different new economy organisations in the UK was only created in the last two years, which provides an agile and efficient platform for communication.

### Tensions, disagreements, and how these might be overcome

Despite such positive developments,, the actors interviewed also described that genuinely joined-up coordination was a more infrequent occurrence. The predominant explanation provided for these only partially formed interconnections was a simple question of resources — both financial and temporal. Various attempts to ignite substantive collaborations between actors were described as promising beginnings but ultimately struggled to generate momentum. Instead, a familiar story was recalled by actors of gradually becoming consumed by their own specific organisational agendas, causing collaborative projects to eventually fall by the wayside. Other interviewees also linked these instances to a deeper reflection about the nature of UK organisational actors, and how they are set up to prioritise organisational interests before considering the wider interests of a burgeoning new economic movement.

This manifests itself tangibly in debates over conceptual terminologies, with disagreements over a collective definition of basic income cited as a sticking point by numerous interviewees. These debates fit within broader tensions about where it is exactly that UK actors ought to be rallying around. Whilst some vocalise the end of the growth and consumption paradigms as a priority, others prefer to anchor their new economic visions within a more mainstream world of macroeconomics. Crucially though, these tensions were never characterised as insurmountable by the actors attempting to reconcile them, and many communicated a desire to leave such debates in the past. Noteworthy actors trying to accelerate collaboration and mutual understanding within the UK include the Economic Change Unit (ECU) and the New Economy Organisers Network (NEON). Their efforts reflect a genuine appetite within the UK to harness the nation's diverse actors into some kind of movement.

## Filling the gaps

Broader gaps were also identified in the general direction of the UK's economic thinking, which in turn restricts its impact. Most actors identified the nature of the available funding within the UK as a key explanation for these gaps. Funding streams were often characterised as historically tilting towards either the world of research, policy, and idea generation or, at other times, to more campaigning and grassroots-focused initiatives, despite most actors voicing preferences for a balanced and simultaneous approach by funders to these equally important dimensions of new economic thinking. Such perspectives are reinforced by the research findings of this report which indicate that, at present, it is campaigning-style groups that receive less visibility within the UK's new economic landscape. One simple explanation for this present dynamic is a pressure to deliver outputs that can easily break through the mainstream media bubble, and these tend to come in the shape of a report or blog, rather than a much longer-term campaigning initiative. The New Economics Foundation (NEF) is one example of an organisation attempting to straddle both of these worlds through a varied portfolio of work, but a fairly consistent message throughout our research on the UK was that more can be done on this front.

## A patient but proactive approach to the future

Despite these challenges, it is evident that dynamic new economy actors continue to both emerge and connect inside the UK. This lends itself to a shared sentiment that even if the UK's new economic thinking has not yet formed into a cohesive movement, this does not feel like a reality that is too far away. Inevitably, the pace of this change will be determined to some extent by the wider political context. Whilst some argue that the UK's dominant Conservative government is becoming more experimental in its economic policy, others frame these developments as more of a smokescreen to cover up the prevailing status quo. Nonetheless, new economic thinking within the UK is growing both patiently and proactively, as it works to develop the tools to eventually spark systemic economic transformation.

## GREECE: “Pregnant” with promise

In Greece, the neoliberal project never established its solidity fully. Weekly strikes, mass demonstrations, and trash cans burning on a typical Saturday night, signal that Greek people won't go down without a fight. However, when discussing issues specific to the economy, this societal unrest is not translated into a vision. In a country where the people have lost so much, anger is funnelled into protection and conservation of rights, rather than optimism and long-term thinking. The country's Civil War between the communists and the liberals has ensured that heterodox thinking passed down through generations, but the feeling of loss has stirred up a feeling of “us versus them”. While universities constitute public spheres that allow anti-establishment thinking to develop, they do little to solidify it institutionally. The 2015 referendum, where 60% of the population rejected the economics of austerity, did not translate into coordinated action. In other words, the status of new economic thinking appears to always be “pregnant”; ever-existing but never fully coming to life.

