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Antifascist Economics

Webinar on the Foundations of a New School of Economic Thought

10th November 2026

Agenda

- Welcoming Words
- Input Antifascist Economics
- Input Consequences for Economics in Higher Education
- Interactive discussion
- Economists for Future, Resources and Short Outlook

Speakers



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Anti-fascist Economics

Can an economy be democratic if it produces social inequality, authoritarian power, and ecological destruction?

Marius Ewert | WWF Schweiz | 10.11.2026
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Economic Insecurity and Political Responses

Imagine the following situation:

Rents are rising.
Energy and food are becoming more expensive.
Jobs are becoming increasingly insecure.
Public services are under pressure.
At the same time, the climate crisis and environmental pressures are intensifying.

Which political response becomes more likely?

A. Solidarity and collective action
B. Withdrawal and political resignation
C. Authoritarian and nationalist scapegoating
D. Different responses – depending on social conditions

Why do we need an anti-fascist economy?

The Transformation of Capitalism Since the 1980s

Three Structural Developments:

1. Financialization and the Concentration of Wealth

→ Financial markets and investment logics increasingly shape economic decisions.

Wealth accumulation increasingly outpaces the growth of output and incomes.

2. Deindustrialization and Structural Transformation

→ Employment has shifted from manufacturing towards services.

Production, employment and value creation have become increasingly reorganized across global supply chains.

Why do we need an anti-fascist economy?

3. Precarization and Growing Inequality

More flexible and insecure forms of employment.

Productivity gains are not equally reflected in workers' incomes.

Growing inequalities in income, wealth and economic power.

Some Empirical Evidence – Switzerland and OECD Countries:

→ Switzerland: The industrial sector's share of employment fell from almost 50% in the 1960s to around 23% in 2011.

Switzerland: Between 2000 and 2025, private wealth grew by an average of 3.9% annually, compared with 2.6% for GDP and incomes.

OECD: Since the mid-1990s, real labour income has become decoupled from productivity growth in around two-thirds of OECD countries.

The Central Question:

How are experiences of economic transformation and insecurity translated into authoritarian or democratic forms of political mobilization?

The Current Debate: Isabella Weber

Rethinking Economic Policy

1. Affordability: Protecting access to essential goods such as energy, food and housing.

2. Strategic Price Interventions: Using targeted government intervention to prevent extreme price increases.

3. Democratic Economic Governance: Expanding public influence over essential economic decisions.

4. Material Security: Protecting living standards against economic shocks.

5. International Cooperation: Addressing economic crises through cooperation rather than nationalist competition.

The Underlying Question:

How can economic policy protect people's living conditions while strengthening democracy?

What is the current debate in economics?

Research Approach	Key Finding
Inequality Research	Economic inequality can intensify status insecurity and political polarization across social classes – including the middle and upper-middle classes.
Political Economy	Financialization and concentrated economic power constrain democratic control over economic decisions.
Welfare State Research	Social protection can reduce economic insecurity and strengthen people's capacity to participate in society.
Labour Market and Trade Union Research	Collective organization creates democratic counterpower and strengthens workers' political influence.
Inflation Research	Rising prices, unequal market power and expanding profit margins can intensify distributional conflicts.
Authoritarianism Research	Economic insecurity does not automatically produce authoritarianism. Political narratives, group identities and perceived threats shape how people interpret economic crises and whom they blame.

The Key Mechanism: From Crisis to Political Mobilization

1. Drivers of Economic Transformation:

   Globalization and international competition
   Financialization and shareholder-value orientation
   Automation and digitalization
   Neoliberal restructuring and welfare-state retrenchment
   Energy crises and geopolitical conflicts
   Ecological crises and the pressures of economic transformation

2. Social Experiences:

   Fear of social decline and loss of status
   Loss of economic control and security
   Experiences of exclusion and lack of recognition
   Uncertainty about the future
   Conflicts over resources and social participation

The Key Mechanism: From Crisis to Political Mobilization

3a. Authoritarian Response

- Nationalism and exclusion
- Scapegoating and social division
- Authoritarian leadership
- Protection of existing hierarchies

3b. Democratic Response

- Solidarity and collective action
- Trade unions and social movements
- Democratic participation
- Social protection and redistribution

The First Major Blind Spot in Anti-Fascist Economic Policy: The Frankfurt School

Why is redistribution alone insufficient to explain or prevent fascism?

