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Political economics in the laboratory

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Preface

The path that brought me to do my PhD at the University of Amsterdam started in June 2004 in São Paulo, Brazil. At that time I had just started a Master's program in Public Administration and Government at the Fundação Getúlio Vargas and in the mid-year holiday I chose to take the intensive Master's course in Economics, which was offered that year by a Dutch Professor, Arthur Schram, on a topic I had never heard of: Experimental Economics.

By the end of the three very intense weeks (3 hours of classes per day, every day), Arthur and I got along quite well and he told me about the Tinbergen Institute and the possibilities here. As I was concluding my Master's, I successfully applied to the 5 year program (2 year Master's program in Economics plus 3 years of PhD research) at the Tinbergen Institute. Already on my second year I had a desk at CREED (Center for Research in Experimental Economics and Political Decision Maker) where I wrote my Master Thesis under Arthur's supervision.

CREED is certainly a wonderful place to do your PhD. The several people with different levels of experience and research focus provide an optimal and open learning environment hard to be found elsewhere. Along the people I met at CREED during these years I should mention and thank Eva and Michal, my first officemates, Julianna, Roel and Pedro, my following officemates, the other PhD students, Adrian, Jona, Thomas, Julian, Ben, Ailko, Audrey, Yang Yang, the rookies Matze, Anita and Boris, the Professors (assistant, associate and full) Aljaz, Mathijs, Klaus, Frans, Joep, Theo, Gonul and, obviously, Arthur and the one responsible for making everything run smoothly, Karin. I thank also the people I met via the environment of the Tinbergen Institute, the University of Amsterdam, ESA meetings, CREED guests and ex-CREEDers. These include, on a non-exhaustive list, Jeroen, Massimo, Marcos, Adam, Marie, Martijn, Cars, Bas, Marko, Zoltan, Petr, Julia, Marcus, Matija, Deny, Rei, Bernd, Nick, Fujin, Melinda, Robert, Ernesto, Jens, Ana, Martin, Anya, Aniol, and Marta. A special thank is reserved here for my co-authors Jon and Luca, who helped me tremendously with progressing through this thesis.

Spending 5 years abroad, in a place you have never been before and stays at least 10 hours flying away from your home place, is not an easy task for all parts involved. For their understanding and support, I thank my direct family, Henrique, Dulce and Michele,

both my grandmothers, who passed away during these 5 years, Nesia and Rosa, and my other relatives, such as my uncles and aunts Sérgio, Regina, Marisa and Sérgio and their direct families who were always interested in my updates. I thank specially my friends Tatiana, Nathalia and Leo, for keeping in good contact with me, visiting and reminding me of good things from home. On the other side of the story, I thank specially my great (new) friends (and paranymphs) Roel and Clio, for making me feel at home here in the Netherlands. I thank all the people I met via dancing and made my social life really active. They include (also on a non-exhaustive list) Rob, Antonio, Mirjam, Armando, Karin, Mary, Eddy, Erwin, Rene, Krullaine, Remko, Jette, Juliana, Maaïke, Josje, Daiva, Sander, Anya and Marion.

Most of all I would like to thank Rosalie, my most important ‘finding’ during these 5 PhD years. Jokes apart, since we have been together she provides me with great light, support and help giving meaning to the things I do. Also a special thanks to her parents, Martin and Marion, who could not be more welcoming and give me a family feeling also here in the Netherlands.

This thesis is a snapshot of a work in constant progress. It captures 4 research projects in slightly different stages of evolution as of August of 2011 and portrays methods and topics that highly interest me. I will save the contents for the main chapters. It suffices to say that regardless of where my research and/or career moves in the coming years, this thesis (and the 5 years that took to write it) will always be a defining period in my life, which I believe has provided me with the lenses and tools with which I want to see and affect the world.

Marcelo

Maastricht - October, 2011