

# THE FRENCH MOVEMENT FOR A PLURALISTIC TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION IN ECONOMICS

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Changing economics teaching to change economists

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# Introduction

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- What is PEPS ?
- What do we want ?
- PEPS' strategy
- PEPS' achievements
- What's next and what's beyond ?
- Modest advices

# What is PEPS ?

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- Unsatisfied students with their economics curriculum.
- Teachings do not allow to understand the world.
- Common feeling: Economic crisis is also a crisis of economics and its teaching.
- PEPS was created in 2009
- PEPS is not new: Post-Autistic movement in the 2000s
- PEPS is not alone: USA, Canada, Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Israël, Germany, Iran, New Zealand...

# What do we want ? (1)

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- Aim 1: Giving a critical knowledge of economics and a critical understanding of the world to students in economics
- Aim 2: Training future economists **AND** future citizens. Most of the students won't become economists.
- Pluralism is the word

# What do we want ? (2)

- Implementing the *Three Pluralisms*:
  1. **Pluralism of theories** : Teaching modern Neoclassical theory **AND** the other approaches (post-Keynesian, Marxist, Institutionnalist, Ecological, Feminist, Complex, Neo-Austrian...) on a equal basis.
  2. **Pluralism of concepts** : Reflexive approaches must be given a central place (History of economic thought, History of economic facts, Epistemology and philosophy of economics)
  3. **Pluralism of disciplines** : Opening towards other social and human sciences (Sociology, Philosophy, History, Psychology, Geography...)

# PEPS' strategy

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- First step: Objectivizing our feeling
- Second step: Creating an alternative
- Third step: Spreading ideas

# PEPS' strategy: Objectivizing our feeling

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- Need for asserting the lack of realism and pluralism in economics teaching: is it more than a feeling ?
- A study on 50 bachelors in economics of French universities
- We collected all the courses of these Bachelors, ECTS (European Credit Transfer System) taken as a proxy of their weight in the curriculum.
- Limit: Focus on the *titles* of the courses (it does not necessarily reflect the exact content of the courses).
- However, own experience as well as widely used handbooks give insights on the contents of the classes

# PEPS' strategy: Objectivizing our feeling

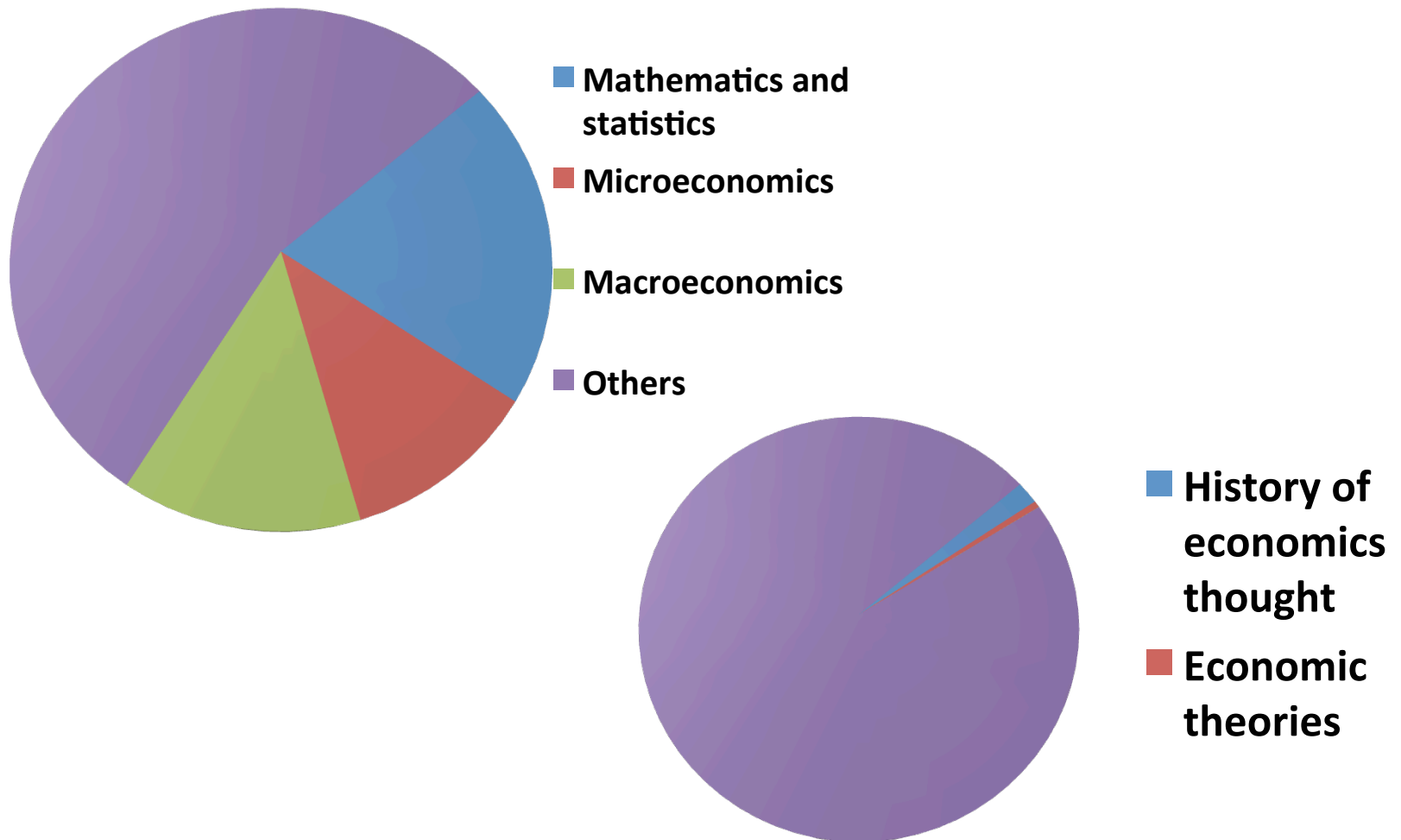
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- IT IS more than a feeling
- Numbers and figures are quite explicit
- Under-representation of reflexive disciplines
- Lack of openness towards other Social Sciences
- Most likely a lack of theoretical pluralism
- Similar results for similar studies conducted or in progress in Canada, Israël, Germany **without** prior coordination



