

**DOSSIER***Internationalization of educational policies within the framework of human rights***The academic multifield*****El multcampo académico******O multcampo acadêmico*****Darlan Pez Wociechoski<sup>a</sup>**  
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amcatani@usp.br**ABSTRACT**

This article examines the concept of academic multifield and its national and global scales. It mobilizes several fundamental concepts to connect theoretical elaborations: the notion of field, the ternary division of the field, the off-field actors, and the global, national, and local markets, alongside multi-territoriality, the world-system, and the transformation of the particular into the universal through university bureaucracy. The analysis of agents' strategies and representations within the academic field is promising, as it aims to detail these agents' positions on local, national, and global scales and their respective contexts - dominant/dominated, internal or external. This approach allows for the unveiling of cooperation strategies and competition among agents, considering these multiple and nuanced dispositions. This is particularly evident in the context of a culturally dependent capitalist field within Brazilian academia, which subordinates itself to foreign agents seeking to ascend both internally within their institutions and on the national scale.

**Keywords:** Higher Education. Educational Policy. Internationalization. Social Fields. Academic Field.

**RESUMEN**

El artículo discute la idea de multcampo académico, así como detalla sus escalas nacional y global. Se movilizan algunos conceptos fundamentales para unir la elaboración teórica: la noción de campo, la división ternaria del campo, los de fuera del campo, los mercados 'local, nacional y mundial', la multiterritorialidad, el sistema-mundo y la transfiguración de lo particular en universal, operada por la burocracia universitaria. Se concluye que son prometedores los análisis de estrategias y representaciones de agentes en el ámbito académico que detallen las posiciones de estos agentes a escala local, nacional y global, y en el respectivo universo (dominante/dominado interno o externo). Entonces es posible revelar estrategias de cooperación y competencia que se establecen entre agentes en conformidad con estas múltiples posturas, como el tipo

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capitalista cultural dependiente del campo académico brasileño, que se subordina a un agente extranjero para ascender internamente en su institución y a escala nacional.

**Palabras clave:** Educación Superior. Política educacional. Internacionalización. Campo Social. Campo Académico.

## RESUMO

O artigo discute a ideia de multicampo acadêmico e detalha as suas escalas nacional e mundial. Alguns conceitos fundamentais são mobilizados de forma a amarrar as elaborações teóricas: a noção de campo, a divisão ternária do campo, os de fora-do-campo, os mercados mundial, nacional e local, a multiterritorialidade, o sistema-mundo e a transfiguração do particular em universal operada pela burocracia universitária. Conclui-se como promissoras as análises de estratégias e representações de agentes do campo acadêmico que venham a detalhar as posições desses agentes nas escalas local, nacional e mundial, e no respectivo universo (dominante/dominado interno ou externo). Assim, é possível desvelar estratégias de cooperação e competição estabelecidas entre agentes em observância a essas múltiplas e sombreadas disposições, como a do tipo capitalista cultural dependente do campo acadêmico brasileiro, que se subordina a um agente estrangeiro visando ascender internamente na sua instituição e na escala nacional.

**Palavras-chave:** Educação Superior. Política Educacional. Internacionalização. Campos Sociais. Campo Acadêmico.

## Introduction

Spatial and temporal scales are common to both geography and history (Rodrigues, 2009). In educational policies, authors recognize international, national, and local influences on the processes of policy formulation, text production, and the implementation of these policies (Bowe; Ball; Gold, 1992; Ball, 1994; Mainardes, 2006). Some of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological works (2014; 2017) allow for the identification of scales within social fields, particularly concerning the competition and cooperation among academic agents in provincial areas, the nation's capital, and at the international level — especially in studies related to state formation. In this context, several articles highlight the global or international dimensions of social fields (Lingard; Rawolle; Taylor, 2005; Go, 2008; Azevedo; Catani, 2013; Azevedo, 2015; Azevedo; Catani; Hey, 2017).

