

‘TAMA’ economics under siege in Brazil: the threats of curriculum governance reform

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Abstract

This article considers the curriculum framework governing economics teaching in Brazilian higher education. We assess economics teaching according to three criteria: its pluralism or monism regarding economic theory and method; its treatment of economics' wider socio-political dimensions; and its educational philosophical approach and goals. Against these criteria we conclude that Brazilian economics has been pluralist and open, particularly in comparison to other international governance frameworks. However, we argue that Brazil's prevailing *TAMA* – There Are Many Alternatives – framework is threatened by strong disciplinary, institutional and wider political pressures with both domestic and global roots. These forces may force Brazilian economics teaching to be less open, becoming more like the existing hegemonic approaches, such as those operating in Anglo/US systems. These changes partly reflect the neo-liberalization of higher education.

Key words: Brazilian higher education; economics teaching; pluralism; neo-liberalism; educational philosophy.

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Introduction

This article examines several threats to Brazil’s current approach to teaching economics – what we call ‘TAMA’ (There Are *Many* Alternatives) – which may force conformity with the dominant Anglo/US mainstream. International political economy (IPE) scholars, who stress the inseparable political nature of economics beyond the confines of a single state (Cohen, 2008), have long recognized the problems of disciplinary monism and, *inter alia*, argued for greater pluralism and interdisciplinarity to promote inclusiveness in the social sciences. Central to IPE is understanding the role of various empirical domains where social and political change can occur (Farrell & Newman, 2010; Seabrooke & Young, 2017). Higher education represents one of these domains that has been subject to a global policy agenda (Scherrer, 2005). Here, the retrenchment of the welfare state in education is identified by IPE, alongside privatization and the financialization of social life (Santos, 2017) as results of processes of neoliberalization. These processes are evident within disciplines and sub-disciplines in social science, including economics.

Economics teaching constitutes a significant enigma. It is functional to global capitalism, by aiding the inculcation of core ideas such as market supremacy. Yet it has faced a crisis of credibility. Critics of the discipline allege that it is closed, unresponsive to events, and even arrogant (Fourcade, et al., 2015), despite performing poorly in terms of

explanatory and predictive power or providing effective policy advice. The global financial crisis (GFC) of 2007-8 amplified these criticisms, triggering myriad calls for change in economics research and teaching. Prominent among these detractors were student protest groups such as Post-Crash Economics Society (2011), Rethinking Economics (2013) and ISIPE (2014); as well as educators (Reteaching Economics 2015). Earle et al. (2016) capture this discontent in a multi-criteria critique of undergraduate economics teaching, followed by three connected demands for change: greater pluralism of approach to economic theory and method; a clearer recognition of the wider socio-political nature of economics; and a commitment to liberal, rather than instrumental, education.

However, there is dispute whether economics has changed substantively, particularly in Anglo/US universities. Some, for example the Bank of England's chief economist Andy Haldane (2017), argue that new teaching frameworks 'capture the complexities of modern societies'. Others, though, regard them as merely defensive responses, reinforcing core *mainstream* theories and concepts of economics (Wren-Lewis, 2017), where the pretension to scientism and the narrowing of the discipline remains unchanged.

Mearman et al. (2018a, 2018b) argue that neither the much-trumpeted *CORE* (Curriculum Open-Access Resources in Economics) Project nor the revision of the official UK undergraduate economics curricular governance framework deliver change (see also Morgan, 2015): rather, they entrench dominant concepts and methods. Their analyses deploy three criteria for evaluating curricular reform. Specifically, they examined the extent of pluralism in economics teaching, its treatment of social and political aspects of

economics, and its underpinning educational philosophy. All three criteria connect to established strands of literature on economics education. Let us discuss these in turn.

The first evaluative criterion is whether curricular frameworks promote monism, or pluralism in economics. This criterion reflects criticisms of economics as being peculiar in social sciences as being dominated by a *mainstream*¹ (Fourcade et al., 2015). This mainstream has its origins in Anglo/US universities but is largely hegemonic globally. A typical mainstream textbook in the core curriculum will assume atomistically individual rational agents optimizing some objective function subject to constraints. These individuals can be aggregated unproblematically into generally amoral and indifferent equilibrium systems (Watson, 2018). All of this is best theorized using a type of mathematical formalism (Chick and Dow, 2001): mainstream economics insists on this approach (Lawson, 2003, et passim). Monism is seen by some as necessary for progress; however, this may be incorrect. Old or other ideas can re-appear and be regarded as useful again; for example, the ideas of Keynes and Minsky were (at least for some) rediscovered as economists struggled to explain or remedy the GFC. Monism may also not be sensible for teaching. It can be argued that a pluralist approach is better educationally (Freeman, 2009; Dow, 2009; Nelson, 2009; Mearman et al. 2011; Morgan, 2014).

These mainstream principles are replicated via the institutional structures and sociology of the profession (Payson, 2017). They are, for instance, embedded in research quality evaluation, which employs mainstream criteria of excellence. Hence, mainstream presuppositions, such as that individuals maximize some objective function, tend to be

¹ We acknowledge that this definition omits sociological elements such as having prestige and influence in academia; or the ability to attract funding (see Colander et al., 2004; Dequech, 2007); however, by abstracting from the sociological, we avoid potential confusion: for instance, avoiding different classifications of 'mainstream' in different sociocultural contexts when contrasting Brazil with Anglo/US academia.

obligatory; and mathematical modelling tends to be valued more highly than other forms of work. Citations follow the same conventions. Thus, when research quality uses citation analysis to evaluate publications, the bias is reinforced. Work by Lee and Cronin (2010) and Lee et al. (2013) suggest that these structures are narrowing economics. Thus, alternative, ‘heterodox’² theories and/or methods are marginalized. Research programs descending from seminal authors, such as Marx, Keynes, and Veblen are largely excluded or unacknowledged. Presently, then, there is an inherent mainstream monism in economics.