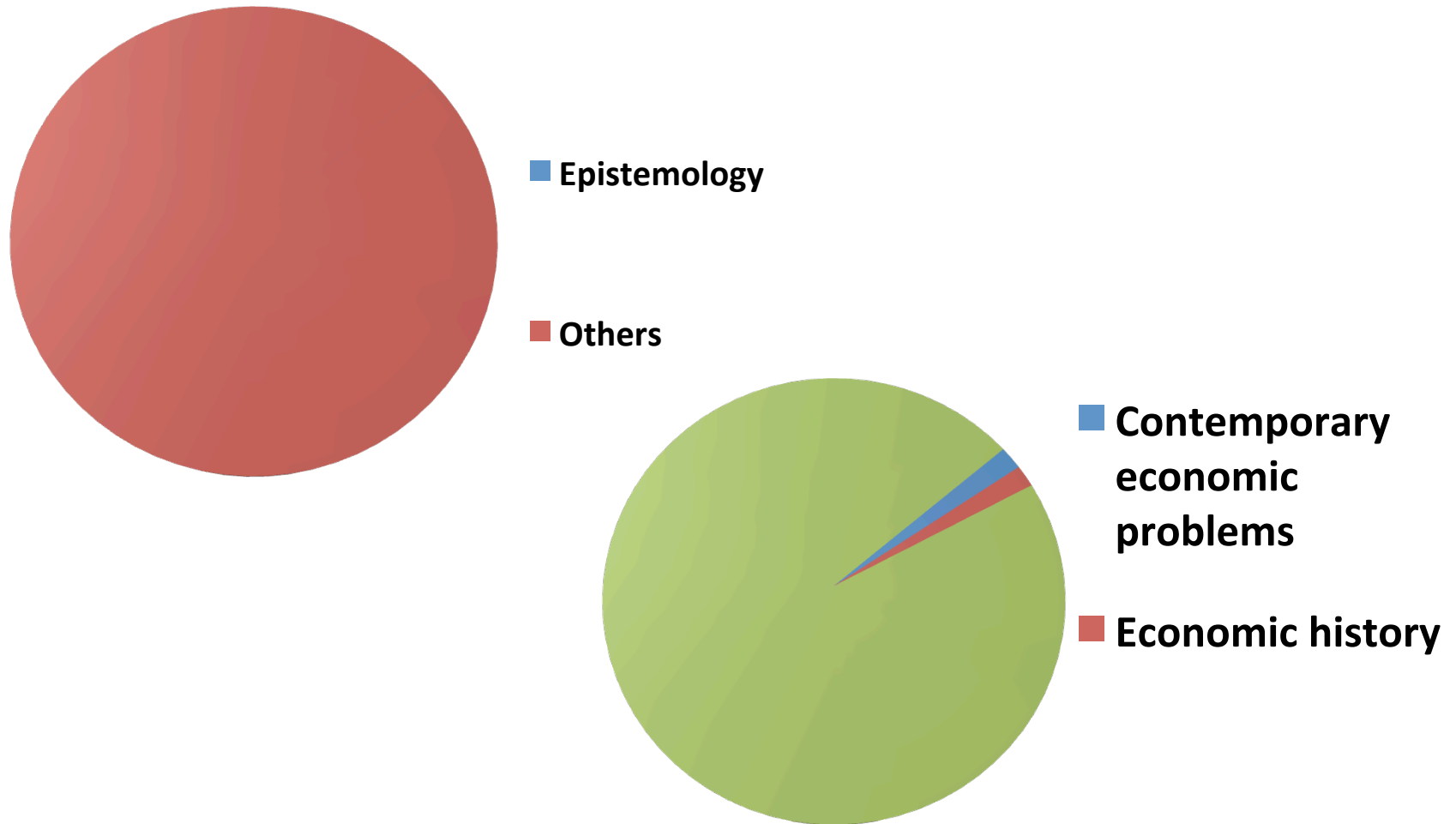
# PEPS' strategy: Objectivizing our feeling