This study, in turn, aims to discuss the multi-scalar perspective of the academic field. In detail, it follows the line of discussion established by the aforementioned works and delves deeper into the overlapping scales of the academic field. This is achieved by comparing selected texts by Pierre Bourdieu (1983; 1989; 2014; 2017) with contributions on markets from Karl Polanyi (2000) and on multi-territoriality from Rogério Haesbaert (2003; 2005). Furthermore, it draws on a ternary framework to explore the relationships between dominant and dominated agents within the academic field, as well as those dominated “off the field” (Lahire, 2002). This ternary perspective is equally crucial for discussing the existence of a central, semi-peripheral, and peripheral academic field within the current world-system (Wallerstein, 1974).

Simultaneously, this article aims to reveal the predominantly competitive nature of the academic field, drawing on Polanyi (2000). Additionally, it seeks to highlight the relationship between the global academic field and long-standing historical structures by engaging with the works of

Fernand Braudel (1987), Immanuel Wallerstein (1974), and other authors. Of particular importance, especially for a semi-peripheral country like Brazil, this text emphasizes certain characteristics of the world-system (Wallerstein, 1974) as they relate to the configurations of academic fields across various scales — such as the division into three strata characterized by pressures of class and racial homogenization, the technical and ideological tools that implement bureaucracies, and the support for different types of states, among other aspects.

In summary, the central argument underpinning this work encompasses the understanding of the presence of academic agents engaged in simultaneous competitions and cooperations at the global, national, and local scales, as well as the comprehension of social reproduction facilitated by the hierarchies of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) historically distributed across a vast geographical area.

The significance of this argument lies primarily in its contribution to educational policy studies that draw on the insights of Pierre Bourdieu, as it allows for the contextualization of the strategies employed by academic and political agents within a geohistorical framework of multiple scales. Additionally, it is important to highlight that the intellectual and political strategies of Brazilian agents are intertwined with the country's semi-peripheral position in the world.

Indeed, this text is structured into three parts. The first part addresses the concept of the academic multi-field, linking the contributions of Polanyi and Haesbaert to Bourdieu's notion of the academic field. The second part examines the academic field at the national and global scales, drawing on the works of Bourdieu, Lahire, Wallerstein, and other authors. The third part is dedicated to the concluding remarks.

## **The academic multifield**

The concept of a field is founded as an intermediary between two analytical poles, offering as an alternative to both. On one side, there are those who argue that a work should be understood solely through its content, while on the other, some analyze the same cultural production in relation to its broader social or economic context. Social fields, in this sense, are seen as intermediary universes — microcosms that operate with relative autonomy from the larger social space and follow specific social laws (Bourdieu, 2004).

Moreover, the “theory of fields” was developed to analyze “differentiated societies” (Lahire, 2017, p. 64). In the case of France, this differentiation emerged with the rise of its “modern state, [...] which is based on a body of bureaucrats [...]” (Nogueira, 2017, p. 105). It is also understood that the notion of a field — closely tied to the nation-state — was constructed as an intermediary pathway between two poles: on one side, the localist ethnomethodological tradition; and on the other, authors concerned with global issues (Bourdieu, 2014).

This association between the social sphere and central power is further reinforced by the French sociologist's observation of a circular causal relationship, in which the state produces the fields that, in turn, generate the state. In other words, “the construction of the state as a metafield,

as the power to construct all fields, [is achieved through] the construction of each individual field” (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 368).

From this perspective, the notion of field aligns with Karl Polanyi’s concept of the national market, as within the economic sphere

the state voluntarily contributed to structuring this space, which appears to us as a given, when in fact is an institution. The genesis of fiscal power and a fiscally based economic power occurs alongside the unification of the economic space and the creation of a national market (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 369).

As the Hungarian author explains, through the actions of the territorial state, the “national market took its place alongside local and foreign markets, sometimes partially overshadowing them” (Polanyi, 2000, p. 87). From this analysis, one can infer that a national academic or university field was similarly formed, without necessarily suppressing these institutions at the global and local levels. Furthermore, in theory, any national academic or university field would inherently possess the competitive characteristics of an internal market, fundamentally distinguishing it from the other two. However, “at a later stage, markets became predominant in the organization of foreign trade” (Polanyi, 2000, p. 80), indicating that competitive characteristics were extended on a global and local scale as well.