Our second evaluative criterion is the approach adopted by curricular frameworks to power, society, and ethics. One manifestation of monism, as identified by Earle et al. (2016), is a narrow treatment of the economy as a separate object. The scientism – or at least pretensions to scientism – of economics is also manifest in the maintenance of the ‘positive/normative’ or ‘is/ought’ distinction. Combined, these positions mean questions of ethics and politics are (effectively) dismissed³. Economics has thus gradually moved away from ‘political economy’: a term now used in the mainstream only to refer to a narrow set of questions. Questions of class, power and distribution have been side-lined by mainstream economics (Ozanne, 2016), providing an opportune foundation for the influence of neoliberalism into educational policies. There has been a shift away from the universal social process of nurturing capacities (Peters, 2012). Instead, we see the ‘technicization’ of knowledge: its commodification into saleable products (through

² This article understands *heterodox* economics as a collection of non-mainstream approaches, often meaning schools of thought including Post Keynesian economics; Feminist economics; Social economics; Institutional economics and Marxian/Marxist economics. For a discussion of ‘heterodox’ see Dequech (2007).

³ As Myrdal (1929) shows, this position is also inconsistent: whilst ethics is deemed external to economics, much of its material, particularly in microeconomics, smuggles in concepts from utilitarianism, and implicit notions that free market outcomes are ‘just’.

patents) and a pervasive testing system (Connell, 2013). These are reinforced both by the logic of the market and the imperialism of mainstream⁴ economics over educational policies.

Our third criterion is the approach(es) to educational philosophy either embedded or elaborated explicitly in curricular frameworks. Educational philosophy matters because the inherent narrowness of economics *could* be counteracted in its teaching were economists to adopt a liberal or critical approach to education. Instead, economics largely eschews explicit discussion of educational philosophy. Where elucidated, the approach tends to *instrumentalism*, i.e. economics programs as training to promote employability in the theories and tools of analysis, rather than being geared towards emancipation, autonomy or criticality. This contradicts, for instance, *critical* pedagogy, which recognizes the role of power in education in developing critical and political self-awareness as advocated by political economists (Bridges and Hartmann, 1975), including IPE scholars (Larrabure 2018).

Overall, then, economics teaching in Anglo/US systems is dominated by a mainstream, which excludes alternatives, demands an economics stripped of its social and political dimensions, emphasizes mathematical formalism, individualism and equilibrium, and prioritizes training individuals for the labor market. This nature reflects disciplinary conventions and wider cultural and political factors. The preferences and structures of the economics discipline are exacerbated by both the structures of universities and curriculum

⁴ Whilst mainstream economics is itself diverse and does not reflect the full range of neoliberal beliefs, there is sufficient shared ground between them to move economic education in tandem and in the same direction.

governance, and by the impacts of neoliberalism⁵ on higher education. These include, for example, organizing education around the conception of the individual as the competitive entrepreneur of the Self (Peters, 2012). Accordingly, education has moved forcibly from a universal public good to a ‘modest safety net’ that involves imposed user-charges (tuition fees), transforming students into ‘investors’ and ‘customers’ (Marginson, 2011). Similar to what has been suggested by Strange (1994) and Bakker & Gill (2003) regarding power-knowledge structures, this reproduces economists as social ideologues who serve the simultaneous function of social technicians, supported by ‘scientific knowledge’. Collectively, these ideologues advocate the teaching of mainstream approaches as uncontested critical knowledge. In economics teaching, a central mantra of neoliberalism is writ large: *There Is No Alternative (TINA)*.

This article develops the above analysis. In section 1 it examines the curricular framework governing undergraduate economics teaching in Brazilian higher education according to the criteria discussed above. We find that Brazilian economics teaching has been historically a bastion of a pluralist and broad understanding of economics informed by a commitment to liberal/critical education (Dequech, 2018; Fernandez and Suprinyak, 2016), reflecting a strong presence of the state in educational design (Ban, 2013). It may then be characterized as *TAMA* – There Are *Many* Alternatives.

In section 2, though, we show that the system is threatened by disciplinary, institutional and political changes, some reflecting a neo-liberalization of higher education as an indication of the failure of neo-developmentalism, and others suggesting the tensions

⁵ We are aware that in the literature a distinction is drawn between neoliberalism as a diverse political movement or ‘thought collective’ and as a mode of production or phase of capitalism. (Fine et al., 2016 and Mirowski, 2016 for a discussion of both aspects) We take the view that neoliberalism embodies elements of both. We use the term accordingly throughout the paper.

in the regulatory system between undergraduate and postgraduate levels. As such, its traditionally acknowledged *TAMA* approach to economics teaching is imperiled, being shifted closer towards less open, *TINA* modes.

1. Economics teaching in Brazil

In this section we analyze the Brazilian curricular governance framework for economics undergraduate programs. First, we consider the process by which the governance framework is constructed, reformed and implemented. The first set of Brazil's curricular guidelines emerged in 1984 (Resolution 11/84). They are reviewed periodically. The most recent set was implemented in July 2007, after ten years of discussion by a panel drawn from institutions involved in the different activities of economists. These include national associations for undergraduate (ANGE) and graduate programs (ANPEC), as well as the councils that regulate the profession of the economist: the Federal Council of Economists (COFECON) and its regional divisions (CORECONs). The panel includes two main types of experts: faculty members from private and public higher education institutions; and professional economists that work as special consultants for the Ministry of Education (Cadernos ANGE, 2010). The direct involvement of the Ministry in the process is unusual among nations.

The Ministry publishes a legally enforceable Resolution (Resolution 04/2007). It outlines the six main curricular guidelines for the economics curriculum: (1) *basic educational principles*; (2) *desired profile of the Bachelor*; (3) *political-pedagogical project*; (4) *assessments system*; (5) *total course load* and (6) *curricular content*. These

guidelines effectively establish the pedagogical parameters for economics undergraduate degrees. These include minimum requirements for each teaching module, such as articulating minimum teaching hours for each undergraduate level; and expected learning outcomes. The guidelines thus provide a national curriculum and prescribe certain teaching and assessment practices. Because the Resolution is legally enforceable, the guidelines must be followed by all public and private institutions wishing to offer economics courses. These features necessarily give the process, and hence the guidelines, considerable force, which can be an advantage or a disadvantage for *TAMA* economics, depending on the political orientation in power.

1.1 Pluralism

A striking contrast can be made between the relatively monist character of Anglo/US economics teaching and that found in Brazil. Pluralism of thought is common in the country's top-level economics departments, which display a wide array of theoretical traditions, *inter alia* mainstream, Post Keynesian, evolutionary, Marxian, Veblenian institutionalist, structuralist, and Sraffian. Similar diversity is also present in Brazilian journals, awards, research grants, and other symbols of academic prestige. Moreover, rather than being a necessary compromise, pluralism in Brazilian economics appears to be a value widely shared within the scientific community; a commitment to diversity and tolerance that is enshrined, for instance, in the Ministry of Education guidelines (Fernandez and Suprinyak, 2016).

