

New Approaches to
Economic Challenges
Seminar Programme

January – May 2021



NEW APPROACHES TO ECONOMIC CHALLENGES (NAEC)

SEMINAR PROGRAMME: January – May 2021

NAEC invites some of the world's leading authorities to present a multidisciplinary perspective on the questions we face and the ways we answer them. The seminar debates inform [NAEC reports](#), strategic partnerships with other international organisations, think tanks and Foundations, as well as NAEC's work with OECD Members, Directorates and Committees. Webcasts of all seminars in the NAEC series can be viewed by theme or date at <https://www.oecd.org/naec/events/>

A priority for NAEC in 2021 is a series of papers and meetings under the theme "A Systemic Recovery". The Covid pandemic has revealed fissures in the system which have been developing for a long time. The focus on economic recovery from the effects of Covid-19 should not blind us to the opportunity to do much more. The scale and scope of the existential problems we are facing are now evident. They are systemic and solving them will require rebuilding the whole system. This is the role of NAEC. Two years ago we looked at [Systemic Collapse](#). NAEC has since been [Confronting Planetary Emergencies](#) with some of the world's leading economists and will now facilitate a debate on policy approaches to develop the resilience necessary for a Systemic Recovery. This will be the theme of NAEC's annual Baillie Gifford conference scheduled for the end of April.

Building on our 2020 seminar series [Exit Strategies and Lessons from Covid-19](#), NAEC will join with [Rebuilding Macroeconomics](#) to host a series of debates on "The Future of Economics", bringing together various organisations and individuals committed to debating new ways of understanding the economy and transforming economic thinking and acting.

NAEC is working with various actors on the concept of "Brain Capital" which considers brain skills and brain health as an indispensable part of the knowledge economy. This programme features a discussion of [A Brain Capital Grand Strategy: Towards Economic Re-imagination](#) which argues that in our brain economy, investments in brain health and brain skills are critical for post-COVID economic renewal, re-imagination, and long-term economic resilience. We do not know what the future will hold, particularly in the midst of a crisis, but we must make decisions anyway: economist John Kay examines such "Radical Uncertainty" in decision-making. Stephanie Kelton, of Stony Brook University, offers a timely analysis of the effects of deficits on the economy. In "*The Plague Cycle*", Charles Kenny, from the Centre for Global Development, shows how climate and population fluctuations and aspects of our prosperity such as global trade have left us more vulnerable than ever to newly emerging plagues.

Key issues from the seminars and the policy thinking discussed in NAEC are synthesised in NAEC publications: [The Financial System](#) debates the theory and models of the financial system and offers advice on how financial policy can contribute to making the financial system more resilient; and [Beyond Growth: Towards a New Economic Approach](#) draws on developments across the modern field of economics and political economy to argue for a new approach which recognises the rootedness of economic systems and behaviour in the relationship between people, social institutions and the environment.

To help reinforce the OECD's analytical and modelling capacities, NAEC has set up strategic partnerships with a range of partners including the Santa Fe Institute, the Fields Institute and INET Oxford on [New Analytical Tools and Techniques](#). NAEC's strategic partnership with the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) produced the joint report [Systemic Thinking for Policy Making - The Potential of Systems Analysis for Addressing Global Policy Challenges in the 21st Century](#) demonstrating the potential of systems analysis and systems-based strategies to address critical global issues and guide policy options, drawing on innovative methodologies, models and tools for research and policy analysis. Working with researchers from the US Army Corps of Engineers, NAEC is promoting a [A Systemic Resilience Approach to Dealing with Covid-19 and Future Shocks](#) and working with directorates to help establish convergence across policy communities in resilience definitions, concepts, frameworks, analytics and policies.

You can contribute to the debate by sending us your comments, criticisms and suggestions to naec@oecd.org, along with your proposals for future seminar themes and participants.