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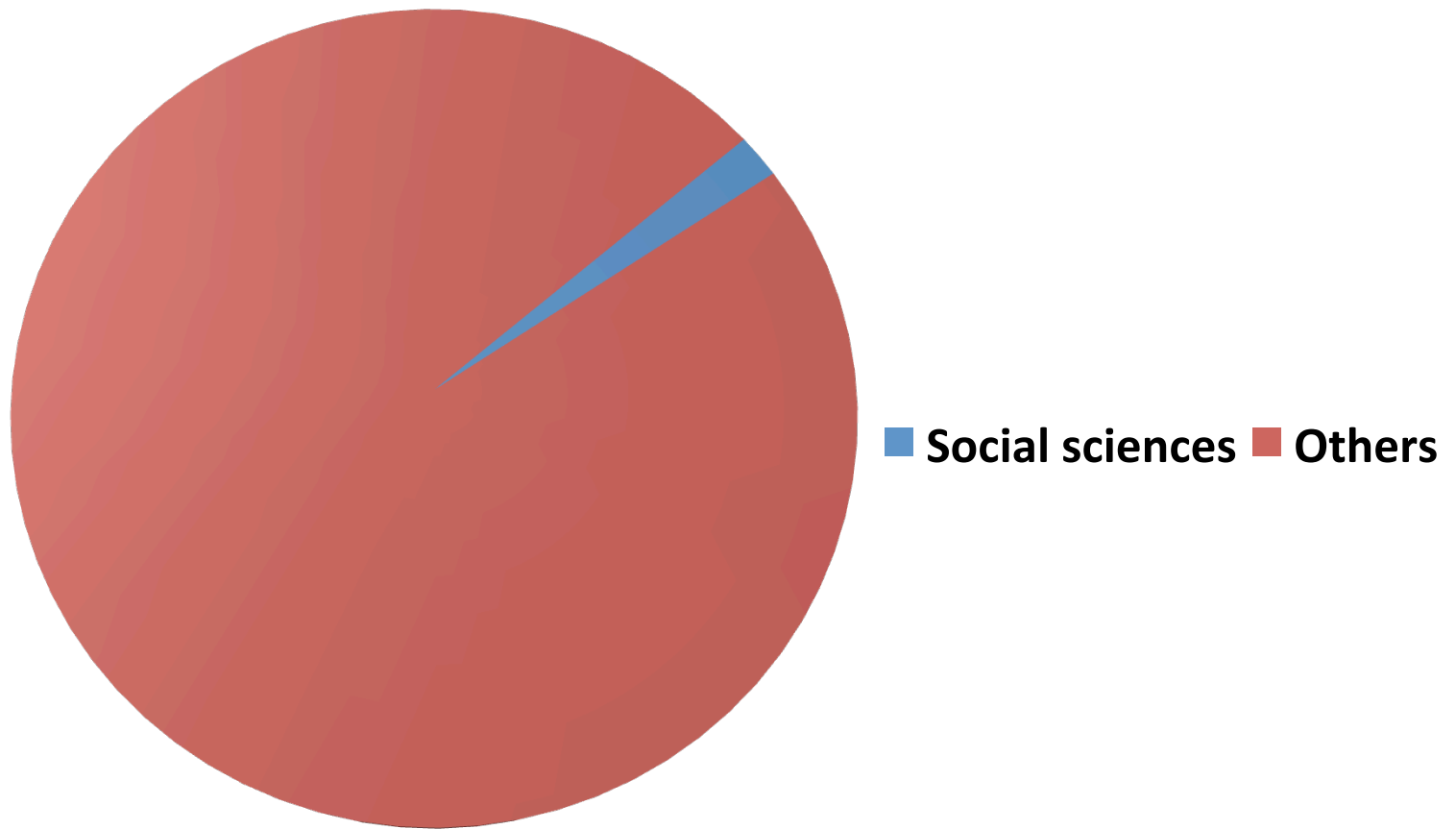
# PEPS' strategy: Objectivizing our feeling