For example, the guidelines specify pluralism as one of the main requirements for higher education institutions wishing to offer an economics degree. Clause II of Resolution 04/2007 requires ‘methodological pluralism in coherence with the plural character of economic science, which is constituted by different schools of thought and paradigms’. Thus, Clause II recognizes the theoretical complexity of economics and its plural character. This can be seen, for instance, with the inclusion of compulsory modules on history of economic thought and political economy, as well as optional modules in economic methodology, ethics and philosophy of economics in the curriculum⁶.

Clause II is a much stronger statement than that found, for example, in the UK’s governance framework, that ‘[v]arious interpretations of commonly observed economic phenomena exist, and hence explanations may be contested’ (QAAHE 2015, section 1.2): it legally compels universities to adopt a pluralist approach to theory and to method. Furthermore, the Resolution decrees that only twenty per cent of the minimum module requirements are explicitly set aside for ‘theoretical-quantitative training’, which includes advanced topics in *inter alia* mathematics, statistics, and econometrics, but also political economy and socio-economic development. Hence, there is ample opportunity within this framework for students to take scientific methodology and research methods courses before doing their own research. This is significant because it problematizes method rather than assuming one set of tools (usually quantitative) is superior or more scientific. Again, then, the framework challenges the norms found in Anglo/US systems.

⁶ See for instance the curricular guidelines of the University of São Paulo (<https://www.fea.usp.br/economia/graduacao/estrutura-curricular/diurno>), the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro (<http://www.ie.ufrj.br/index.php/graduacao/curriculo>) and the University of Minas Gerais (<https://www.face.ufmg.br/graduacao/ciencias-economicas/o-curso.html>).

The factors underpinning Brazil's pluralism are part historical, part institutional. Mantega (1997) identifies two channels that allowed such tolerance to develop. First is the influence of Keynesian and Marxist Latin American economists in the United Nations Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) during the 1950s and 1960s. ECLAC was greatly influenced by Latin American economists, such as Argentinian Raul Prebisch and Brazilian Celso Furtado, who advocated core structuralist ideas such as *center-periphery dynamics* and the concept of *terms of trade deterioration* (Bielschowsky, 2014), which proposed underdevelopment not as a stage of development, but a structural condition. These economists played a significant role in the creation of modern Brazil (see Furtado 1965; De Paula and Ferrari, 2012). Hence their ideas became accepted.

Second, structuralist ideas were embraced as part of the military government's (1964-1985) interventionist-nationalist strategy to develop the Brazilian economy. It adopted an 'authoritarian-developmental' ideology that proposed to overcome the country's underdevelopment through a state-led strategy of capital accumulation in the industrial sector (Malini, 2016). That allowed interventionist schools of thought with Keynesian and Marxist backgrounds to exist in Brazil as a form of 'tolerated pluralism'. In some Departments of Economics (such as in the University of Campinas), left-wing faculty members (and their views) were tolerated (Dequech quoted in Mearman et al., 2019), creating room for some dissent against the military government. These conditions produced a commitment to diversity among Brazilian economists (Fernandez and Suprinyak, 2016).

Foreign institutions also played an important role in enabling pluralism in Brazilian economics. The Ford Foundation created an institutional space for economic research in Brazil in the 1960s, allowing different ideological clusters to coexist (Fernandez and

Suprinyak, 2014). Specifically, the Foundation channeled its support into institutions that could produce specialized knowledge outside the confines of state bureaucracies, playing a strategic role in stimulating new areas of economics research, such as funding pro-development projects. It also allowed postgraduate programs in economics to flourish, partly by sponsoring the creation of ANPEC, Brazil's national association of centers for postgraduate economics. Whilst ANPEC has pursued some pluralism at postgraduate level, higher degrees of pluralism have been pursued by its undergraduate equivalent (ANGE), as well as Brazil's professional regulatory councils (COFECON, CORECONs). Collectively, these created a foundation for pluralism throughout Brazilian economics.

1.2 Approach to economy/society

Above, we claimed that economics curricula in the Anglo/US model exclude specific discussion of ethics and politics and ignore real interconnections between society and 'the economy'. Consequently, economics curricula focus on honing theoretical and mathematical expertise and spend relatively little time studying the real economy. Brazilian undergraduate economics curricula appear rather different. The Brazilian guidelines contain clear requirements for 'realism' and for the study of the Brazilian economy. Resolution Clause I demands 'a commitment to the study of the Brazilian reality without impairing a solid theoretical, historical and instrumental education' (Resolution 04/2007, p. 2, our translation). Moreover, Article 5 refers specifically to 'the...principles of economic history and Brazilian economic history' (Resolution 04/2007, p. 3, our translation). Hence, the guidelines recognize the foundational importance of understanding

the state and history of the Brazilian economy. Modules that account for this specific content, such as *Brazilian economics*, or *Brazilian economic history* are compulsory in all economics courses (Cadernos ANGE, 2010). Whilst the guidelines discuss ‘the economy’, concomitantly, they stress the interrelations between economy and society. Clause III of Resolution 04/2007 notes that recognizing this connection is a core element in forming socially-aware economists. Moreover, Clause IV puts special ‘emphasis on fostering ethical attitudes and reasoning, which are crucial to professionalism and social responsibility’ (Resolution 04/2007, p. 2, our translation). It recognizes an inherent ethical dimension to society – a facet largely absent in the dominant Anglo/US frameworks. The emphasis on history and ethics also suggest an interdisciplinary approach to economics. The 2007 Resolution stipulates that at least thirty per cent of the minimum module requirements involve historical, philosophical or social training. The structure of the framework makes it likely that students will face deep exposure to political aspects. Consequently, Brazilian economics graduates are informed and reflexive citizens whose practice is grounded by a broad understanding of the economy and society.

This particular facet of the Brazilian system has three structural drivers. The first is that Brazil’s military dictatorship in 1964 approached public higher education differently. Unlike the McCarthyist crusade against left-wing ideas and ‘propaganda’ at universities in the USA after World War 2, Brazil’s military government adopted an approach to ‘tolerance and moderation’ in universities, suggesting an ambiguity in the regime (Motta, 2014). Further, it viewed higher education as an important part of its economic development program: specifically, to improve human capital to achieve structural change in the economy (Skidmore, 1988). This led to Brazil’s contemporary model of higher

education, still mainly characterized as ‘Napoleonic’, based on direct state control over higher education institutions and disciplines (Le Freuve and Metso, 2005).