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SEMINAR PROGRAMME

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27 January 2021

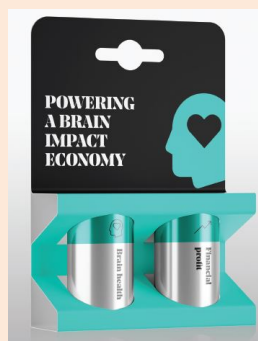
BRAIN CAPITAL GRAND STRATEGY: TOWARDS ECONOMIC REIMAGINATION

3.30 PM - 5.00 PM

[Register](#) (OECD delegations)

[Register](#) (OECD staff)

[Webcast](#)



NAEC is working with various actors on the concept of “Brain Capital” which considers brain skills and brain health as an indispensable part of the knowledge economy. This seminar will discuss [A Brain Capital Grand Strategy: Towards Economic Re-imagination](#) recently published in *Molecular Psychiatry* – an inter-disciplinary effort of medical doctors, neuroscientists and economists to which NAEC contributed. The paper argues that in our brain economy, investments in brain health and brain skills are critical for post-COVID economic renewal, re-imagination, and long-term economic resilience.

The seminar, introduced by the Secretary General and moderated by [Megan Greene](#), will include Admiral [William H. McRaven](#) and [Tom Leppert](#) who promote collaboration across scientific disciplines to discover how brains can perform at their best and translate their research findings to create strategies for strength and well-being to enhance, preserve and restore brain health and performance across the lifespan.

17 February 2021

RADICAL UNCERTAINTY

3.00 PM - 4.00 PM

[Register](#) (OECD delegations)

[Register](#) (OECD staff)

[Webcast](#)



[John Kay](#)

Economist and Author

Radical Uncertainty: Decision-Making Beyond the Numbers

Much economic advice is bogus quantification warn John Kay and Mervyn King. Invented numbers offer false security; we need instead robust narratives that yield the confidence to manage uncertainty. Some uncertainties are resolvable. The insurance industry’s actuarial tables and the gambler’s roulette wheel both yield to the tools of probability theory. Most situations in life, however, involve a deeper kind of uncertainty, a radical uncertainty for which historical data provide no useful guidance to future outcomes. Radical uncertainty concerns events whose determinants are insufficiently understood for probabilities to be known or forecasting possible. The limits of certainty demonstrate the power of human judgment over artificial intelligence. In most critical decisions there can be no forecasts or probability distributions on which we might sensibly rely. Instead of inventing numbers to fill the gaps in our knowledge, we should adopt business, political, and personal strategies that will be robust to alternative futures and resilient to unpredictable events. Within the security of such a robust and resilient reference narrative, uncertainty can be embraced, because it is the source of creativity, excitement, and profit.

25 February 2021

THE DEFICIT MYTH?

3.00 PM - 4.00 PM

[Register](#) (OECD delegations)

[Register](#) (OECD Staff)

[Webcast](#)



[Stephanie Kelton](#)

Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Stony Brook University and a Senior Fellow at the Schwartz Center for Economic Policy Analysis

Vice-president Dick Cheney famously boasted, “Reagan proved deficits don’t matter.” Was he right? Do deficits matter? Stephanie Kelton leads a debate on whether deficits matter and how we think about government spending today and the implications for future generations. Can deficits be used to sustain life and build a more just economy that works for the many and not just the few?

11 March 2021

THE PLAGUE CYCLE

3.00 PM - 4.00 PM

[Register](#) (OECD delegations)

[Register](#) (OECD Staff)

[Webcast](#)



[Charles Kenny](#)

Director of Technology and Development and Senior Fellow, Centre for Global Development

For four thousand years, the size and vitality of cities, economies, and empires were heavily determined by infection. Striking humanity in waves, the cycle of plagues set the tempo of civilisational growth and decline, since common response to the threat was exclusion—quarantining the sick or keeping them out. But the unprecedented hygiene and medical revolutions of the past two centuries have allowed humanity to free itself from the hold of epidemic cycles—resulting in an urbanised, globalised, and unimaginably wealthy world.