## Citizen movements and campaigning

Part of why new economic thinking in Greece has not reached full sophistication is that relevant groups stick to almost entirely guerilla and grassroots tactics. This means that anti-neoliberal thinking is expressed mainly through social issues, the fight against police brutality, strikes and civil unrest to protect certain groups, demonstrations, and a strong alternative culture. Social media has given new pathways to action. Recently, a food delivery company issued a statement that they would be forcing all of their

deliverers to change their occupational status to self-employed. This would have dire effects on the deliverers who, under this new status, would have to pay for their own social insurance. A mass movement was instigated immediately through the hundreds of “left pages” on social media, like Luben, RosaProgressive, and Tziz. This resulted in the company’s app reviews falling to just 1 star within a week. The company was forced to retract and hire all of its deliverers, giving them even more rights than they had before. This was a success story. However, strict employment protection legislation has forced 12.8% of Greek youth into the same insecure and costly *de jure* self-employment<sup>71</sup>. Action very much embraces groups that are *perceived* as weak, and thus grassroots tactics fail to put forward institutional proposals for society as a whole.

## Idea generation and advocacy

As happened in most EU countries, the COVID-19 pandemic pushed the agenda towards Keynesianism. However, the combination of high taxes, corruption, and high unemployment creates what we call “dysfunctional capitalism”. Consequently, new economic thinking in Greece is bound to be more radical than progressive. Greece has a leading tradition in heterodox economics. Many internationally renowned Marxist economists, like Yanis Varoufakis and Costas Lapavistas, are prolific in their critique of neoliberalism. Political economists and social scientists also contribute to a rich and ever-present discussion. Running Marxist theory journals, like *Theseis*, and heterodox book shops, like *Politeia*, hold up the ideological fort. Recently, alternative think tanks have started to develop, like the ENA Institute, providing heterodox economic analysis for a policy audience. When given the chance to speak publicly, the richness of heterodox economics is able to affect public discourse. However, the abstract economic terms and the complexity of systems, make it difficult for the concerned viewer to feel activated and empowered. Moreover, profound ideological disagreement over Europe, the role of the state, technology and digitalisation, make collaboration an unlikely event.

## The climate crisis as an opportunity for change

Neoliberalism has found a more united front in the developing promise of the circular economy, the economy of wellbeing, and green transition. In Greece, issues of sustainability are still very high level and practical. The focus is to follow EU recommendations. Yet, this is a space where research, entrepreneurship, and policy come together in agreement. The Athens University of Economics & Business, for example, runs an interdisciplinary Lab on Socio-Economic and Environmental Sustainability (ReSEES) that focuses on environmental and energy issues. This is an area of fruitful innovation that is likely a beneficiary of a flourishing and lively European community that has formed around these topics. International and local organisations, like ICRES, SDSN, ATHENA, ClimateKIC, and PESD introduce these topics in a perhaps predictable audience for the moment. These efforts would have to be embraced by many Greek governments to follow, paired with a long-term focus on reskilling and upskilling of the Greek labour market. The absence of local know-how presents a roadblock to social innovation.

These efforts are not particularly radical, as they can be sympathetic – or “healthy additions” – to neoliberalism. Yet, a promising innovation emerged in 2018 with the establishment of energy communities. Through shared ownership of their energy, these communities are challenging the absolute foundations of neoliberalism, like production, consumption, and price determination. Their members are actively promoting the model through advocacy, coalition-building, and campaigning.

<sup>71</sup> OECD (2020). *Inclusive entrepreneurship policies, Country assessment notes: Greece 2020*.

## The future

Greece holds a vibrant promise in the pursuit of new economic thinking. While the public discourse, movement building, and grassroots campaigning are there, local actors are in need of research funding and a safe space to develop common ground. Contrary to the ideological solidity of neoliberalism, heterodox economic thinking in Greece is a diverse, dynamic, and organic space, built from the ground up. As a result, investment in these (for now) divided communities is unlikely to come from the top. The exception of efforts driven by the effects of the climate crisis suggest that solidarity from abroad is integral. Like a caring but sometimes unforgiving womb, Greece has nurtured new economic thinking for almost a century. To deliver on its promise, guidance and compassion must flow into the country before it is too late.