Second, the Brazilian approach to the economy and society may also reflect the nation’s strategy in the 1960s to build a modern and fully integrated national state that understood higher education as core to the shaping of a national identity. This led to an emphasis on *Brazilian* history, geography, economy, literature and language in education (Bethell, 2005), while endeavoring to bring the country’s regional diversity and inequalities into the teaching of economics. This aspect of teaching is, therefore, another manifestation of Brazil’s pluralist economics. Crucially, economics undergraduate degrees in Brazil spread across in the beginning of the 1950s in public universities (federal and state), coinciding with the expansion of the national academic system.

Third, educationalists such as Anísio Teixeira and Paulo Freire changed the views of how education was conceived within Brazilian society (Saviani, 2005; Assunção, 2014). Teixeira saw education as a renovation process in which the school is ‘a replica of the society it should serve’ (Teixeira 1968, p. 42, our translation), questioning the traditional role of education as an elite pursuit and supporting the expansion of public education as a human right. Freire’s Marxist-inspired ideas saw the university as a locus of social, cultural and economic transformation, highlighting the creation of a social ethos as the ultimate purpose of education (Freire, 1970 and 1996). Accordingly, universities still play an important social role in the country’s socioeconomic development, particularly on intergenerational social mobility and inequality reduction (Bustelo et al., 2017). In summary, Brazil’s higher education is still largely seen as a public and merit good, which in a *TAMA* approach means resisting the tendencies of utility maximization and

instrumental egoistic behaviors inherent to mainstream economic theory. Rather, it emphasizes good citizenship. This also reflects a different set of educational goals from those evident in Anglo/US systems, as presented in the following section.

1.3 Educational approach and goals

Cited in section 1.2, Clause I of the Resolution included reference to ‘an instrumental education’. This reference is immediately significant, being a specific statement of educational philosophy. Clearly, there is some concern in the guidelines that economics graduates are equipped to do useful work. As it will be noted in section 2, pressure in this direction is growing. Additionally, it is clear that the Brazilian framework could be said to have *instrumentalist* aspects, for instance by being aligned to a specific vision of society.

The guidelines make many more such philosophical references. Item 2 of the 2007 Resolution outlined the desired profile of economics graduates, referring to ‘a capacity [of the economics graduate] to assimilate and comprehend new information, intellectual flexibility and adaptability, as well as a solid social conscience’ and ‘a broad cultural base that allows the understanding of economic issues in its historical-social context’ (Resolution 04/2007, p. 2, our translation). This suggests an orientation towards both a *liberal* and a *critical* perspective of the purpose of education, mainly influenced by Teixeira (1968) and Freire’s (1970) pedagogical project of awakening an independent, critical consciousness through investigation. Reinforcing our arguments in section 1.2, it

acknowledges the socio-political dimension of economics, including ethics, culture and a social conscience as characteristics of a critical and free economist.

That perspective reflects the institutional-historical context of Brazil's post-military educational guidelines, which includes both *liberal* and *critical* principles that deploy 'the pluralism of ideas and pedagogical practices', as well as 'the links between education, work, and social practices' that 'acknowledge [...] social-ethnic diversity' (National Education Bill n. 9394, 1996, our translation). They were influenced by Freire's pedagogical theory which envisioned education as a tool to overcome social oppression and economic inequality (see *inter alia* Xavier and Szymanski, 2015). As a São Paulo state secretary of Education (1989-1992), Freire focused on improving youth and adult education, proposing a 'public-popular educational model' under core pillars – one that would later be followed by other federal states and national curriculum guidelines. These pillars included, for instance: (i) a collective decision-making process for new curricular guidelines involving the participation of different social and economic groups; (ii) the recognition of the autonomous and democratic role of education that enables social diversity and pluralism of thought; and (iii) the inclusion of a theoretical-practical curricular unit that could educate through practice (Saul and Silva, 2009).

We cannot claim that the above identifies *the* efficient cause; however, it is evident that the bodies regulating Brazilian economic education take a radically different approach to their task than do their Anglo/US counterparts. We have already outlined how the government legally enforceable framework, laid out mainly in Resolution 04/2007, lays out requirements for a more open approach. Furthermore, the professional regulatory bodies, the Federal Council of Economists (COFECON) and its regional divisions

(CORECONs) follow suit. Instead of focusing exclusively on the technical rigor and analytical proficiency of economists, COFECON aims to:

Contribute to the socioeconomic development of the nation and ensure the legal and ethical exercise of the economics profession (...) serving as a reference as a professional entity that decisively contributes to the economic development with social justice (COFECON, 2017 our translation).

Taken collectively, the points here (section 1) suggest several systemic differences in educational philosophy between Brazil's *TAMA* approach and *TINA* frameworks elsewhere. The Brazilian system explicitly outlines the desired profile of an economics graduate. At the end of his/her studies, the graduate should have been exposed to a political-pedagogical project, which includes studies in political economy, ethics, history and an expectation to develop a social conscience. There is a danger that such a program is one of indoctrination; however, the graduate is also exposed to a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches, which suggests a commitment to open-mindedness and flexibility. Thus, the system is designed to create open, flexible, socially-oriented citizens, also offering a broader positive role of educators in society, rather than mere instructors.

Whilst there is no guarantee that students in this system will emerge as planned – indeed, the nature of openness is that they may not – it is designed to produce a different type of graduate than are those in Anglo/US *TINA* systems. In the latter, graduates are *trained*: they bring relevant skills to the workplace and demonstrates technical proficiency. The nature of the *TAMA* graduate ought to be different. Morgan (2014, p. 16) proposes the informed student, one who is empowered to understand the wider spectrum of economic

discourse and its relevance to politics, enabling him/her as citizen of a democracy. Similarly, one might think of these graduates as ‘educated’, a la liberal principles. Moreover, drawing on Freire, the graduate is awakened, conscious and active. The Brazilian system might even be said to contribute to the *Bildung* of students, i.e.:

The process of developing critical consciousness and of character-formation, self-discovery, knowledge in the form of contemplation or insight, an engagement with questions of truth, value and meaning (Vasquez-Levy 2002, p. 118-9).

Clearly such a program is ambitious; but it may also be fragile.