In this regard, it is worth noting that Karl Polanyi sought to conduct comparative studies of “primitive,” archaic, and modern societies in order to “emphasize the differences between the various social and economic systems, particularly between capitalism and all the societies that preceded it,” thereby “highlighting the absolute exceptionality of the market economy in human history” (Machado, 2010, p. 73-74). This method of study allowed the Hungarian author to distinguish between “formal economy” — which is based on neoclassical economic theory and “focuses on the isolated (‘rational’) individual seeking to maximize their gains” — and “substantive economy” (Machado, 2010, p. 72), which aligns with Polanyi’s approach. This latter perspective

examines the institutional forms through which the process of meeting human needs manifests in different societies, both past and present, while studying the role of the economy within society. The emphasis is on sufficiency rather than efficiency (Machado, 2010, p. 73).

A more crucial element in understanding “the great transformation” of society is the establishment of the capitalist market system and the concept of the (dis)embedding of the economy (Polanyi, 2000). After the Middle Ages, with the rise of this system,

the economy no longer embedded itself within social relations; instead, social relations became embedded within the economic system [...] [which] is structured into distinct institutions, driven by specific motives, and granted a unique status. Society must be reshaped to allow the system to function according to its own rules (Polanyi, 2000, p. 77).

In sum, Karl Polanyi’s (2000) contribution to academic thought lies in the concept of the substantive economy, which emphasized sufficiency and the social embeddedness of markets. Similarly, Bourdieu also engaged in the comparative study of pre-capitalist and capitalist economies, but with the added dimension of conducting fieldwork and analyses “in different times and places (Cabília, Béarn, etc.)” (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 158). In his own distinct way, the French author sought

to free both pre-capitalist economies and sectors of capitalist economies from the constraints of economicism —whether Marxist or neo-marginalist — arguing that these economies did not fully operate according to the law of interest or the pursuit of (monetary) profit maximization (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 158).

While Bourdieu highlights the opposition between the operational rules of the cultural and economic fields, a certain parallelism persists. In the author's view, both are "formal economies" oriented toward efficiency and the maximization of gains, whether economic or non-economic (such as social capital and cultural capital). This parallelism is intrinsic to the fields themselves, as they are constructs sustained by specialized professionals striving to increase their respective forms of capital.

In retrospect, comparing the concepts of field and market illuminates the perceptions of levels or scales and the potential for their overlap. These issues are common in geography and are particularly embedded in debates surrounding conceptions of territory. They are also relevant for rethinking the notion of academic and university fields, and thus, for addressing the current problem at hand.

According to Rogério Haesbaert (2003), the following competing views of territory can be identified:

Juridical-political: the most prevalent perspective, where territory is viewed as a delineated and controlled space [...]; Cultural: emphasizes the symbolic-cultural dimension, which is more subjective, considering territory primarily as the product of a group's symbolic appropriation and valuation of space; Economic: focuses on the spatial aspects of economic relations, particularly the conflict between social classes and the capital-labor dynamic; Natural: adopts a notion of territory based on the relationships between society and nature (Haesbaert, 2003, p. 12).

Each of these views on the concept of territory offers its own contributions and limitations. The author, for instance, highlights that in the juridical-political cartographic perspective, there exists an "old confusion between territory and geographical space, often still used interchangeably today, as if any material, 'spatial' base that is socially appropriated would constitute a territory" (Haesbaert, 2003, p. 12).

It is understood, however, that the cartographic delimitation of a territory — established by a central authority and marked by internal and boundary lines — has practical regulatory implications as well as symbolic and cultural effects. In other words, states not only shape their respective national fields but also continue to contribute to the functioning of global and local fields (academic, literary, artistic, etc.), thereby facilitating the operation of circuits of social consecration. This is made possible through the hierarchization of products and producers that move across different markets/fields.

