

# Acknowledgements

Only two names appear on the cover of this book, but don't let that fool you. *Economy Studies*, both the book and the accompanying website, is a cooperative effort built with contributions of some 180 people. Sprawling as it is, we simply could not have written it alone, nor would we have wanted to. In this chapter, we want to tell you a bit about the process of this project, and honour the many people who made remarkable contributions to this effort.

## 1 Building on a Wider Movement

The story of *Economy Studies* is inseparable from the international student movement *Rethinking Economics*. Over the past decade, Rethinkers have pointed out gaps in the curriculum, argued for different material and conducted thorough curriculum reviews. Many staff members and faculties turned out to be quite interested in our proposals. Still, they generally found it hard to implement such requests, being so used to the familiar curriculum. Hence the idea germinated in *Rethinking Economics* meetings to make an example curriculum.

We did not want to reinvent the wheel, but rather assemble the best work from the generations that came before us. So, we reached out to a wide range of seasoned academics around the world, hoping to tap into their collective knowledge and wisdom. Overwhelmed by the breadth and depth of the responses, we have continued this practice throughout the writing process. These economists freed up some of their precious time to respond to one or more of our requests for feedback. Some of them we already knew through classes or conferences, many others had so far just been revered names in our bookcases. Each time, we were honoured and humbled by the many responses, often going in great detail.

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In the first round, before starting our own writing process, we simply asked this group of seasoned academics a few open questions. How would they define the economy, what should the core principles of a good economics education be, what courses or programmes did they find inspiring, and what it was that made these courses and programmes so worthwhile? These responses, together with many pages of notes from *Rethinking Economics* gatherings, would form the basis of our new curriculum proposal.

## 2 A Process of Crowdsourcing

We quickly realised that it would be impossible to write ‘the perfect curriculum’. *Rethinking Economics* is at its core a movement for pluralism, and does not intend to replace the current, relatively standardised curriculum with a single alternative. This does not mean that we do not have a coherent view. It just means that it encompasses diversity of theories, methods, values, people, and programmes. We agreed, however, on the major gaps in current programmes, the basic tenets for future programmes, the design principles, and on the general direction we envision for economics education.

This, we decided, would be the form of our curriculum proposals: a modular, open-ended design toolkit built on a clear foundation of guiding principles. The core: teach students to study the economy using a broad and open-ended toolkit, rather than drilling them in a specific manner of thinking about it. Such a modular approach has two advantages. For its writers, it allowed for a collaborative and diverse yet coherent vision to emerge from a broad reform movement. For its users, it offers a menu and a variety of tools, rather than a fully formed ‘take it or leave it’ alternative structure.

Our first rough draft, just 70 pages long, saw the light of day at a long weekend workshop in January 2019, where it was picked apart and put together again lovingly by Daniel Obst, Eric Sargent, Alexandra Sokolenko, and Sally Svenlen. Special thanks here go to Ross Cathcart, Cameron Fay, and J. Christopher Proctor, who have acted as this project’s godfathers from start to finish. We are grateful to the *Independent Social Research Foundation* for funding this workshop. Following this workshop, we took eight months to come to a fuller draft, including much more detailed building blocks, detailed lists of materials and a full version of the *Pragmatic Pluralism* approach.

In September 2019, we went back for more comments. We once again sent out the manuscript, now around 150 pages, to the same group of professors, and again were honoured to receive many pages of valuable feedback. In the year that followed, we processed their comments, additions, critiques and other suggestions to create a new manuscript. We then organised a final round of feedback in the summer of 2020. We went back to the group of seasoned academics mentioned in the list above for a final time, now sending them each one or two relevant chapters to receive more in-depth thematic feedback. At the same time, a group of about twenty rethinkers edited one chapter per week per person for about two months, ensuring that every chapter would pass through many pairs of eyes and hands.

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### 3 Constructing the Toolkit: An Iterative Process

Throughout the writing process, we also held some twenty try-out workshops and discussions to broaden and sharpen the work. Many thanks go to the organisers of all these workshops, conferences and gatherings: *the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW)*, *the Dutch Ministry of Finance*, *the Oikos* and *Netzwerk Plurale Ökonomik* student movements, *The Hague University of Applied Sciences (THUAS)*, *the Italian Association for the History of Political Economy (STOREP)*, *the Goldschmeding Foundation* and *the Commission for Education, Culture and Science of the Dutch House of Representatives*. We especially wish to thank the *Rethinking Economics* staff team, who have brought together such an extraordinary worldwide network of young academic freethinkers so many times. This book could not have been written without your tireless organising behind the scenes. In addition, *the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, *the Radboud University of Nijmegen*, *Utrecht University* and *Leiden University* provided inspiring discussions and use cases of early drafts.

The try-out workshops also helped to sharpen another component of the project: course design workshops at economics faculties, using an abbreviated version of the *Economy Studies* toolkit for the initial brainstorming. In November 2020, *Rethinking Economics International* organised an *Economy Studies Expert Training*, where Rethinkers from five different continents came together online for four weeks to discuss the book and how to conduct such workshops in their own region. The feedback from the participants in this series of sessions sharpened the workshop format in many ways.

It was in these workshops that the book grew to take its final size and shape. Through discussions with fellow Rethinkers and many academics, we came to realise that a curriculum proposal or a set of building blocks with guiding principles alone was not enough: it needed a head and a tail. So, we fleshed out the *Foundations* more clearly, and added several more *Tools* chapters to get closer to the practical realities of everyday teaching work, such as *Adapting Existing Courses* and *Learning Objectives*. All this greatly expanded the book's waistline, to the dismay of our publishers. Still, we believe it is worth it, as the project's range is now much more complete: from basic principles to practical application within a single framework.

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All remaining errors are, of course, our own. In addition, as the main authors of this book are two young white university educated middle-class men from the Netherlands, the book has an inevitable bias towards our own experiences. We hope that you, the reader, will help us to make the next edition sharper and richer, by pointing out errors and omissions and suggesting better teaching materials and techniques.

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