2. Threats to Brazil’s *TAMA* system

This section outlines how Brazil’s *TAMA* system is currently threatened from several directions: first, by the dynamics of the economics discipline inside and outside Brazil. Despite the challenge of the GFC to its credibility, the structures and practices of the economics discipline have remained robust. They manifest in particular standards for research quality, and thereby hiring and funding decisions, which in turn create pressure for curricular conformity. This often comes though postgraduate teaching. Ironically, in the Brazilian case, some of the threat to its *TAMA* system, comes from existing tensions within it, specifically from regulatory differences between undergraduate and postgraduate curriculum frameworks.

Further, these disciplinary threats are reinforced by (second) institutional and (third) political challenges that Brazil currently faces in the light of a right-wing

presidential victory. Collectively (to different degrees) they might be identified with a neo-liberalization of higher education. It appears as another example of Mirowski's (2013) thesis that crises are instrumentalized by neoliberals to further marketize the social realm.

2.1 Disciplinary threat

The establishment of Brazil's *TAMA* system reflects a multi-causal process that combines different historical, institutional and cultural elements. These elements allowed strong educational policies that enabled the manifestation of pluralism and critical pedagogy in economics education. Nevertheless, the system also exhibits tensions rooted in internal differences between undergraduate and postgraduate education. These differences have coexisted for some time; however, they become problematic under particular conditions. Specifically, like many countries, economics in Brazil increasingly conforms with the type of economics favored by US universities. This shift brings new disciplinary norms, processes and expectations, including those around research quality evaluation, hiring and funding. Combined, these represent a powerful channel where *TINA* ideology can enter the system.

In Brazilian postgraduate economics education, regulatory curricular guidelines from the Ministry of Education are looser than for undergraduate programs. Crucially, the requirements which underpin pluralism in the latter are missing for the former. Instead, postgraduate regulations focus on contact time, minimum credit requirements and guidelines for the submission of dissertations and theses. In terms of content, postgraduate curricula in economics tend to meet the minimum requirements established by ANPEC

(Brazil's national association of postgraduate centers), which define a core structure composing quantitative methods, microeconomics, macroeconomics and Brazilian economics.

Differently from undergraduate provision, this curricular framework is not legally enforced by the Ministry of Education. Nonetheless, for historical and institutional reasons most Masters and PhD programs in economics tend to follow ANPEC's recommendations. These reasons include apparently practical concerns to homogenize the learning outcomes and technical expectations (including scholarly research) of economics graduates; however, also evident is the historical influence of certain economics departments in setting the postgraduate agenda (Fernandez and Suprinyak, 2016). These dominant departments therefore influence curricula. They also control the entrance examination all candidates for postgraduate study must take – ANPEC's National Admission Test, affecting the composition of the intake. Thus, the orientation of these leading departments partly determines whether the postgraduate curriculum is as pluralist as the undergraduate one. Here, crucially, wider disciplinary concerns affect postgraduate curricula.

In this context, a key driver of change in Brazil's academia is the quest for 'prestige', which is associated with international recognition. That, in turn, usually is measured by 'research quality', which, similarly, implies publishing in internationally recognized journals. Here, a crucial role is played by journal rankings, such as the Diamond List or the Association of Business Schools (ABS) list, which denote the 'top' journals, containing the 'top' research.

Now, internationalization of knowledge is not harmful *per se*; however, in two respects internationalization of economics research is not value-free. First, most 'top'

journals are Anglo/US. Thus, 'top' research is that countenanced by the 'top' US institutions. Second, in economics, most highly-ranked international journals (and their editorial boards) are also mainstream (Baccini, 2018). Thus, collectively they embody ontological and methodological assumptions and norms that prescribe the type of research questions asked, and which methods are 'appropriate'. Thus, academic research represents a system of knowledge production aimed at highly ranked journals dedicated to formal economic modelling and mainstream axioms (full rationality, utility maximization and equilibrium). Hence, the ranking lists constitute a self-referencing system via which mainstream economics maintains itself as (in Kuhnian terms) the dominant paradigm. In economics, then, seeking internationally acclaimed research implies narrowing down possible questions, approaches and theories explored in economics that are considered to be relevant, or even scientific. As observed by Lee (2009), the existence of rankings lists for academic journals represents a challenge for the plurality of academic research. More broadly, the ranking mechanisms support a transnational hierarchy of knowledge production, one that carries the built-in biases of mainstream economics in favor of a US hegemony (Wade, 2009) to the detriment of peripheral economies. That hierarchy is manifest in various dimensions of the discipline.

One of the major barriers to pluralist teaching is that potential teachers are recruited on the basis of their research potential. This barrier has been noted both by critical, or heterodox economists (see Clarke and Mearman, 2003; Kapeller, 2018), and by mainstream economists (Heckman and Moktan, 2018) as an issue of the sociology of the discipline. Again, journal rankings play a crucial role. Whilst, officially, the expert panels who assess research quality do not use these lists, economics departments hire *as if* the

panels do. Thus, only institutions which hire scholars publishing or expected to publish in Anglo/US mainstream economics journals can fund research. This affects directly the composition of economics departments. This threatens their *desire* and *ability* to teach pluralist economics; or indeed sub-disciplines such as the history of economic thought. Thus, pluralist elements of curricula are threatened.

We can see these dynamics manifest in Brazil. Here, widely supported calls for increased prestige, i.e., greater international recognition, are reflected in shifts in Brazil's research quality assessment guidelines, which are increasingly mimicking an Anglo/US approach. The CAPES Research Foundation and the Brazilian Ministry of Education employ their own journal ranking procedure, *Qualis Capes*⁷, to measure the quality of academic publications, via which Brazilian scholars are subject to rules that lead them to publish according to the standards determined by CAPES (Fernandes & Manchini, 2019).

As anticipated above, in economics this journal ranking system is not benign (cf. Dequech, 2018).

According to Almeida et al. (2017), 15% of the *Qualis* highest strata (A1/A2) is composed by heterodox publications. Notably it is more permissive than the influential ABS list. Whilst the *Qualis* includes most heterodox journals in its ranking⁸, in the ABS list only (at most) five journals that accept heterodox work (or less than 6 per cent)⁹ are

⁷ The CAPES Research Foundation (Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel) is a body within Brazil's Ministry of Education whose central purpose is to coordinate efforts to improve the quality of Brazil's faculty and staff in higher education through grant programs. CAPES is particularly concerned with the training of Doctoral candidates, Pre-doctoral short-term researchers, and Post-doctoral Scholars (Institute of International Education, 2017).