## FRANCE: “We don’t have money, but we have ideas” – the small but vibrant field of new economic thinking in France

In France, the field of new economic thinking can be described as small, dispersed, and mostly issue-oriented. The country has a rich intellectual life with public intellectuals, debates, conferences, and small magazines – including on topics around the economy. However, the debates tend to revolve around thematics described as “old left” by one interviewee, emphasising social justice and solidarity – with more and more green transition issues brought to discussions too. However, actors working on holistic, system-level changes in the economic system are still rare.

The field of new economic thinking in France consists of academic organisations and networks (such as Research and Degrowth or Association Française d’Economie Politique AFEP) and a few think tanks (such as the Veblen Institute, Fondation Nicolas Hulot, the Shift Project, and the Foundation for Political Ecology.) Some public intellectuals such as Alain Grandjean (president of Fondation Nicolas Hulot) or Dominique Méda (professor of sociology at IRISSO<sup>72</sup>) push for the need to radically redefine economic thought.

The NGO space is populated by sectoral campaigning organisations located in the capital (like Réseau Action Climat, Greenpeace, France Nature Environnement ou Humanité & Biodiversité), with small local actors fighting for specific issues in the terrain. Amongst the issue-oriented actors, organisations focusing on environment and sustainability matters are heavily emphasised.

An interesting case in the European media landscape is the French monthly magazine and website *Alternatives Economiques*. The magazine was born in 1980 to counter neoliberal politics and the infamous “there is no alternative” approach. The magazine quickly found its audiences and is today a well-established media outlet with 700,000 monthly readers. Politically independent, the magazine is not advocating for a specific agenda but wants to enrich the debate on economics by bringing to the discussion perspectives that differ from mainstream thinking.

A more recent addition to alternative media outlets is the website *The Other Economy*, launched by Alain Grandjean and his former colleague Marion Cohen. *The Other Economy* is a platform that brings together knowledge and shares ideas on how the current economic system should be transformed.

In addition, France has a dynamic cooperative movement that presents an alternative way of organising corporate ownership. 70% of retail banking and 40% of France’s food industry is run in cooperatives. Cooperatives employ 1.3 million people<sup>73</sup>. This movement establishes its presence through foundations who support events and some think tank activities.

<sup>72</sup> IRISSO is an organisation born in 2015 from the fusion of Institut de recherche interdisciplinaire en sociologie, science politique et économie (IRISES) and ‘Centre d’études et de recherche en sociologie des organisations (CERSO)’ in the University Paris-Dauphine.

<sup>73</sup> See <https://coops4dev.coop/en/4deveurope/france>

## No funding for systemic transformation

The interviewees saw the funding structures as a core reason for the small number and detachment of actors working on systemic change of the economic system. The funding is mostly sector-based, and there is no funding for systemic, cross-sectoral vision-building. A part of the problem is that the French law makes opening a foundation for non-private corporations very difficult. For this reason, many smaller funders allocate their resources to Fondation de France, an umbrella organisation that shelters almost 900 charities, which in turn funds projects in different sectors of the society. This funding structure limits individual funders' possibilities to steer funding to specific causes, even if there was interest in doing so.

Also, unlike in e.g. Germany, France has no structural funding for political think tanks, which has kept the field weak. In recent years, this has been compensated to some extent by international foundations setting up offices and programs in France. For instance, the Paris office of the European Climate Foundation plays an important role in this regard, both in terms of funding and as convenor for the French NGOs and think tanks.

## Despite its heterodox superstars, academia remains mainstream

Whereas the field lacks resources, there is intellectual vitality in the space of new economic thinking amongst its practitioners. As one interviewee summarised, “we don't have money but we have ideas”, paraphrasing the former French president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. This perception is embodied through international superstars like Thomas Piketty or Nobel-prize winner Esther Duflo, who have exposed the flaws of the neoliberal economic system with the means of empirical economics. The exchange of ideas is active also in several networks and frequent public events, but as one interviewee pointed out, the debate on new economic thinking is dispersed and lacks a general vision of what the “new” should look like.

