

Summary

The importance of a functional judiciary for the economy is a time-honoured belief held by economists. Especially in recent years, this theory has been confirmed by several studies exposing the connection between courts' quality and economic development. However, a complete understanding of the factors underlying the evolution of judicial performance is still in the early stages of development.

This dissertation offers an analysis of judicial performance from an economic perspective. Court performance is understood as a multidimensional concept having at least three dimensions, namely: independence, efficiency and accessibility. In an effort to comprehensively cover these three dimensions, the research is focused on the Brazilian judiciary.

Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are introductory chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the topic by presenting the motivation, scope and outlook of this research. Chapter 2 provides the dissertation's theoretical framework, stressing the relevance of the court system for the proper functioning of society, and discussing the principal determinants of judicial performance. Chapter 3 describes the structure of the Brazilian judicial system, laying a foundation for the analyses of the following chapters.

Chapter 4 explores the evolution of judicial independence. It is believed that *de jure* and *de facto* judicial independence might develop in different ways. While *de jure* judicial independence can be quickly achieved by changes in legislation, *de facto* judicial independence might require time to develop. This chapter confirms this belief and explores the evolution of practical judicial independence. Based on our findings and discussion, we conclude that measures taken to improve judicial accountability might boost the development of *de facto* judicial independence.

Chapter 5 explores the determinants of judicial efficiency change. Adopting a two stage empirical approach, it explores factors that are correlated with courts' productivity growth over time. The results suggest the nonexistence of a trade-off between judicial quality and efficiency improvement, while judges' remuneration, legal complexity and the use of technology affect judicial productivity, however, not always in the expected direction.

Chapter 6 brings judicial accessibility into perspective. Also adopting an empirical approach, it explores the individual and institutional factors that might influence an individual to try to solve a conflict by filing a case in the court system. The results confirm that especially personal characteristics (such as education, gender, age and the presence of a legal professional at home) are correlated with the decision to take legal action.

A final chapter summarizes the general findings, highlights the limitations of the dissertation and present some policy recommendations and opportunities for future research.