Critical Theory expands the analysis of economic domination through five interconnected dimensions:

1. Economic and Social Domination: How unequal power relations shape people's lives, institutions and opportunities?

2. Authoritarian Character Structures: How experiences of powerlessness, insecurity and social hierarchy can contribute to authoritarian attitudes and submission to authority?

3. Ideology and Social Conformity: How existing power relations become normalized and how people come to accept or reproduce them?

4. Instrumental Reason: How rationality becomes reduced to efficiency, calculation and control – treating people and nature primarily as means to an end?

5. Domination of Nature: How the exploitation and control of nature are embedded in broader structures of social domination?

Key Thinkers:

Max Horkheimer, Theodor W. Adorno, Erich Fromm, Herbert Marcuse

The Second Major Blind Spot: Climate Justice

→ The climate crisis is also a crisis of distribution, power and democratic participation.

Four Dimensions of Climate Justice:

1. Distributive Justice
   Who is responsible for emissions?
   Who bears the environmental damage and the costs of the transition?
   Who has the financial means to switch to green technologies and sustainable lifestyles?

2. Procedural Justice
   Who gets to make decisions about climate policy?
   Who participates in shaping the ecological transition?

The Second Major Blind Spot: Climate Justice

3. Recognition Justice

Which social groups and lived experiences are taken into account?

Whose needs and vulnerabilities are overlooked?

4. Reparative and Historical Justice

Who bears responsibility for historical environmental damage?

Who receives compensation and support for climate-related losses?

The Blind Spots of Economic Models

Frequently Considered Variables	Frequently Overlooked Dimensions
GDP and economic growth	Ecological limits and planetary boundaries
Prices and consumption	Power over production and investment
Average income	Concentration of wealth and emissions
Employment rates	Recognition and social participation
Carbon pricing	Global climate justice
Overall efficiency	Distribution within households and unpaid care work

Climate Justice in Economic Models

From Traditional Economic Models to a Broader Perspective

Traditional Model Perspective

CO_2 Pricing → Changes in Relative Prices → Investment Decisions → Emissions Reduction

Expanded Anti-Fascist Perspective

1. Ecology
- **Emissions budgets**
- **Resource consumption**
- **Planetary boundaries**

2. Distribution
- **Income and wealth**
- **Ownership structures**
- **Unequal access to green technologies**

The central question:
How can ecological transformation take place without reproducing or deepening social inequalities?

Climate Justice in Economic Models

3. Democracy

   Participation in economic decision-making

   Concentration of economic and political power

   Democratic control over investment and production

4. Social Reproduction

   Care work and unpaid labour

   Affordable housing

   Access to energy, healthcare and essential services

   The conditions necessary for everyday life and social participation

Beyond Efficiency: An Economy That Sustains Life and Democracy

Model of an Anti-Fascist Economy

Democratic and Socio-Ecological Transformation of the Economy

1. Material Security

- **Affordable housing and essential services**
- **Secure employment and fair wages**
- **Access to energy, healthcare and social protection**

Reducing economic insecurity and fears of social decline.

2. Democratic Counterpower

- **Strong trade unions**
- **Social movements and collective organization**
- **Democratic participation in economic decision-making**

Strengthening people's capacity to shape their own living conditions.

Model of an Anti-Fascist Economy

3. Overcoming Structures of Domination

Challenging concentrated economic power

Addressing authoritarian ideologies and social hierarchies

Strengthening recognition, equality and social participation

Reducing the social conditions that enable authoritarianism and exclusion.

4. Climate Justice

Respecting ecological limits

Fair distribution of environmental costs and resources

Democratic and socially just ecological transformation

Preventing ecological crises from becoming new sources of inequality and political division.

The Goal:

A democratic, solidarity-based and ecologically sustainable economy that enables everyone to live with dignity and participate in shaping society.

Why Material Conditions Matter for Democracy

- an Anti-Fascist Economy Changes the Conditions Under Which People Live and Participate in Society.
- People are less vulnerable to political scapegoating when their basic needs are secured.
- People are less likely to blame marginalized groups for their own insecurity when structural inequalities are addressed.
- People gain democratic agency when they can collectively influence economic decisions.
- People experience social recognition when their needs, work and contributions are valued.
- People are more likely to support ecological transformation when it is socially just.

The Central Argument:

Democracy requires more than formal political rights. It also requires material security, social recognition and the power to shape collective living conditions.