Furthermore, the vital intellectual debate has not turned into post-neoliberal politics — even though neoliberal ideas never broke through in politics in the same force as in the United Kingdom and post-Keynesianism has remained relatively strong. There was a shared agreement amongst the interviewees, that general public discourse and policymaking in France still very much happen within the neoliberal cadre. One reason behind this was seen to be that in general, heterodox economics is still very weak in French academia. As one interviewee noted, there is “no funding, no journals and no jobs” for researchers willing to practice non-mainstream economics in France. This reproduces the economic dogmas and offers no alternatives to policymakers. However, there seems to be a growing demand amongst students for more diverse economics education that better addresses especially ecological crises — which can further fuel the movement to transform the prevailing economic paradigm.

## FINLAND: Mainstream untouched, but action on the fringes

The Finnish mainstream intellectual and policy landscapes are heavily permeated with a hegemony of neoliberalism protected by strong defenders. There are, however, many individuals working on alternatives through institutions.

Finland can be characterised as a country with a tight elite, which allows only limited room for alternative thought. Although this traditional characterisation may have started to crumble in recent decades, economic thought is still emblematic of a consensus-driven past: mainstream discussion is fairly uniform and follows economic dogma. There has neither been room nor funding directed to many organisations working directly on building a new economic movement in Finland. Notable exceptions include the independent research institute BIOS, which pushes for a comprehensive green transfor-

mation (and accompanying economic paradigm shift), and Demos Helsinki<sup>74</sup>. In addition, the Finnish system has independent but party-affiliated think tanks funded for each parliamentary party — out of which Kalevi Sorsa Foundation can be seen to advocate for alternative economic policy.

While the number of independent new economic actors is extremely low, much of the Finnish new economy movement can be seen to be channelled through existing institutions: namely labour unions, Finnish universities, and political parties.

#### ■ Labour unions

Traditionally labour unions and employee organisations are strong societal actors in Finland. Although labour unions as such don't push systematically for a new economic agenda, labour union economists are among the most vocal heterodox economists in the Finnish landscape<sup>75</sup>.

#### ■ Universities

While academic economics (and the linked research institutes) generally seem to follow mainstream neoclassical schools of thought, Finnish universities provide an institutional home to many new economic thinkers. These individuals come mainly from non-economic social sciences, such as political economy, sociology, or communications, but their insights have not punched into mainstream debates as credible challenges of a neoliberal dogma, but it is noteworthy that universities themselves have acted as a powerful space for debates and conflicts around the adoption of neoliberal policies into universities.

#### ■ Political parties and individuals

No Finnish political party has adopted a consistent alternative economic agenda into their party programmes. This is not to say that multiple individuals linked with political parties have been champions of new economic thinking. There is a growing group of individuals, both politicians and political advisors who can be seen well-versed in new economic arguments. Furthermore, there is a small but somewhat influential group of non-party affiliated but politically active individuals with the aim of translating new economic arguments into public discussions via traditional and new media channels<sup>76</sup>.

## Framing the future through a debate

These efforts have not, however, translated into a lasting change in the societal landscape, and Finnish societal discussions are still coloured by an abidance to neoliberal dogma. A good example of this is an emerging public discussion on Finland's *budgetary frame*. The budgetary frame refers to a spending ceiling set in the beginning of a governmental cycle by which the government agrees to abide. This agreement is heavily facilitated by the Ministry of Finance with the objective of fiscal responsibility spanning political cycles. Now, with EU discussions on green investments as external to the Stability and Growth Pact, some interest in budgetary frames is also growing. Noteworthy from a new economic perspective is the strong backlash to such propositions, both from media op-eds and editorials, and from civil servants.

The public debate on the budgetary frame showcases how neoclassical mindsets are entrenched in media and public institutions in Finland. However, it also shows the possibility for change. As Finland is a rather small and cohesive country, it is easy to see the rather rapid changes in public discourse and opinion. Therefore, Finland can provide a fertile landscape for examining different strategies when opening up economic narratives to new economic thought.

<sup>74</sup> Demos Helsinki is the author of this report.

<sup>75</sup> Anni Marttinen and Patrizio Lainà can be seen as the most vocal labour-union based, alternative economists in Finland.

<sup>76</sup> A good example of such activity is Mikä Meitä Vaivaa — “What is wrong with us” — a combined podcast and social media initiative aimed at popularising contra-neoliberal thought.