⁸ [Scientific journals are ranked as follows: A1 \(highest stratum\); A2; B1-B5; and C \(lowest stratum\). For a list of heterodox journals, see Lee and Cronin \(2010\).](#)

⁹ Cambridge Journal of Economics; Ecological Economics; Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization; Journal of Institutional Economics and Oxford Economics Papers (ABS List, 2015).

listed as an internationally leading economics journal (ranked as 3*/4*) (Cronin, 2010; Stockhammer et al., 2017). That suggests a slightly more open attitude towards heterodox economics journals than Anglo/US systems. However, the proportion is *only* 15%, meaning that the *Qualis* still lends considerably more weight to mainstream journals rather than prioritizing pluralism. Thus, whilst heterodox economists occupying leading positions in the most prestigious academic institutions in the country (see Dequech, 2018; Almeida et al., 2017) suggests pluralism, the *Qualis* is likely to push (or allow) Brazilian departments to become more mainstream.

Additionally, the *Qualis* exhibits a clear bias towards Anglo/US journals and editorial boards at its highest strata rather than lending more space to Brazilian or Latin American publications. (Carneiro, 2011; Almeida et al., 2017 and Fernandes & Manchini, 2019). For instance, economics journals listed as A1 (scholarly outstanding) are dominated by US (42.86%), UK (28.57%) and Dutch (28.57%) origins, whereas their editorial boards also exhibit a dominance of US scholars (53%), followed by the UK (13.8%) (Fernandes & Manchini, 2019). These statistics suggest that Brazilian journals, and hence a distinct national flavor to Brazilian economic research, are threatened in comparison to international journals that have a taste for more mainstream methods or non-peripheral research articles. Overall, the *Qualis* institutionalizes a strict preference towards allegedly more prestigious foreign and *mainstream* journals over national and heterodox publications. Further, the *Qualis* for economics is considerably more rigid compared to other disciplines, as it allows very little space for non-specialized journals outside economics (Fernandes & Manchini, 2019), narrowing the possibilities of pluralism within research assessments for Brazilian economists. Consequently, the adoption of journal

rankings is likely to undermine the core principles of a critical *TAMA* approach to economics teaching, as it stimulates economics academics to publish abroad rather than domestically, also punishing those who prefer to prioritize Brazilian journals.

As discussed, these processes will likely to also affect hiring practices, thereby further reducing the autonomy of Brazilian economics departments. Brazil adopts a points-based system as determined by the Federal Government (Law n. 12772, 2012) to recruit candidates. Even though departments may have different internal dynamics and some degree of freedom to modify the selection process (such as external examiners and exam questions for candidates), hiring structures for civil servants are homogenous across public universities, and their main guidelines remain as determined by federal and state governments. Part of this process is a *CV memorial* comprising the candidate's track record of publications and other scholarly activities, in which publications in A1/A2 journals are awarded higher points. Furthermore, in Brazil's *Qualis* system, economics denotes a relatively low (to other disciplines) proportion of journals as being top-quality publications (Barata, 2016). Only 11.3% of economics journals are classified as A1/A2, in comparison to, for instance Business & Management (21.2%) and Political Science (15.9%). Ironically, by being in thrall to Anglo/US journals, Brazilian economists have disadvantaged themselves relative to other disciplines.

These dynamics of how academic research in economics is sponsored and regulated will likely affect how postgraduate programs in economics are taught. One mechanism is through funding. Postgraduate programs are ranked between grade 3 (recently implemented, or locally recognized program) and 7 (high-quality, internationally recognized program) by the CAPES Foundation and the Ministry of Education. These

rankings then determine the amount of funding for research and teaching activities each program receives annually. A crucial factor in these rankings is research quality, as measured by the *Qualis*. Postgraduate programs whose staff achieve what are deemed outstanding publications (A1/A2) will receive additional research funding. Thus effectively, the *Qualis* is also used to assess the overall quality of postgraduate programs.

Collectively, these changes, allied with existing efforts to produce so-called high-quality and internationally-acclaimed economic knowledge, suggest profound shifts in postgraduate economics. Some are already evident. Highly ranked universities, such as the University of São Paulo (USP) and the Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro (PUC-RJ) have a strictly mainstream curriculum in their Masters and PhD levels¹⁰ (Mathematics, Econometrics, Neoclassical Micro- and Macroeconomics). Overall, these characteristics, seemingly small technical differences, make postgraduate curricula significantly less pluralist than before, and relative to undergraduate schema. This suggests a tension between the two parts of Brazil's economics education: *TAMA* at undergraduate and *TINA* at postgraduate.

Further, the dynamics of research quality, hiring and funding suggest that postgraduate economics in Brazil will become more mainstream as mainstream departments are better rewarded; and they hire people trained in the mainstream, unwilling and unable to teach pluralistically. Consequently, it is less likely that wider social, ethical and political dimensions of economics would be considered. Thus, any narrowing of

¹⁰ The list of Postgraduate course requirements from these universities can be accessed at: <http://www.portalfea.fea.usp.br/economia/pos-graduacao/disciplinas?area=12138> (University of São Paulo's Postgraduate Programme in Economic Theory) and <http://www.econ.puc-rio.br/index.php/categoria/posgraduacao> (Pontifícia Universidade Católica do Rio de Janeiro's Postgraduate Programme in Economics).

economics will threaten *TAMA* in terms of two of our evaluative criteria: pluralism and the broader treatment of economics as a social or moral science.

Overall, then, it seems clear that Brazil's pluralist economics is under disciplinary threat from movements towards *TINA* economics. These movements echo shifts most obvious, perhaps, in Anglophone countries such as the UK and Australia; and in *inter alia* Germany and Italy (Grimm et al., 2018; Corsi et al., 2018). These disciplinary shifts are sufficient grounds for concern; however, they become worrisome when combined with graver, systematic institutional and political threats within Brazil. For, the institutional changes offer no resistance to disciplinary threats – indeed, they deepen them by prioritizing instrumental education. Moreover, whereas before, when a benign political sphere (including the military dictatorship) helped resist disciplinary threats, now the political direction *reinforces* the institutional threats. So, collectively they reinforce, not resist, the disciplinary threats. These processes are outlined in sections 2.2 and 2.3.

