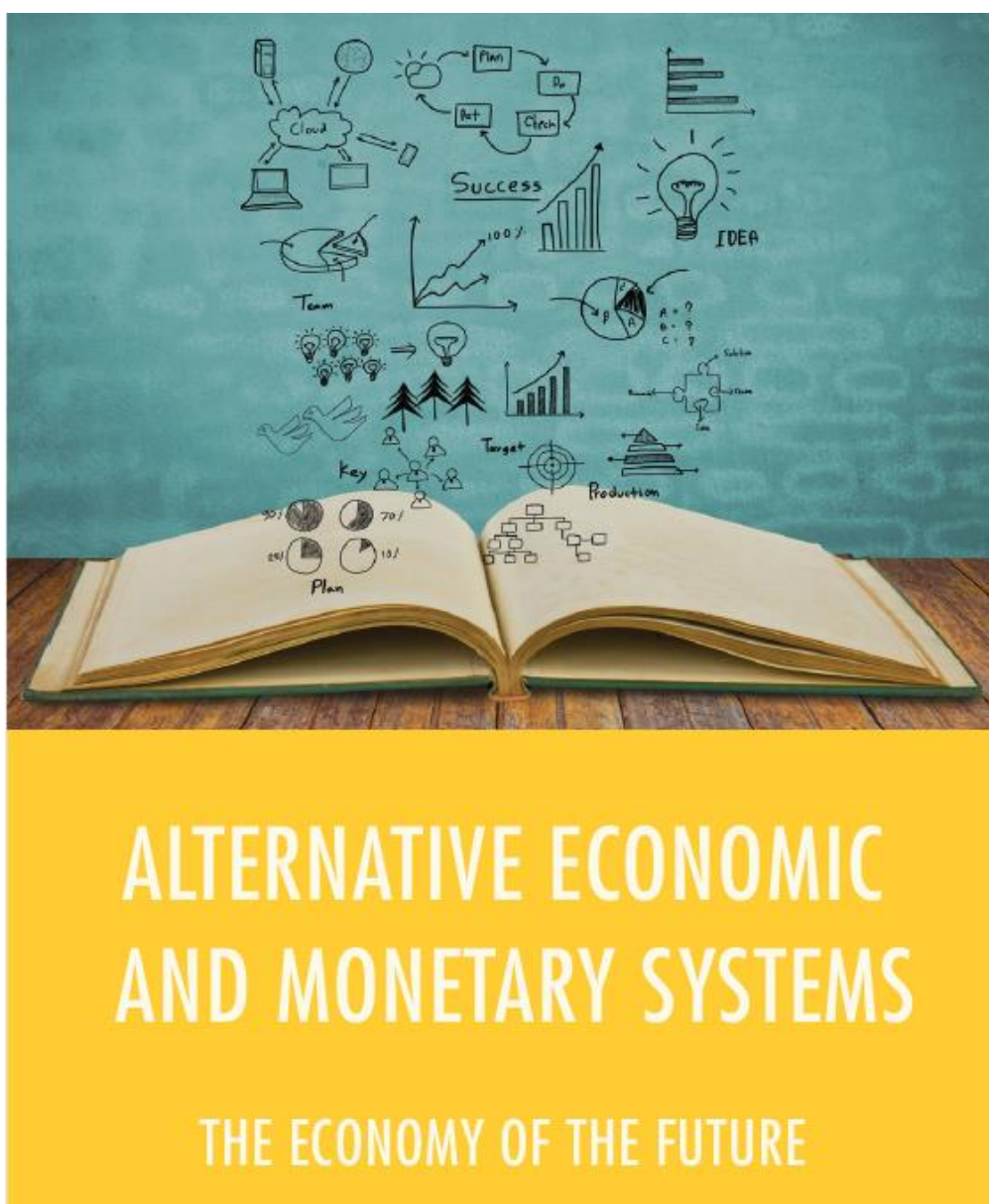


# SUMMER UNIVERSITY 2017



# CONTENTS

FACES OF AEMS .....	2
INTRODUCTION .....	3
ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC AND MONETARY SYSTEMS.....	4
CLIMATE AND RESOURCES .....	6
THE HUMAN FACTOR.....	8
THE CURRICULUM.....	10
PARTICIPANTS .....	13
GROUP PROJECTS .....	14
PUBLIC EVENTS .....	15
SOCIAL EVENTS .....	17
THE SPIRIT OF AEMS .....	18
OUR GRATITUDE.....	19

## With kind support of our sponsors



## FACES OF AEMS



*"The lecturers have been outstanding and the people taking part are from all around the world. I really like that environment."*

Alex Lantos (Hungary)

*"AEMS really teaches you to think critically."*

Rachel Jessup (France)



*"Regarding participants, they were outward and friendly that I felt we were one big family. I had good time interacting with them."*

Pem Lepcha (Bhutan)

*"Taking part in AEMS has been among the two best weeks of my life."*

Jake Senior (U.K.)