This interpretation is not new and can be drawn from Bourdieu's (2014) nuanced discussion on the spatiality of social divisions and their interrelations. In this perspective, the state generates hierarchies within its juridical-legal territory while actively engaging at a global scale in the historically constituted "university market" (Bourdieu, 2017, p. 167). This occurs because "the state is formed [...] within a dual context: on the one hand, in relation to other current or potential states [...]; on the other hand, in relation to an internal context, to counterpowers [...]" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 366).

Regarding the overlap of fields mentioned earlier and the distinct trajectories of university or academic agents, it is useful to consider the concept of multi-territoriality. This concept accounts for both the “material domination” and “symbolic appropriation” of territories by these agents, as well as their ability to form networks and operate simultaneously across various modalities (Haesbaert, 2005, p. 6783). Within this framework, we can recognize the potential for simultaneous interactions between individual or collective agents from different national and/or local fields, who may establish relationships of cooperation and/or competition with one another.

Building on these reflections, academic agents are understood to craft their strategies by navigating various scales within their field, while also remaining attuned to the macrosocial context. The next section outlines the structural characteristics of the academic field at both national and global levels.

## The national and global academic field

To understand the formation of the global academic or university field, we can turn to Cunha’s (2006) work on the historical struggle for university autonomy, although the author challenges the notion of academic field as conceived by Pierre Bourdieu. Cunha first emphasizes the international nature of this field and suggests that, within the social space, the interests of its agents may at times align with those of the Church, the state, the Party, or the Market. However, these agents sought, as much as possible, to distinguish themselves from these institutions or from society as a whole, depending on their degree of autonomy or their “capacity for refraction” from external forces — a concept borrowed from Bourdieu (2004). Thus, we can assert that “autonomy, more than a founding myth, remains a key element of university identity” (Cunha, 2006, p. 18), reaffirming the existence of the academic or university field, whether through conflicts with other fields or social spheres, or through moments of truce between them.

Moreover, one can argue that autonomy and heteronomy are also phenomena present in the relationships established between national academic fields (French and Brazilian; Anglo-American and Brazilian). This is exemplified by what Xavier Polanco (1986) describes as the *internal brain drain*, where intellectuals from the periphery follow the research agendas set by scholars in central countries. Such relationships between academics from different parts of the world have been discussed by Polanco and other authors (Polanco, 1986; Lafuente; Ortega, 1992). In fact, Xavier Polanco was

inspired by Braudel’s notion of *world-economy* introduced to propose *world-science* as a heuristic tool that allows us to unmask the traits of domination shaping the relationships between powerful scientific communities and weaker ones in the process of formation (Lafuente; Ortega, 1992, p. 108 – emphasis in the original).

Similarly, inspired by Braudel (1987), it is argued that the global cultural field operates, among other mechanisms, through the manipulation and distortion of prestige by intermediary agents. These agents monopolize the field and thereby ensure that the flow of capital is directed toward them; in other words, cultural capitalism functions as a monopoly. This domination is maintained

in the cultural sphere through the possession of social consecration held by higher education institutions (HEIs) and their agents, and it is further supported by the respective and distinct types of states. According to Wallerstein (1974), states can be classified as central, semi-peripheral, or peripheral. In this scenario, substantial symbolic gains are tied to the flows established through long circuits of consecration that transcend the borders of multiple countries.

In reality, the cultural field — and specifically the academic or university field at its various levels — is not open to competition from all agents within it and depends on the existence of those “off the field” (Lahire, 2002). This underscores the need to broaden the scope of analysis beyond the dominant and dominated poles within the concept of the field. Such a shift involves a significant change in how we approach and apply this analytical tool, as it calls for the consideration of a third pole, embodying a ternary framework of thought.

From these perspectives, it is acknowledged that Pierre Bourdieu himself (1989) contributed to this discussion — for instance, by highlighting the fractions of state nobility and the partial autonomy of fields. At the same time, according to Bourdieu, the actions and representations undertaken by agents in the struggle for the object of social distinction are framed by the need to maintain the micro-system itself, while also logically attending to agents from other sectors.