→ An anti-fascist economy is therefore not only about preventing economic crises – it is about creating the social conditions in which solidarity and democracy can flourish.

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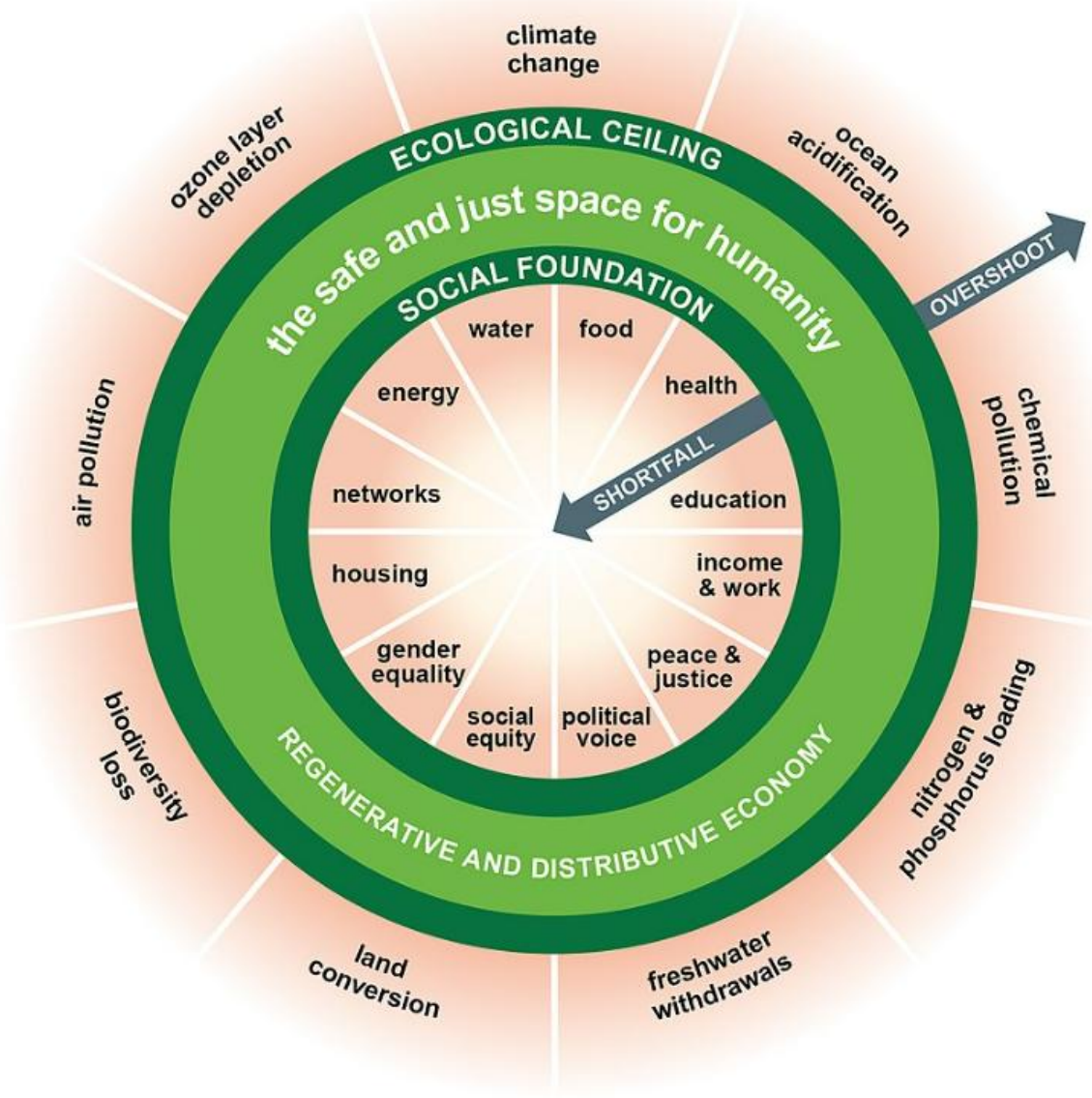
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Why are we interested in Antifascist Economics?