# INTRODUCTION

"In all affairs it's a healthy thing now and then to hang a question mark on the things you have long taken for granted."

*Bertrand Russel*

**AEMS** is an international summer university program that offers a **new approach**: An evaluation of economic alternatives that considers natural boundaries and the human factor to be equal parts of the equation. **Our ambitious goal**: To help solve some of societies' problems by presenting viable alternatives to processes and developments that are putting enormous strains on economic, ecological, and social boundaries.

**2017 saw** the fourth installment of AEMS. 54 students from 30 nations joined the program this year to hear more about economic alternatives, planetary boundaries, technological remedies, and limits posed by demographic growth and human nature.

**WHY AEMS?** Overconsumption, resource depletion, overpopulation, environmental degradation; the current problems are vast and well known. But rather than just adding another discussion of the current state of the world, the Summer School offers solutions and provides the opportunity to link theoretical approaches with subject-specific content from different scientific disciplines and professional best practice. Students are provided with state of the art scientific data from natural and social sciences supplementing various new and classical concepts from economic sciences. This enables them to have a level-headed discussion about economic and monetary reforms while asking, "What is our leeway?"

**BEST OF AUSTRIA** - In 2016 AEMS won the award "Education for sustainable development - Best of Austria" (Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung - Best of Austria). The prize was awarded from Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management (BMLFUW).

We would like to thank all participants, teachers, and the whole organizing team for making AEMS a continuing success.

Best wishes,

Günther Jedliczka (OeAD-Housing Office), Helga Kromp-Kolb (BOKU), Lisa Bohunovsky (BOKU), Karin Küblböck (ÖFSE), Ernest Aigner (WU Vienna), Katharina Thill (ECG)

Steering Committee AEMS





## ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC AND MONETARY SYSTEMS

"The significant problems we face cannot be solved at the same level of thinking we were at when we created them."

*Albert Einstein*

**The Summer School is the result** of a cooperation between the OeAD-Housing Office, the University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences, Vienna, and representatives of the Economy for the Common Good (ECG): A combined effort to create an academic event that would enable students from all fields of study to learn more about the current socioeconomic climate and provide them with economic and monetary alternatives. The program introduces students with limited economic background knowledge to the main factors that lead to the current situation of economic instability, global environmental degradation, and social inequality. Content-wise, it addresses the current and future availability of key resources such as water, food, and energy as well as presenting economic concepts and theories that deal with these problems.

**The abundance of available ideas** for economic reform shows that there has been a high demand for a new economic system for some time now. Yet it renders the idea of a complete presentation of every available proposal impossible. Only a selection of the most promising concepts can be covered, ranging from small steps on an individual level, to fundamental reforms of global structures and institutions.

**The monetary system** has its own intricate feedback loop with the economy, making the emphasis on monetary reform a natural choice. With this in mind, a significant part of the program was set aside for the topic of monetary reform featuring Professor Bernard Lietaer, a former central banker, fund manager, co-designer of the European Currency Unit and renowned advocate for monetary diversity, a system of competing currencies.







## CLIMATE AND RESOURCES

"One resists the invasion of armies; one does not resist the invasion of ideas."

*Victor Hugo*

**The global population** has grown rapidly during the 20th century, from around 1 billion in 1800 to 3 billion in 1960 and 7.5 billion in 2017, with the strongest population growth occurring in urban areas. UN Population Division projections for the year 2050 range between 8.8 and 10.8 billion, mainly in Asia and Africa, while the European population is expected to simultaneously decline and age.

**The rise** in global populations and living standards increases the rate of resource consumption on a global level. Since 1970, the human rate of natural resource consumption led to a level where demand is higher than regeneration of resources. This overshoot of biocapacity leads to a further loss in biodiversity and challenges planetary boundaries. In addition, there is increased loss of agricultural land, with 30-50% of the land surface already having been transformed by human interventions, with increasing conflicts over the scarce remaining land and water in developing countries.