2.2 Institutional threat

Changes in research funding are not quirks of economics; rather, they should be thought of as manifestations of neoliberalism (Chubb and Watermeyer, 2017). Namely, the ability to secure private research funding (Moura and Camargo, 2017) replaces public funding for higher education institutions. Hence, they reflect broader pushes toward privatization.

Following the neoliberal restructuring of Brazilian universities between the early-1990s and mid-2000s, these institutions adopted a set of pro-market policies, opening up

the public sector to private interests and profitmaking (Robertson and Verger 2012; Ordorika and Lloyd, 2015). It also witnessed the expansion of private higher education institutions via, for instance, political lobbying between policy institutions such as the Inter-American Development Bank and regional networks that support privatization of education (Shiroma, 2014). Consequently, here as elsewhere there has been a progressive cognitive capture of government by private corporations (for the US context see Mirowski, 2013). In research, universities were stimulated to form strategic alliances with international research agencies and secure external research funding. Additionally, Brazil's higher education institutions have been criticized for exhibiting weaknesses in technical knowledge, in particular in science and innovation (Suzigan and Albuquerque, 2011). As discussed above, one response to this perceived failure is a push for the internationalization of knowledge via information dissemination (such as scholarly publications). This, for educationalists, has implied the adoption of certain imperatives – for instance, a standardized curriculum that ignores regional disparities, inequalities and local constraints (Gyamera and Burke, 2018). More generally, the Brazilian system began to exhibit the characteristic neoliberal *ethos* of a focus on efficiency in quality assurance and accountability (Hostins, 2015). This has led to, for instance, the recruitment of economists and businessmen as educational decision-makers.

These moves toward neoliberalization of higher education are also clearly evident in pressures on curricular design. Universities face increasing calls to develop links between pro-profit industries and businesses to support new instrumental educational goals. This force is deemed justified by standard neoliberal employability requirements and the impression that economists lack soft employability skills when compared to, for

instance, Business & Management or Finance graduates (Macedo, 2016). Hence, in an attempt to respond to the demands from business, marketing and financial sectors to make students more employable and economically literate, some economics curricula focus increasingly on technical and mathematical skills and market-centered theory. For instance, Brazilian private universities such as the FGV/São Paulo School of Economics offer an economics undergraduate degree that mimics the main aspects of the instrumental Anglo/US model as raised by Earle et al. (2016). It combines core modules in economic modelling for policy evaluations, principles of corporate finance for utilities and computational methods for finance whilst equipping students with ‘what they need in today’s competitive job market to meet employers’ requirements’, such as the inclusion of pedagogical ‘innovations’ of active learning and PBL (problem-based learning) as a way for learners to be able to apply economic models in real-world situations (FGV, 2018).

Many of these for-profit private higher education institutions in Brazil are part of large business groups, mainly founded on the Anglo-American model of education and research as responsive to market needs (McCowan, 2004). Unlike the Freirean model of pedagogy as a transformative process, private institutions reinforce the instrumental model of education, in which students are trained to attend the demands of the labor market instead of developing a critical and ethical sense of the role of economics in society. Here they convey that the primary purpose of higher education is employability (see *inter alia* McCowan, 2015). Universities and higher education degrees are largely conceived within Brazilian society as an instrument for social mobility – for students, undertaking a higher education degree is framed largely as a means of becoming more employable: going to

higher education can increase an individual's future earnings by up to three times (PNAD, 2017).

Reflecting the view of university as promoting social mobility, student concerns for their future employability have also had an impact. A large share (80%) of economics graduates are absorbed by the private sector (Vieira Filho, 2010), notably firms or banking/financial institutions, which tend to demand more applied, technical and flexible forms of teaching economics, including business and financial analysis. These demands can be seized on by interested groups. For example, a recent manifesto issued by Brazil's Liberal Institute (2017) questioned the failure of COFECON/CORECONs to make economics undergraduates more employable. This advocacy of greater 'flexibility' in regulating the profession of the economist, is a direct attack on the power of the COFECONs/CORECONs. This is significant because the role of COFECONs/CORECONs in regulating the profession of economist, one which is only open to holders of an economics diploma, is enshrined in Brazilian law (Oliveira, 2017). Indeed, the COFECON/CORECONs legislation has remained the main legal source for the economics profession in Brazil since its implementation in 1951 (COFECON Resolution, 1.1 2004). Thus, the Institute's criticism exemplifies how neoliberalization includes direct threats to the very institutions which have been responsible for maintaining Brazil's *TAMA* curricular guidelines. Once again, these threats are exacerbated by wider political shocks.

2.3 Political threat

Brazil's higher education system bears the fingerprints of political influence, particularly in terms of curricular benchmarks and funding policies. After struggling with drastic budgetary cuts during the 1990s as part of the Washington Consensus agenda that compromised its teaching and research excellence (Michelotto et al., 2006), Brazilian universities went through major restructuring programs during the 2000s that followed a neo-developmental approach of reinserting the state within national development (Ban, 2013). During the mandates of Lula (2003-2011) and Dilma Rousseff (2011-2016), substantial public investment drove Brazil's higher education system to expand, generating an expansion of the number of institutions and faculty. Consequently, the number of undergraduate economics programs in public universities expanded, reaching 67 across the country in 2017 (E-MEC, 2017). Further, a revision of all curricular guidelines led to the pluralist undergraduate curriculum framework being solidified.

Nevertheless, it is possible to see a shift in the role of the state and its treatment of the economics discipline, which constitutes a political threat to the current pluralist curriculum. In section 2.1, we showed how Brazil's military government tolerated economic pluralism as part of its developmentalist strategy. Now, however, the economic and political crises that followed Rousseff's impeachment post-2016 may impose a change to Brazil's *TAMA* framework. A primary cause of this change involves austerity measures and budgetary restrictions to all public-funded universities. As Siqueira and Rocha emphasize (2017), in the face of Brazil's current economic recession, federal, state, and municipal governments are implementing austerity policies that compromise how the educational system is run. In December 2016, the federal government approved a law (PEC 95) that freezes public investments on science, technology, innovation, education, and

health care for the next twenty years, severely affecting the country's production of knowledge. Additional austerity measures approved by president Jair Bolsonaro include a 42% cut in the country's R&D budget (Angelo, 2019), crippling Brazil's scientific development, as spending on infrastructure, personnel and studentships are drastically reduced. For economics, this may represent a change in how pluralist research is funded, as the government can restrict access to funding in some areas arbitrarily, or even impose new teaching guidelines across universities by approving new laws that could change the existing 2007 Resolution. Bolsonaro's intentions to withdraw funds from philosophy and sociology programs to focus on disciplines such as engineering and medicine that generate an 'immediate return' (perhaps via job training) to taxpayers may suggest a similar path (Redden, 2019). The fact that, as discussed in section 2.2, large business conglomerates act as stakeholders in the country's educational system suggests a political threat insofar as the rules of the game can be changed through lobbying. Changes to the funding system could risk academic freedom and pluralism of thought insofar as it makes universities vulnerable to political interests, manipulation and control (Cole, 2015).