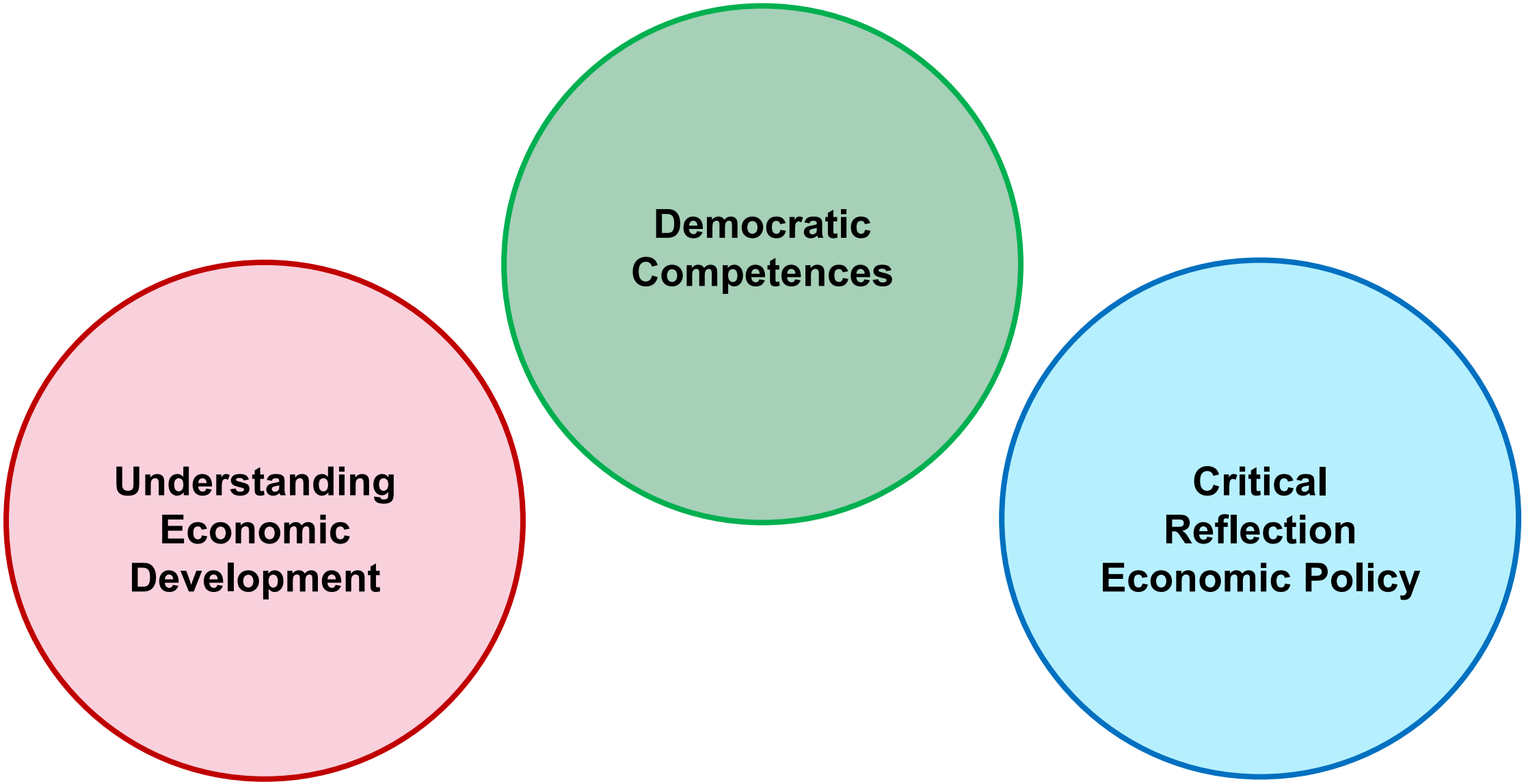


Doughnut Model by Kate Raworth



Teaching Antifascist Economics in Higher Education

Key areas to understand the concept of Antifascist Economics



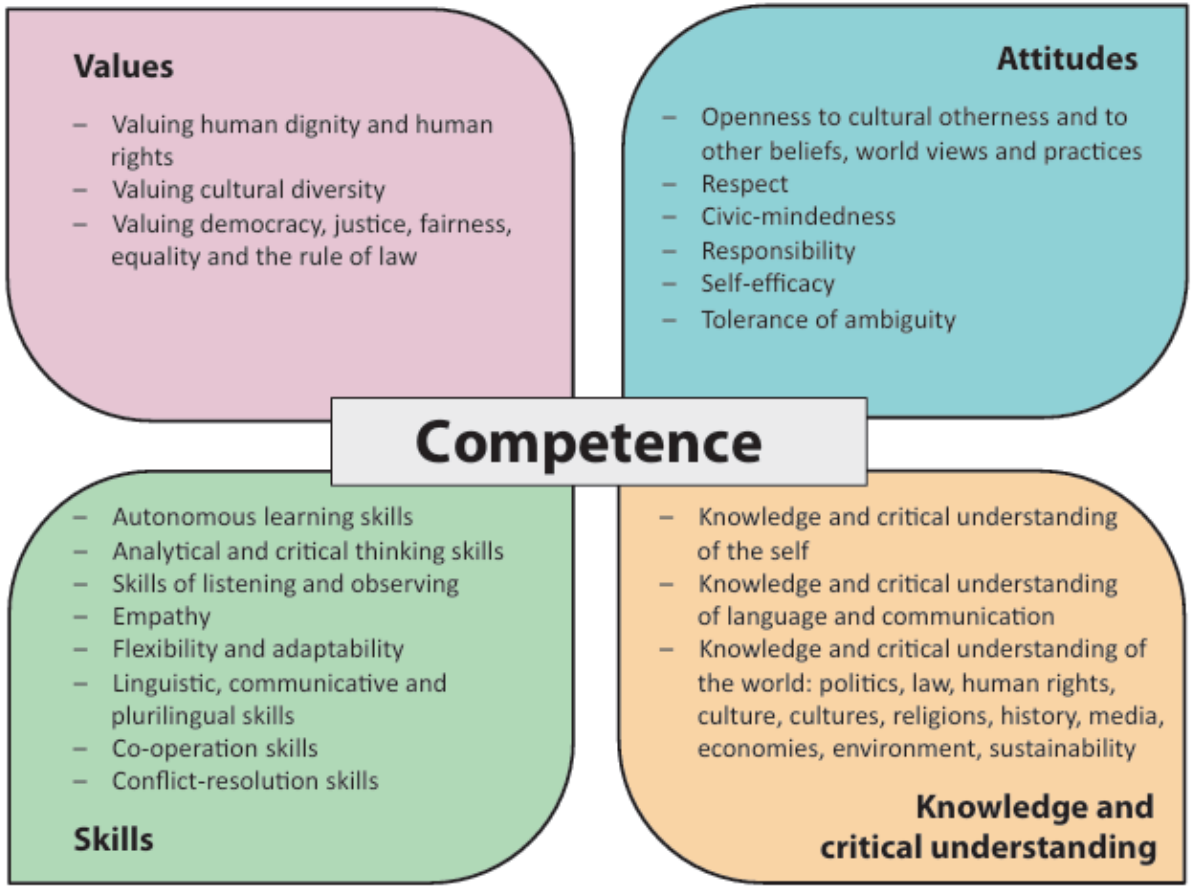
Understanding Economic Development

- Students should understand the **historically unique economic growth** that has taken place since 1950 – following centuries of slow economic growth.
- They should recognise the **positive consequences** of this development (the eradication of hunger, poverty and disease for many people), but also the **negative consequences** (environmental destruction, the exploitation of animals, the alienation of people and rising global risks).
- They should reflect on **alternatives to economic growth**, with the aim of ensuring that all people and future generations can live well, halting environmental destruction and respecting planetary boundaries.
- They should be able to understand which national and international **political decisions** and which **technological factors** (fossil fuel and nuclear technologies; digitalisation) have made this enormous economic growth possible.