**A number of proposals** for economic reform focus on new technologies such as a reinvention of allocative efficiency or criticism of the practice of externalization, especially with regard to public

goods. Other approaches like the Degrowth Movement demand a shift in consumer behavior, arguing that history has repeatedly shown that every reduction of resource usage made possible through technological progress has been undone through changing behavior surrounding that very technology. This is the so-called rebound effect. Other ideas focus on extensification vs. intensification of agricultural production, the creation of food networks and community projects.

**Monetary reform** can also play a crucial role: Projects like the Curitiba, a Brazilian complementary currency, can help to stabilize purchasing power, foster the community and promote regional cycles and a resource-efficient close-to-nature economy. An alternative to bank money is sovereign money. In a sovereign money system, all money is created exclusively by a state authority, e.g. the central bank, and not by commercial banks anymore. This way each credit given to customers would be fully covered by the cash amount, which is controlled by the central bank. Sovereign money could stabilize the amount of money in circulation and hence could stabilize the financial system.







## THE HUMAN FACTOR

"We must be the change that we would like to see in the world."

*Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi*

**The last decades** brought about an intensification of cross-border business activities. The subsequent worldwide competition for investment influences labor standards and increases instabilities in the labor market concerning wages and working time as well as job security itself. Occupational psychology increasingly focuses on work-related diseases caused by stress, fatigue, and monotony.

**Also patterns are shifting:** The 500 biggest enterprises control 37% of the global GDP, but employ only 1% of the global workforce. Income inequalities, measured by the Gini-Coefficient, are at its highest levels and even higher than nearly two hundred years ago. In 2017, the wealth of the richest eight people equals the wealth of half of the world's population (3.7 billion). Income inequality rises not only between social classes, but gaps between national economies are increasing on a tremendous level too. In the 1960s, the average GDP per capita of the wealthiest countries was 54 times bigger than the 20 poorest countries. In 2000, this indicator was already 122 times larger than the poorest countries.

**A number of proposals** focus on social reform, with some criticizing that the monetary valuation of all goods creates a loss of information by collapsing all sorts of different values down to one single dimension; namely the said assigned monetary value, which is unsuitable to depict nuances. Approaches like the Economy for the Common Good and the Solidarity Economy seek a revalorization of other aspects than monetary valuation, emphasizing human dignity, social justice, solidarity and cooperation, codetermination, transparency, and ecological sustainability.

**A fundamental question** remains of how and why decisions are made, especially the notion of good people doing evil things, sometimes even without realizing that what they do has a harmful effect for others, or on society as a whole. One possible answer lies in the concept of Ethical Blindness: It describes the unconscious, context-bound, and temporary deviation from someone's own values and principles while making a decision.





## I: Status Quo: The Multiple Crises and the Need for Alternative Approaches

- What's wrong with current economics?
- Mainstream neoclassical economics vs. heterodox approaches ( Keynesianism, Institutional Economics, Marxism)

## II: Democratizing the Economic System

- Cooperatives, credit unions & Co. private enterprises with collective forms of ownership
- Participatory economy, solidarity economy
- The economy of the common good

## III: Reforming the Financial and Monetary System

- The role of money
- Credit unions, development banks, cooperative banks, bank for the common good
- Full reserve money, 100% money, local currencies, local exchange trading systems

## IV: Socio-Ecological Transformation

- Sustainable development, greening the economy, de-growth
- Sustainable agriculture
- Resource usage and scarcity
- Sustainable energy
- Working-time reduction, care economy, share economy

## V: Wrap-Up & Synthesis

- Workshop on the theory of change
- Group presentations

## THE CURRICULUM

"Dare to know! Have the courage to use your own intelligence!"

*Immanuel Kant*

**The AEMS' curriculum is** divided into five modules starting with an introduction to basic economic concepts and their backgrounds. Before the beginning of the AEMS, students are required to prepare a poster and are assigned readings. Students are asked to consider their main questions concerning the Summer School and put them on a poster:

- What do I want to learn during the 2.5 weeks of the Summer School?
- Which questions do I want to have answered?

**The idea** is that all students have a clear concept about what they want to take home from their participation. With these questions in mind, they can address the lecturers or discuss them with other participants. Moreover, the questions can help to find colleagues with similar / contrary questions for the group work.



In order to prepare for AEMS 2017, students were also requested to read the following articles:

- Steffen, W. et al (2015): "Planetary boundaries: Guiding human development on a changing planet", Science 347, pp. 1-10.
- Stirling, A. (2014): Emancipating Transformations: From controlling "the transition" to culturing plural radical progress. Retrieved from <http://steps-centre.org/wp-content/uploads/Transformations.pdf>
- Brand, U./Wissen, M.(2012): "Global Environmental Politics and the Imperial Mode of Living: Articulations of State-Capital Relations in the Multiple Crisis", Globalizations, pp. 547-560.