However, our development has lately become precarious. Climate and population fluctuations and aspects of our prosperity such as global trade have left us more vulnerable than ever to newly emerging plagues. Greater global co-operation toward sustainable health is urgently required—such as the international efforts to harvest a Covid-19 vaccine—with millions of lives and trillions of dollars at stake.

The Plague Cycle reveals the relationship between civilisation, globalisation, prosperity, and infectious disease over the past five millennia. It harnesses history, economics, and public health, and charts humanity’s remarkable progress, providing a timely look at the cyclical nature of infectious disease.

19 March 2021

THE FUTURE OF ECONOMICS - ROUNDTABLE

2.30 PM - 3.45 PM



This series brings together various organisations and individuals committed to debating new ways of understanding the economy and transforming economic thinking and acting. This series, running through 2021,

will attempt to establish the shared elements, definitions and goals of a new economic paradigm. It is not expected that speakers will always agree with each other, but the series will generate a balanced debate on the Future of Economics.

24-25 March 2021, Paris

FOURTH MEETING OF THE OECD-IIASA TASK FORCE



The [Strategic Partnership established by the OECD and the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis \(IIASA\)](#) has defined priorities including the formulation of systems-based strategies to address global issues, disseminating systems thinking through education and training, and extending the systems approach across the OECD.

April 2021, Toronto

SYSTEMIC RECOVERY: MODELLING AND ANALYSIS



A Joint NAEC-Fields Institute event to be held at the [Fields Institute for Research in Mathematical Sciences](#) (Toronto, Canada). "Systemic Recovery: modelling and analysis" will be preceded by an Industrial Problem Solving Workshop ([IPSW](#)), where groups work on a problem suggested by NAEC (e.g: comparison of policies - fiscal, monetary, public health - adopted by different countries and their effectiveness in [combating Covid versus helping the economy](#)) and present the results during the workshop. Topics will include: "financial and economic consequences of Covid" combined with lessons for a recovery that takes into account systemic issues (private debt, the nature of work, environmental impact, etc). Focus of the Fields event is on the successes (and possible limitations) of novel analytic approaches highlighted during the Covid crisis, to complement the focus of the NAEC conference in Paris on translating their insights into policy.

April 2021- Date TBC

A SYSTEMIC RECOVERY

3.30 PM - 6.00 PM



[Mark Carney](#)

United Nations Special Envoy for Climate Action Finance

The Covid pandemic has revealed fissures in the system which have been developing for a long time. The focus on economic recovery from the effects of Covid-19 should not blind us to the opportunity to do much more. We need to repair the damage to the natural environment and the climate system; to weave a new social fabric to replace the fraying one which we have allowed to develop and which has undermined the socio-political system; and finally, once this health and mental-health emergency is under control, we need to build a more resilient system to protect ourselves from such events in the future.

The design, operation and management of the economic system play a primordial role in dealing with these issues and new approaches are not only feasible but indispensable. This means going beyond the strategy put in place in response to the last crisis, based on bolting on additional issues of concern to our pre-crisis model, managing resulting policy trade-offs and promoting structural reforms in the hope that this will enable markets to self-organise in a way which increases growth and helps attain inclusiveness, sustainability etc.

The scale and scope of the existential problems we are facing are now evident. They are systemic and solving them will require rebuilding the whole system. This is the role of NAEC. Two years ago we looked at [Systemic Collapse](#). NAEC has since been [Confronting Planetary Emergencies](#) with some of the world's leading economists and will now facilitate a debate on policy approaches to develop the resilience necessary for a Systemic Recovery.

« **Systemic Recovery : Lessons from COVID-19, Modeling, Analysis, and Policy Implications** The Journal of Risk and Financial Management (JRFM) is advertising the event in a [Special Issue "Systemic Recovery: Lessons from COVID-19, Modeling, Analysis, and Policy Implications"](#)

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www.oecd.org/naec