



Politics, Bureaucracy and Media: Symbolic Struggles about public hearings disclosure in the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies

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Abstract: This paper analyzes the symbolic struggles over the definition and redesign of public hearings disclosure policy conducted by the Chamber of Deputies, based on the theoretical perspective of Pierre Bourdieu. To understand how they operate these symbolic struggles, the study was based on interviews in depth with all civil servants that have exercised the office of Journalism Coordinator of the Chamber's Communications Office, from 2001 to 2015, were also interviewed the executive-secretaries of the 23 standing committees to make the contrast between the two fields: informational and political. Initial findings draw attention to the existence of a multifactorial process of symbolic struggles in several stages involving redefinitions and constant negotiations between managers of information and representatives of committees that promote public hearings, including parliamentarians themselves and functional body of committees involved in the discussions.

Keywords: Symbolic struggles. Legislative disclosure. Public hearings. Professional values. Political values.

Introduction

The text analyzes the symbolic struggles around the definition and reformulation of the public hearing disclosure policy held by the Chamber of Deputies, based on Bourdieu's theoretical perspective (1989; 2011a; 2011b). For the author, symbolic systems, as structured and structuring instruments of communication and knowledge, fulfill their political function of imposing and legitimizing the domination of one group over the others. The field of symbolic production is therefore a microcosm of symbolic struggles. In other words, the symbolic systems produced by a body of experts are vying for legitimacy before a bureaucratic or political body, for example, as in the case of

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disputes over the public hearings held by the Chamber of Deputies, through its institutional media system, such as Rádio Câmara, TV Câmara and Agência Câmara de Notícias.

To understand how these symbolic struggles operate, the study was based on in-depth interviews with all the holders of the position of Journalism coordinator of the Chamber's Communication Office (Secom), since the coverage articulation and coordination function came into existence even before the formal creation of the Journalism Coordination (CJor)⁴. The executive-secretaries of 23 standing committees were also interviewed to make the counterpoint between the two fields: informational and political. The period studied ranges from 2000 to 2014.

CJor came up with the assignment of articulating editorial criteria for legislative coverage, including public hearings. Since then, six permanent employees have served as CJor holders, all journalists of the CJor staff. The interviews were conducted in the first half of 2015, in a qualitative perspective, based on the sociological principle of comprehensive research, more specifically supported by Giddens (1984) methodological assumption that there is a *double hermeneutic* process in this type of research. This means that sociopolitical knowledge must first go through the analysis of the perception of the agents involved, in this case, the interviewees. In the second instance, it passes through the eyes of the researchers. This was the methodological principle that guided the research.

Politics, bureaucracy and journalism

Studies on bureaucracy and politics often highlight the dichotomies between the two fields, pointing to the rationality of the former and the irrationality of the latter (WEBER, 1999; BOURDIEU, 1996; KLÜGER, 2015). By irrationality is meant a logic of politics, in itself, driven by passion and affections, as opposed to bureaucratic logic, whose virtue would be in impersonality, which excludes feelings and emotions. Politics necessarily involves the dispute of power interests (WEBER, 1999), with their struggles and dissensions (BOURDIEU, 2011). Bureaucracy, in turn, is associated with behaviors governed by rules and procedures that “manage to make their political choices technical decisions” (KLÜGER, 2015, p.91). After all,

⁴ The formal emergence of the CJor occurred in 2003. However, the function of articulation and coordination of coverage already existed even before the institutionalization of the body.

The fact that the devaluation of the politician as opposed to the technician is convergent with common sense is a powerful asset of neutralizing the political action of the technicians. Belief in the rationality of science, technique and modern forms of management would eventually protect the choices presented as techniques of criticism, preventing the foundations of science and technique and the purposes that drive the action of technicians from being judged in their political dimensions, that is, in its irrationality (KLÜGER, 2015, p. 91).

Bourdieu is one of the authors that most emphasizes the political character of bureaucracy, characterized by him as structures of domination whose legitimacy comes from the technical competence anchored in the symbolic capital of titles, diplomas and competitions for state recruitment (BOURDIEU, 2011). As a structure of domination, in Bourdieu's view, the bureaucratic field is an instance of political struggle, although its political character is concealed by "a successful set of magical acts" capable of masking the innumerable non-rational and arbitrary foundations of choice of "competent men" identified as technicians. It is a mechanism of the bureaucracy itself to legitimize its position of domination and to present itself as "a specific social group, best prepared to exercise power in a rational and neutral way" (KLÜGER, 2015, p.92).

This is what Bourdieu (2011a) calls the *technocratic illusion*, which results from the attribution of a technical rationality to the specialists, which contributes to "erasing the social marks of their positions":

Informed by the worldviews prevailing in the spaces in which they were socialized, in the family, at school, in mundane life, decision-making is necessarily linked to their position in the social space, and therefore not universal. The presentation of technicians' decisions as rational, neutral, technical and effective, that is, the conversion of their beliefs and their worldview into universal principles, would thus be a mechanism for reinforcing and legitimizing domination, that is, that is, reproduction of the unequal distribution of resources, including power itself (KLÜGER, 2015, p.92).