**On the first day**, participants are introduced to mainstream economics and its deficiencies. Building upon this, the participants comparatively discuss different heterodox approaches in the following modules. Every module starts with an introductory lecture to explain the status quo and the core elements of the thematic area. The subsequent lectures are more in-depth with practical examples of alternatives.

**The first module** gives an overview over mainstream neoclassical economic concepts and heterodox approaches (Keynesianism, institutional economics, and Marxism).

**Democratizing the economic system** is a discussed theme as democracy is widely recognized as an important value of society. However, whenever the economic system is concerned, the importance of democracy seems to be widely neglected. The 2<sup>nd</sup> module investigates how democratization of an economy could be.

The design of a **financial and monetary system** is crucial for social and economic development. However in the last decades, deregulation and liberalization of the financial system resulted in a situation where financial markets dominated rather than served broader societal interests. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> module, we focus on questions like: How could a new system look like? Is there really no alternative?

**Socio-ecological transformation:** There is overwhelming evidence that the current economic model that is based on everlasting economic growth is destroying the ecosystem of our planet, and thus the basis for the existence of humanity. In this module, we discuss different sustainable de-growth models and how an ecological economy could be.

**Wrap-up and Synthesis:** The final module gives students an opportunity to reflect on and synthesize the many issues and concepts they have learnt about in the previous two weeks.







## PARTICIPANTS

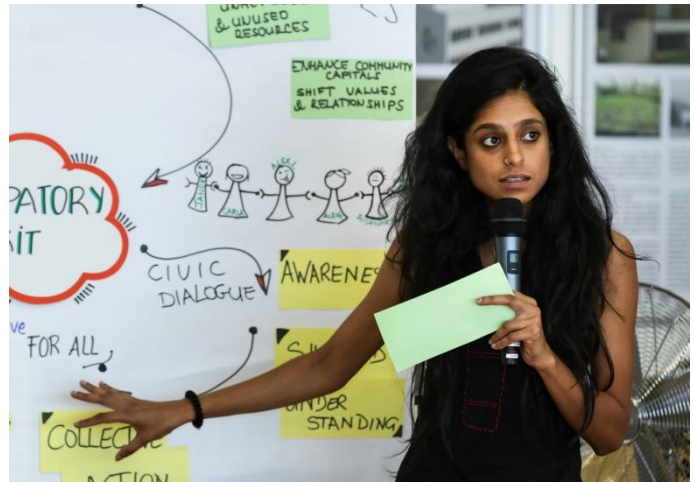
"Those who have seen through their existence cannot be stopped."

*Confucius*

**AEMS participants come** from all over the world. This year's group was comprised of 54 people from 30 different countries. There was a very broad age range; the youngest was 19 years of age and the oldest was 60 years old. People who study AEMS not only have various cultural backgrounds, but also differ in terms of age, profession, and discipline of study. This great diversity led to rich discussion with a multidisciplinary integration of approaches. A background in economics is not a requirement for admission. All people who are interested in learning more about the impacts of the economic and financial system on limited natural resources are welcome to take part in AEMS.







## GROUP PROJECTS

"Do what you can, with what you have, where you are."

*Theodore Roosevelt*

**In order to profit** as much as possible from the expertise, knowledge, and energy of the lecturers and other AEMS students, the participants were asked to get together in groups of four to five students to work together on a project. The aim of the group work was to present solutions to a problem at hand. Participants could choose to either work on a specific project that addressed the issue, or to think about options for action in a more general way. They defined an economic, social, environmental, or another practical problem that was related to either module II, III or IV and discussed it in relation to the other two modules. At the end, the groups presented their findings to lecturers and the other participants.

In addition, AEMS students wrote blog posts. The participants worked in groups of two to summarize the program contents and they discussed the most important learning outcomes of one morning or afternoon session. The very interesting posts can be found on our blog: <http://summer-university.net/aems-blog/>

## PUBLIC EVENTS

"The saddest aspect of life right now is that science gathers knowledge faster than society gathers wisdom."  
*Isaac Asimov*

**AEMS organizes public events** every year to spread the information about alternatives to the current economic and monetary system. Admission is free, and the events are open to all interested guests. This year we had two remarkable panel discussions and a movie night.