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# PEPS' strategy: Objectivizing our feeling

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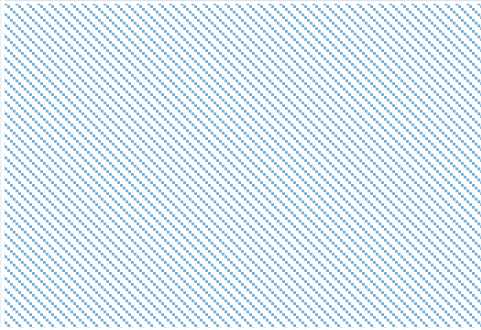
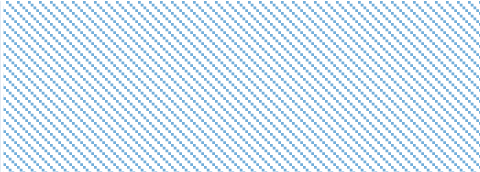

# PEPS' strategy: Creating an alternative

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- An alternative curriculum for Bachelors in Economics
- Basic principles of the PEPS alternative curriculum:
  1. A curriculum based on the *Three Pluralisms*.
  2. An object-oriented approach: from “economic objects” to the disciplines needed to investigate them.
  3. A problematized approach: Asking questions and seeking answers to them.

# PEPS' strategy: Creating an alternative

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Economics	Tools	Cornerstone	Complements
<b>Economic object 1 (3h)</b>	<b>Quantitative tools (2h30)</b>	<b>History of economic thought and facts (4h)</b> <b>Reflexive approaches (4h)</b>	<b>English (1h30)</b>
<b>Economic object 2 (3h)</b>	<b>Qualitative tools (1h30)</b>		<b>Other foreign language (1h30)</b>
<b>Economic news (4h)</b>			<b>Computer (1h)</b>

# PEPS' strategy: Creating an alternative

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- In economic objects courses: economic theories, facts and useful related social sciences are used to answer the problematic.
- Need to understand theories and facts in their whole context.
- That's why History of economic thought and facts is the cornerstone of our curriculum:
  1. Not a catalogue of dead ideas: a lively History developed throughout the two first years
  2. Devoted to the in-depth study of theories within their historical contexts of appearance and evolution

# PEPS' strategy: Spreading ideas

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- Inside the realm of economics:
  1. Appearance in the World Economics Association Newsletter
  2. Appearance in the Heterodox Economics Newsletter
  3. Advertisement in facebook groups on new and critical economic thinking
  4. Close contacts with French economists associations (both mainstream and heterodox)

# PEPS' strategy: Spreading ideas

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## □ **Economic media**

1. Introductory paper in L'Économie Politique (2011)
2. Full study on the bachelors in economics and detailed alternative curriculum in L'Économie Politique (2013)
3. Shorter version of the article in Alternatives Économiques (2013)
4. Op-Ed in Le Monde Économie (2013)
5. Main subject of an issue of Le Monde Économie (2013)

## □ **Universal media**

1. Article by friends in Liberation (2013)
2. Radio show on France Culture (2013)

## □ **Education media**

1. Interview to EducPro (specialized news agency) (2013)



# PEPS' strategy: Spreading ideas

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- Big event: the Estate-General of the teaching of Economics in France in April 2013
- Introducing our ideas and analyses
- Guests from various origins: Foreign students (Germany, Canada), mainstream economists, heterodox economists, other social scientists
- Aim: debating our ideas, attract medias, gathering new people

# PEPS' achievements

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- Modest but promising
  - A teacher told us he modified his course in statistics to include some of our claims.
  - The dean of an economics department contacted us to rebuild their curriculum.
  - Meetings with personal advisors of the Minister of Higher Education and Research.
  - Launching of an official working group by the Department of Higher Education and Research

# What's next and what's beyond ?

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## □ Next for PEPS

1. Spreading our ideas and gathering new people
2. Refining our alternative curriculum and augmenting it (masters degree)
3. Working on the implementation of our alternative bachelor with academics
4. Establishing close links with institutions

# What's next and what's beyond ?

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- Beyond PEPS: Creating a truly international initiative
  1. Launching of an international exchange platform
  2. Project of an international event in Paris in 2014 (with the INET ?)
  3. Unified movement with common and readable claims all over the world

# Modest advices

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- Objectify your impressions: have numbers, figures, rigorously conducted interviews with students
- Suggest concrete alternatives
- Use the crisis as a hook to attract people to the problem of the teaching of economics
- Use media to diffuse your ideas
- Use Facebook and social networks
- Special for high tuitions fees countries: Why would you pay thousands of dollars a year for curricula that do not provide a basic critical understanding of the world ?