In addition to Pierre Bourdieu’s assertions, which support both the inclusion in this debate and help clarify the existence of agents outside the academic or university field, the contributions of Bernard Lahire (2002) are noteworthy. The author emphasizes that the notion of field is part of “a long tradition of sociological and anthropological reflections on the historical differentiation of activities or social functions and on the social division of labor” (Lahire, 2002, p. 48)<sup>1</sup>. He further challenges:

The theory of fields exerts considerable effort to illuminate the grand stages where power struggles occur, but it invests little energy in understanding those who set up these stages, create the settings, or produce their elements [...] and, therefore, shows little interest in life beyond the stage or outside the field [...] (Lahire, 2002, p. 49-50).

In summary, it is understood that the university field is shaped by both the relationships established between dominant and dominated agents and those with indirect participants — typically referenced in the social responsibility and commitment discourses of higher education institutions (HEIs) and related to the objectives advocated by university extension programs. Shifting to a ternary framework means conceiving that potential conflicts among agents are not necessarily direct. Thus, we align with Pierre Bourdieu, who points out that the dominant and the dominated compete for the monopoly of legitimate cultural production within the cultural field. Furthermore, in addition to this perspective from Bourdieu and Bernard Lahire, it can be added that the dominated within the field play a specific and significant ideological role in its configuration. Acting as a “middle class” (Wallerstein, 1974), they convey to the excluded the legitimacy of the field and the possibility

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<sup>1</sup> Bourdieu agreed with Durkheim, Weber, and Marx on the following “tendential law”: “As societies advance over time, they differentiate into separate and autonomous universes” (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 368). This reflects a predominant urban-industrial deterministic thought in Europe during the 19th century.

of accessing it. This action somewhat prolongs the *illusio* (Bourdieu, 1989) without positioning them as direct players in a confrontation with the dominants.

Understanding this ternary framework paves the way for a deeper exploration of the hierarchies within the global university field and its extensive circuits of social consecration. These circuits, in turn, imply an extended social division of intellectual labor across the geopolitical landscape — essentially, a global power field. In this context, based on the concept of the world-system (Wallerstein, 1974), we can assert that the production, reproduction, and consumption of symbolic assets are unequally distributed among countries. As a result, the highest prestige positions within the global cultural field are reserved for select countries and, within each of them, for a major city. This phenomenon occurs because the flow of symbolic capital is directed toward a central pole or core, “represented by a dominant city” (Braudel, 1987, p. 53-54), which is surrounded by intermediate and peripheral zones that receive proportionately lesser amounts of symbolic capital.

As Pierre Bourdieu (2014; 2017) argued, the capital of his country presented itself as dominant over both the provinces and the world: “Paris is a nationalist myth, but one based on reality: it was in Paris that the careers of painters were made; artistic revolutions in Germany were referenced against Paris” (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 296). In addition to these observations, another interpretation from the French sociologist aligns with, as will be seen later, the global analyses of Immanuel Wallerstein:

Culture follows religion with perfectly similar functions: it gives the dominant groups a sense of being justified in their domination, both at the national level and within the global society. Thus, the dominant or colonizing forces can, with a clear conscience, see themselves as bearers of the universal (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 297)<sup>2</sup>.

In this context, it is essential to reassess the role of the cultural field within the global power structure, thereby uncovering its function in the social and economic reproduction of the world system — and vice versa. This perspective aims to address two questions posed by Wallerstein that also prompt reflection on the academic and university field: “How it is politically possible for such a system to persist [?]. Why do not the majority who are exploited simply overwhelm the minority who draw disproportionate benefits?” (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 404).