Furthermore, as noted above, one of the strengths of the Brazilian governance framework is that it is supported by parliamentary acts, rendering it legally enforceable. This strength is, though, simultaneously a vulnerability. If the government decides to impose a mainstream curriculum – particularly if paired with a sanctioned research assessment framework and/or budgetary restrictions – the profession is under pressure to conform; or it may lack the capacity to resist. In this case, higher education leaders need to educate the public about the role of universities in society, which also represents a

challenge given Brazil's historical association of universities with political and economic elites (Schwartzman, 2006).

A report published by the World Bank (2017) illustrates the previous points, and the symptoms of the political threat Brazil is currently facing. The report examines the efficiency and equity of Brazil's public expenditure in the face of an economic and political crisis after a request of the federal government, 'searching for alternatives to reduce the country's public deficit without jeopardizing the social achievements in the last decades' (2017, p. 1, our translation). The report claims Brazil's public higher education system is 'highly inefficient, where *circa* 50% of the financial resources could be saved'; *and* 'regressive', that is, contributing to increasing inequality, thus evidencing the 'necessity to introduce a system of tuition fees in public universities to richer households and to expand student loans programs' (p. 121, our translation).

The World Bank's intervention seemingly misrepresents the Brazilian status quo, depicting it via an ideological agenda in favor of private provisions. The World Bank's approach is problematic generally, as it presupposes that (i) most students enrolled in Brazilian public universities belong to high income households; and (ii) private universities represent a successful model of efficiency when compared to public institutions. The first point fails to address the improvements made by Brazil's higher education system in addressing social mobility. For instance, The National Association for Higher Education Institutions (Andifes, 2016) points out that 66.19% of federal university students come from low-income households (who earn up to R\$1,320 a month; or US\$400), while only 10.6% of students are from high-income backgrounds (or those who earn more than R\$13,200 a month; or US\$4,000). Further, higher education institutions promote social

mobility within Brazilian society, and stimulate important cultural and racial changes. During the mid-2000s an affirmative action system, using racial quotas, was introduced to tackle social and income inequality within the country's higher education system (Ministry of Education, 2014). Consequently, in 2016, self-declared African-Brazilian or mixed-race students represented 47.57% of students enrolled in federal institutions, compared to only 4% in 1997 (Andifes, 2016).

The World Bank's second claim also poses a threat, as it presupposes a standardized view of quality and efficiency measures embodied in private HE institutions. Kempner and Jurema (2002) question the cultural neutrality of major international monetary agencies regarding the concept of development. These agencies refer to narrow conceptions and discourses of 'modernization' and 'globalization', imposing standardized metrics, rankings and a-cultural educational practices in developing countries. As Ordorika and Lloyd (2015) demonstrate in the case of other Latin American countries such as Chile and Ecuador, quality ranking systems reinforce a hegemonic model of higher education that rewards certain areas/approaches of academic research, alongside adopting an explicit stance in favor of private investment in higher education, boosting existing private universities at the cost of public higher education systems. Further, the issue of Brazilian private universities is problematic in itself. McCowan (2015) disproves the hypothesis of efficiency in pro-profit private higher education institutions by demonstrating the precariousness of research and teaching in Brazilian private universities, including identifying predatory practices to bolster student numbers from low-income households.

Although private universities are subject to some of the regulations imposed by the Ministry of Education, a policy turn that favors a partial or a full privatization of public

universities represents a political threat to Brazil's system. Similar to what has been discussed by Lipman (2013) in the US case, higher education in Brazil currently reflects a multi-dimensional strategy of neoliberal governance supported by a right-wing political turn. In the case of the economics discipline, the expansion and reinforcement of research excellence frameworks, increasing privatization of higher education, and recent austerity measures imperils Brazil's tradition of pluralism.

Concluding Remarks

This article examined the undergraduate Brazilian curriculum governance framework according to three criteria: the inherent monism or pluralism in its approach to economics; its approach to the economy in relation to its social and political dimensions; and its underlying educational philosophy. We evaluate the pre-existing Brazilian system to be one captured in the term *TAMA*, in the sense of being pluralist, pro-social and embedding liberal or critical educational philosophy. However, the Brazilian system is under threat from similar forces which have rendered the Anglo/US types of governance framework that resemble a *TINA* structure. Specifically, systems of research governance, privatization of the sector, and central government austerity are forcing changes that imperil Brazil's strong tradition of pluralism, which can be traced to a neoliberal policy. This corroborates Mirowski's (2013) theory of neoliberalism, namely, that it exploits crises to implement structures favorable to it.

In the light of imminent threats, the article therefore points out the need for countervailing bodies and structures to tame these tendencies. Specifically, Brazil's

academic and professional economics associations (ANPEC, ANGE, COFECON, CORECONs) ought to play a key role in resisting change, as well as ensuring an open debate in future curricular reviews that may occur. Including additional networks to this process can prove to be a significant step in organizing and designing future strategies, both academic and student-led. Two examples are the cases of Brazil's Society for Political Economy (SEP) and the National Federation of Economics Students (FENECO), which could have a more formal role in future discussions on curriculum and research governance in economics. Intensifying connections between these bodies and international organizations that seek a *TAMA* approach in economics, such as Rethinking Economics or the International Initiative for the Promotion of Political Economy (IIPPE) may also be beneficial. Here, internationalization could be beneficial: *if* it embraces pluralism.

These above groups should, in order to protect pluralism, aim to change the current governing institutional structures of the discipline of economics. Changes in the *Qualis* system, such as abolishing its disciplinary divisions, could allow economics to be more permissive in comparison to other disciplines. Whilst abolishing ranking systems may be impossible, reforming them to recognize better pluralist research might be feasible. Concomitantly, their role in hiring could be reduced, in favor of, say, teaching quality assessed by *local* standards. These changes could inspire further action at postgraduate level, where economics programs could be subject to similar regulations as undergraduate programs.

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