Critical Reflection Economic Politics

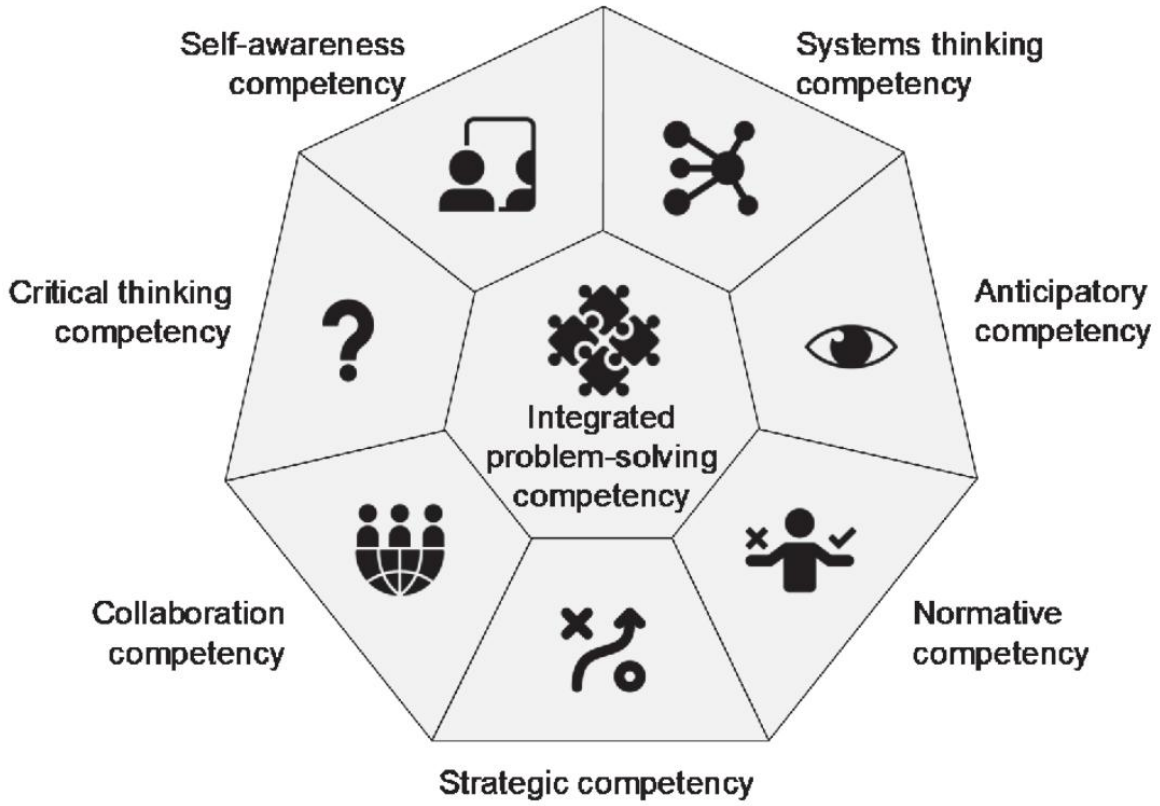
- Understand how **economic policy paradigms** have shaped society and the global economy. They should understand how the social market economy was **replaced by a neoliberal economic policies**.
- **Globalisation** and expansion of financial markets leads to increasing market concentration and **wealth inequality** → causes social consequences like growing **economic insecurity** and social inequality.
- Decline of secure, well-paid jobs comes along with a loss of a subjective social status and sense of belonging.
- Economic and cultural concerns reinforce each other
- Economic success does not guarantee a stable democracy
- **Economic policies** and decisions do not only shape markets. They also **shape social structures, power relations** and the conditions for a stable democracy