According to Wallerstein (1974), three main mechanisms sustain the world system — or, to align more closely with Bourdieu, the global power field — and these mechanisms also help characterize the academic and university fields. The first mechanism involves the concentration of military power held by the dominant class (Wallerstein, 1974). Bourdieu views the military not merely as a coercive force but as “an instrument for instilling cultural models, a means of training” (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 293). He asserts that “relations of power are relations of communication, meaning there is no antagonism between a physicalist view and a semiological or symbolic perspective of the social world” (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 305). The second mechanism, which appears alongside the first, is “the pervasiveness of an ideological commitment to the system as a whole” (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 404). Still regarding the cultural field, Bourdieu argues that

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<sup>2</sup> See Pierre Bourdieu’s considerations on the work of Charles Tilly, “Coercion, Capital, and European States,” for a description of the genesis of European states, in his lecture *On the State* (Bourdieu, 2014).

[...] those who deceive are deceived, and they deceive all the better the more deceived they are; they are all the more mystifiers the more mystified they are. To play the game, one must believe in the ideology of creation [...] What confers value [...] is the collusion of all agents within the system of producing sacred goods. This collusion is, of course, perfectly unconscious. The circuits of consecration are more powerful the longer, more complex, and more concealed they are—even from the eyes of those who participate in and benefit from them. [...] The more complicated the cycle of consecration, the more invisible it becomes, the more the structure is susceptible to being unknown, and the greater the effect of belief (Bourdieu, 2003 [1974], p. 214-215).

The third mechanism sustaining the system is “the division of the majority into a larger lower stratum and a smaller middle stratum” (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 404). At this point, although we cannot assert the same proportions exist within the academic or university field, it is worth considering the idea that a middle stratum — understood as the dominated fraction within the field — plays a central political role in maintaining the field. In other words, “the existence of the third category means precisely that the upper stratum is not faced with the unified opposition of all the other because the middle stratum is both exploited and exploiter” (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 405). This leads to the saying: it takes *three* to tango. Moreover, this stratification generates “pressures for cultural homogenization within each of them”; the semi-periphery behaves like a middle class and reveals that “both classes and ethnic groups, or status-groups, or ethno-nations are phenomena of world-economies” (Wallerstein, 1974, p. 405).

Thus, three types of agents within the university field are concentrated in different countries. There are three groups competing: (i) those at the top of the hierarchy within this global cultural field, situated at the core of symbolic capitalism; (ii) players from semi-peripheral countries, found at the lower end; and (iii) those ‘off the field,’ the dominated from the periphery, who lack the specific capital needed to compete.” Frequently, countries that have “accepted” the terms of the game imposed by the dominant players start off defeated, as this acceptance implies “an inferiority that strives to overcome itself” (Bourdieu, 2003 [1974], p. 210). This stems from the fact that

The dominant actors dedicate themselves to strategies of conservation, aiming to ensure the perpetuation of the established scientific order with which they are aligned. [...] This order also encompasses the set of institutions responsible for the production and circulation of scientific goods, as well as for the reproduction and dissemination of the producers (or reproducers) and consumers of these goods, namely the education system, which alone can guarantee the permanence and consecration of official science by systematically instilling scientific *habitus* in the legitimate recipients of pedagogical action, particularly all newcomers to the field of production itself (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 137-138—original emphasis).

In this way, within the global cultural field, the roles of legitimate production, reproduction, and consumption of symbolic goods are also distributed unequally across countries. At the top of the hierarchy are the dominant agents, who hold a monopoly on the production of legitimate goods and ultimately benefit from the flows of capital generated by the reproduction, circulation, and cultural consumption around the world. Conversely, the dominated agents from off the field have internalized a scientific *habitus* of consumers-reproducers. Lacking the specific capital, they are unable to participate in the competition. Meanwhile, agents from semi-peripheral countries embody

a mixed scientific *habitus*, which at times leads them to produce and legitimize knowledge in ways that challenge the dominant forces of the field. At other times, they merely act as reproducers and consumers of knowledge originating from the North Atlantic, or even as simple adapters of knowledge for tropical contexts. As Darcy Ribeiro aptly put it, they are the vessels of foreign authors:

The vessel of Foucault, the vessel of Lévi-Strauss — through them, Lévi-Strauss speaks constantly; they don't look at Brazil. What matters to them is citing Poulantzas or stating what Poulantzas would think. Or reading *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* by Marx and then crafting academic discourses based on it, sometimes very intelligent ones [...] but they are incapable of seeing the Brazilian reality [...]" (Ribeiro, n.d., n.p).