**"The political and economic situation of Greece and Iceland"** was a panel discussion with Helene Schuberth (Central Bank of the Republic of Austria), Eva H. Önnudóttir (University of Iceland), and Spyroula Nezi (GESIS-Leibniz Institute for the Social Sciences). Read the blog post from AEMS students Wajdi Belloumi & Mouloud Chahid about this evening on our [website](#).

**"The financial system of the future"** was a panel discussion with Christian Felber (Bank for the Common Good), Bernard Lietaer (currency expert), and Bart Jan Krouwel (co-founder of the Triodos Bank). You can read the blog post from AEMS students by Aishwarya Krishnan and Francini Van Staden about this event on our [website](#).

**"Tomorrow"** is a film directed by Cyril Dion and Mélanie Laurent. This documentary film shows initiatives all over the world that have proven themselves in the fields of agriculture, energy, economy, governance, and education. Optimistically, "Tomorrow" puts forward solutions instead of focusing on problems.











## SOCIAL EVENTS

**There are many ways** to meet fellow students and enjoy free time together. All students live in the same dormitory: the OeAD Passive House Molkereistraße. The centrally-located Guesthouse is a fantastic starting point for sightseeing tours in Vienna. It was also the common meeting point for organized cultural and leisure activities.

**We visited IIASA** – the renowned International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis - in Laxenburg on August 7. This town is located about 15 km from Vienna and is famous for its castles, which, beside Schönbrunn, served as the most important summer retreat of the Habsburg monarchs. The building which now houses the IIASA stands on the site of one of Laxenburg's three castles. After the program, we strolled around in the beautiful castle park, rented paddleboats, and visited the castle.

**For sports lovers** among our students, we organized several sports activities where they could play football, volleyball, basketball, tennis, or go swimming in the Old Danube River. We know that our students love to **eat good food**. In Austria we have many great dishes! That is why we organized a dinner in the restaurant "Heuriger Feuerwehr Wagner" where we ordered fine Austrian food like Schnitzel and Apfelstrudel accompanied by fine Viennese wine. On top of all these events, we held many parties, and had a lot of fun! :)

## THE SPIRIT OF AEMS

"Enlighten yourself, and then affect others by what you are."

*Wilhelm von Humboldt*

**Unfortunately AEMS 2017 is over** but the students stay connected. Former participants exchange information about interesting projects and initiatives around the globe in our Facebook alumni group. Some of our alumni have joined together to form initiatives; others have visited their newly found friends in their home countries all over the world. Still others fell in love with Vienna and decided to come back to study what they have learned at AEMS in greater depth.



**Join our AEMS community!**

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[www.twitter.com/AEMSVienna](https://www.twitter.com/AEMSVienna)

[www.summer-university.net](http://www.summer-university.net)





## OUR GRATITUDE

"The good thing about science is that it's true whether or not you believe in it."

*Neil deGrasse Tyson*

**We would like to thank** all participants, partners, and sponsors who made this event possible.

We would like to thank all AEMS 2017 lecturers: Lisa Bohunovsky, Ernest Aigner, Brian Faith, Christian Felber, Wolfgang Fellner, Helga Kromp-Kolb, Bart Jan Krouwel, Karin Küblböck, Friedrich Leitgeb, Bernard Lietaer, Spyridoula Nezi, Eva H. Önnudóttir, Keywan Riahi, Philipp Salzmann, Etienne Schneider, Helene Schuberth, Sigrid Stagl, Nina Thüllen, Bernd Villhauer, Elisabeth Voß, and Richard Werner.

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**AEMS will be back! July 25 – August 10, 2018**



## With kind support of our sponsors

- aap architekten
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- Institut für den Donauraum und Mitteleuropa (IDM) and Danube Rectors' Conference (DRC)
- Institute of International Education
- Lebensministerium
- MA 7 – Kulturabteilung der Stadt Wien
- Migra
- Österreichische Bhutan Gesellschaft
- Schöberl & Pöll
- St. Gobain



## ... and partners





**AEMS will be back in 2018!**

Find us online at **[www.summer-university.net](http://www.summer-university.net)**

E-mail us: **[aems@oead.at](mailto:aems@oead.at)**

AEMS 2017 Steering Committee: Günther Jedliczka, Helga Kromp-Kolb, Lisa Bohunovsky, Karin Küblböck, Ernest Aigner, and Katharina Kronsteiner. AEMS 2017 Organizational Team: Carina Kamptner. Tutors: Alexandra Göd, Armin Thaler, Bertrand Posch, Florian Carl, and Solène Dengler.

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