Competences for Democratic Culture …



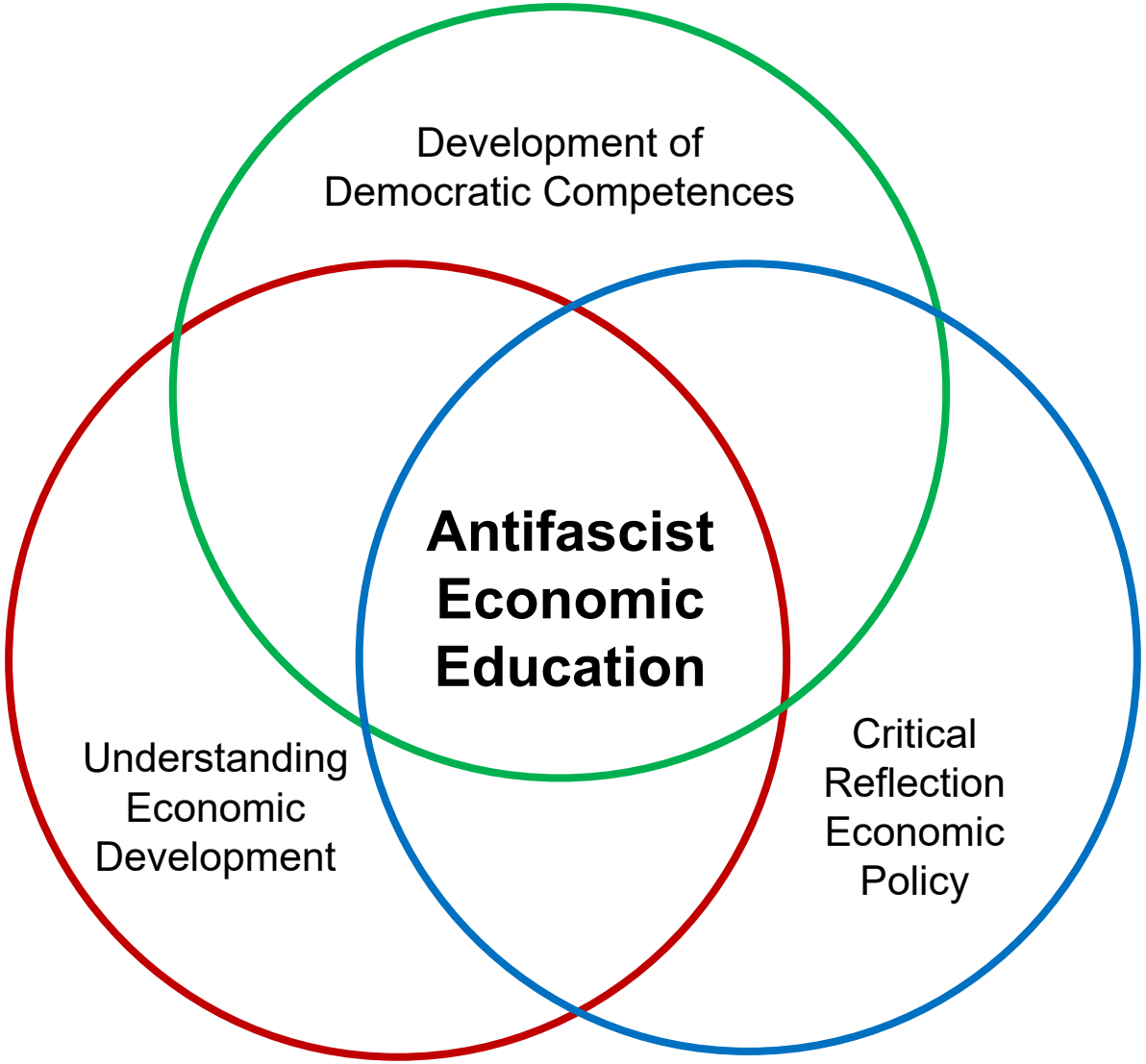
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Competences for Sustainable Development



UNESCO (2017): https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444 Grafik von: [PDF] MAPPING THE CDIO SYLLABUS TO THE UNESCO KEY COMPETENCIES FOR SUSTAINABILITY | Semantic Scholar

Bring together ...



Antifascist Economics Education: Recommendations

Link **economic development** and **economic policy** to issues of **democracy**

Global trend: **rise of authoritarianism** and **fascism**

Promote **case studies**, **role-plays** or serious games

Practice-oriented learning formats e.g. **project-based learning** or **service learning**

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Economists for Future – Who we are

A non-profit organisation founded in 2019 by pluralist economists, and part of the For Future movement

We understand the **economy as embedded in society and nature,** and we work toward an economy that serves both

Shaping the debate: we offer evidence-based critique and policy ideas to the public debate, mainly in German-speaking countries

Building bridges: we are a platform that connects researchers, civil society and policymakers working toward a sustainable and just economy

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What we currently do

Policy Paper Series: our German-language „*Debattenreihe*“ and the international „*Voices in Transition*“ series, which brings in perspectives from the Global South

Economic Policy & Narratives: we analyse key political developments in Germany and critically assess dominant economic narratives

Sustainable Land Policy Working Group: with partners from Germany, Austria and Switzerland we run the webinar series *Land as Public Infrastructure 2026/27* and publish policy papers. We're also planning dialogues with local and national policymakers

Talks & Networking: events like today's, plus exchange with the New Economy and climate movements

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Case studies and research papers

Develop structured reasoning through real-world analysis and evidence-based critical thinking.



Full courses, lesson plans and syllabi

Provide comprehensive learning frameworks with systematic progression and clear objectives.



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Transform complex data into accessible formats that reveal patterns and systemic relationships.



Teaching Material

Introduction to Pluralist Economics

Bachelor, Master | Article | Pluralism in Economics | Exploring Economics

Open Link | Learn more | Review this material

Teaching Material

Economics for a changing world

Bachelor, Master | Full Course | Pluralism in Economics, Sustainable Economy Transformation | > 4h | CoreEcon

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Teaching Material

Sustainability scientists' critique of neoclassical economics

Research Article | Economics | 1h to ≤ 2h

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