In contrast, given that "social agents [...] are not passive particles driven by the forces of the field," as they possess "acquired dispositions [...] which may, in particular, lead them to resist, to oppose the forces of the field" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 28), it is argued, for instance, that Paulo Freire's libertarian pedagogy was a Brazilian response to national issues, informed by a Brazilian perspective on these matters<sup>3</sup>. Moreover, this response served as both a political and intellectual strategy within the national and global academic fields, in opposition to other agents who sought to explore European or North American issues within the Brazilian context (Oliveira, 2006).

Building on this thorough exploration of the divisions of intellectual labor within the academic field, it is pertinent to examine the foundational characteristics of the state (metafield) and the fields themselves, as various educational theories introduced by academic agents have historically aligned with bureaucratic goals in structuring higher education in Brazil and internationally.

In this regard, considering that fields are both products and producers of the state (Bourdieu, 2014), it is necessary to examine how public and private sector agents operationalize the Brazilian national academic field. The focus on operational issues stems from an important element — highlighted by Bourdieu, drawing on Hegel — that is essential for analyzing any public educational policy strategy: the state is a non-fictional social fiction (Bourdieu, 2014).

Hegel once stated that illusion is not simply an illusion. Just because the official is never more than just an official, and just because the commission is not what it claims to be, doesn't mean it doesn't produce an effect. In fact, it still manages to convince people that it is what it pretends to be (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 76).

Thus, the commission functions as a "bureaucracy" in which its agents transform particular interests into a collective one, which is then presented as universal through the application of techniques and ideologies (Tragtenberg, 1977). Additionally, the "commission" can be understood as a field where its members represent a limited number of "private agents bearing particular interests in absolutely unequal degrees of universalization [...]" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 85).

These members, "in turn, positioned themselves as agents of the state, and in doing so, had to create the state in order to become holders of state power" (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 93). Moreover, based on this operational logic, agents from developed countries hold a central state power, thereby

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<sup>3</sup> The thought of Paulo Freire was profoundly influenced by the Higher Institute of Brazilian Studies (ISEB). In this regard, see section "4.2. The Presence of ISEB in Paulo Freire's Ideology" in the work of Maria Teresa Cavalcanti de Oliveira (2006).

gaining the ability to define the dominant cultural arbitrariness that ultimately sustains this world-system, just as the intellectual elite of emerging countries possess a comparable state power.

Additionally, with the establishment of bureaucracies distributed across different parts of the world and their various specializations, “the social construction of public problems” began to take place; that is, agents started to develop “a new legitimate definition of a public problem” and to propose “a new way to provide citizens with the means to fulfill what is considered [or should be considered] a right” (Bourdieu, 2014, p. 74). A similar phenomenon is observed in the structuring of higher education in Brazil, where academic and political agents organize undergraduate and graduate programs for a limited group, while extension courses and services are typically directed toward individuals off this field.

## Final considerations

Brazilian academic agents both influence and are influenced by the global academic field. Specifically, the national field oscillates between being an exploiter and an exploited participant in the global division of intellectual labor, characterized by a relatively low number of dominant individual and collective agents compared to the dominated. University and researcher<sup>4</sup> rankings, although based on questionable criteria and even more contentious applications, reflect Brazil’s reality: there are too few academics relative to the size of its population, with the majority concentrated in the prestigious and well-established higher education institutions (HEIs) in the southeastern region — particularly at the University of São Paulo and the state University of Campinas.

In this regard, hierarchies and concentrations of power exist at various levels, from disciplines and faculties within universities to higher education institutions (HEIs) at the national level and the global academic field. Consequently, analyses of the strategies and representations of academic agents — whether aimed at preserving the existing structure or transforming it — must consider their position both within their respective contexts (dominant/dominated, internal or external) and across its different scales (local/national/global).

Likewise, strategies of cooperation and competition among agents can be established with regard to these multiple and nuanced dispositions. In this context, for instance, an agent within the Brazilian academic field, characterized as a dependent cultural capitalist, may subordinate themselves to a foreign agent in order to advance within their institution and nationally. Alternatively, an agent might seek to establish relationships with those situated in the broader macrosocial context or with specific fields, as seen in Brazilian university extension programs — either from a critical perspective aimed at the emancipation of those off the field or from a commercial standpoint aligned with the economic sector.

Building on the emphasis of the French sociologist, it is asserted that the cultural field is formed and maintained through the establishment of antagonistic relationships between dominant and dominated agents within it, as well as through the connections and separations with participants

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<sup>4</sup> See two examples: Ioannidis, Boyack e Baas (2020) and Times Higher (n.d.).

situated in other specific fields or those not clearly identified within the macrosocial context. Furthermore, the cultural field will not be fully atomized; its autonomy will always be relative to other fields and to those outside the fields, just as the market can never be entirely divorced from society (cf. Polanyi, 2000).

Drawing on the contributions of these sociological authors, it can be argued that the participation of the academic community (from “off the field”) in cultural practices is shaped by the phenomena of differentiation and atomization — the uprooting of social universes (such as the artistic, academic, and literary fields) in relation to society at large — and by intrusions from the economic sphere, similar to other spheres of human existence in modern society. In other words, just as the market seeks to impose its values and atomize itself in relation to society — albeit not entirely successfully — the cultural field is also socially rooted, albeit minimally, and is influenced by the economic field to produce, for instance, mass culture. Thus, there will always be some level of participation from those off the field in the cultural field, along with influences from other fields.

In light of this, it is imperative to break away from the current state of the Brazilian academic field, characterized by a modern pole comprised of socially distinct institutions and highly qualified research agents concentrated in major urban centers and connected to their counterparts abroad. Conversely, there exists an archaic pole to which university extension programs are invariably directed, serving a predominantly marginalized audience in the outskirts of large cities and rural areas of Brazil. Additionally, positioned between these poles are the dominated individuals within the field, who, functioning as a middle class, prevent direct confrontation with the dominant agents and, consequently, contribute to the maintenance of the academic structure.

To address this identified issue, it is important to highlight the recent political initiatives aimed at affirmative actions, expansion, interiorization, and democratization of public universities in Brazil during the Workers’ Party (PT) governments. As the properties of the world system are reaffirmed in the composition of the academic field (global, national, and local), these initiatives are recognized as interventions in the prevailing patterns of ethnic-racial and social class among the three segments of agents in the field and within each of these dimensions.

Enhancing the expansion and democratization of higher education ultimately aims to eliminate the social distinctions among a selected few agents by promoting the unrestricted proliferation of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees (standard courses). These efforts — both realized and envisioned — in support of the right to higher education for all Brazilians may, consequently, assist the country in surpassing the percentage of graduates and postgraduates in comparison to the member of countries of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Brasil, 2023), which lie at the core of capitalism. Simultaneously, it is crucial to engage with productive chains (or parts thereof) that utilize specialized knowledge more intensively, thereby making them more advantageous within the global division of labor.

This perspective diverges normatively from the national development thinking of the agents active prior to 1964. After several technological revolutions, Brazil’s current situation requires a larger number of graduates to generate and apply science and technology, rather than relying on a select few higher-educated professionals to exchange knowledge with the masses of workers and peasants. This does not imply an endorsement of the human capital concept; rather, it underscores

that promoting dialogical approaches within higher educational institutions open to all would be more advantageous.

Furthermore, in a semi-peripheral country with low investment in academic training, culture, science, and technology, it is crucial to conduct research that explores the types of activities present in core countries or other developing nations, particularly those that serve similar functions and exhibit comparable intensity. This research aims to foster harmony between individuals within academic fields and those who are off these contexts, potentially including agents external to a specific national university system.

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