In bureaucratic environments, the use of the political term "sometimes designates those who do not have specialized skills, sometimes designates those who possess technical qualifications, but who are accused of being frankly influenced by political ideals" (KLÜGER, 2015, p.79), thus passing the false idea of neutrality of the field of technocracy, as a *neutral place*, whose actors adopt a place of speech anchored in the field of technique (BOURDIEU and BOLTANSKI, 2008; PINTO, 2009; PINZANI, 2013). The bureaucracy presents itself as a universal group, "a reflection organ and a rational instrument charged with realizing the general interest" (BOURDIEU, 2011a, p.95). Bureaucratic acts belong to the category of official acts, that is, "performed in a situation of authority by authorized persons" (p. 112).

For Bourdieu (2011a), bureaucracies institute political action programs "that seek to impose a particular view of the state, in accordance with the interests and values associated with the position held by those who produce them" (BOURDIEU, 2011, p.96). These action programs constitute forms of symbolic domination inherent in the field of state power, since the state "is the quintessential place of concentration and the exercise of symbolic power" (p.108). For the author, bureaucracy is still a form of exercise of the created power of the state, that is, the power to create apparatuses, institutions and spirits, under the regime of doxic submission to the established order. The state has the power to produce and impose "the categories of thought we use spontaneously for all things in the world, and for the state itself" (BOURDIEU, 2011a, p.96). In this sense, bureaucracies institute programs of political action "that seek to impose a particular view of the state, in accordance with the interests and values associated with the position occupied by those who produce them" (BOURDIEU, 2011a, p.96).

The symbolic capital of *neutral places* and *bureaucracy* is technical credibility or *expertocracy* (PINZANI, 2013). For this reason, parliamentarians often invite experts to the legislative debates they play. Here are some remarks about this strategy of parliamentarians to use expert arguments to legitimize political debate in public hearings, as part of the regime of opinion characterized by rationality and discussion, which confers the principle of authority, with a special role for experts in this regard (HABERMAS, 1994).

It is noteworthy that the experts are invited by the deputies, which already indicates that expert knowledge can be used to build *strong speeches*⁵, to inspire public confidence in the work of the committees that promote the debates. After all, the agents of specialized discourse bear a symbolic power, whose capital is technical credibility, supported by *opposing logics* (Kant De Lima, 2010)⁶. The political debate according to the aforementioned author's view is guided by the logic of the contradictory, whose main characteristic is the polarization between theses. This differs from scientific knowledge, based on the premise that it is the *authority of the argument* and not the *argument of authority* that defines the fate of disputes. As we will see later in this text,

⁵ In the sense used by Goffman (1974) and Bourdieu (1998), that is, a discourse in the service of the dominant order, to legitimize and maintain social, political or economic situations.

⁶ These are the typical logics of academic debate, guided by rational and divergent debate. It is the logics of truth production based "on provisional consensus on facts that are built by reflection and explanation of the different perspectives of those involved, in a process of demonstrative argumentation, which aims to convince all the legitimate parties involved" (Kant de Lima, 2010, p.29).

parliamentarians use the authority of the experts' argument to reinforce their own argument of authority as a way of controlling political debates.

On the other hand, Pinzani (2013, p.160) argues that, supported by the discourse of technocracy or *expertocracy*,

the political man who makes his decisions based on the expert knowledge of the experts is not personally responsible for them, because they are the logical consequence of the practical application of such knowledge. This means, in the first place, the depersonalization of politics. The politician becomes a simple technician who reacts to external factors by taking the necessary measures. His room for maneuver is extremely small and his seat can be taken at any time without any problem by another technician – provided that he has the same knowledge as that.

Long (2004) highlights the relevance of knowledge produced from different forms of mediation and sociocultural interfaces. In this process, the debate itself is an instrument of knowledge production and purification, which is potentiated and amplified by the sharing of experiences and perspectives, whether convergent or divergent. In fact, for the author, discursive contexts with divergent ideas are more productive for the maturation of controversial conceptions, besides feeding and feedback the knowledge of the actors who participate in the debates provided by the argumentative arenas that work under the logic of social and political interfaces. In this process, the author emphasizes, individually, the role of experts, political actors, parties, parliaments and other political, scientific, social and cultural institutions. These interfaces are permeated by different relationships and power devices⁷. Such interfaces are also relevant to interconnect the arenas of specialized technical knowledge, political debate and the sphere of common knowledge⁸, that is, those forms of knowledge directly related to the different experiential fields of the lived world.

Another relevant issue in the debate about the relationship between politics and bureaucracy is the role of emotions and affects. In this sense, Castro (2009, p.485)⁹ highlights that political action is not necessarily based on rational calculation. In fact, for the author, political forms are usually mobilized by passions and affections. Mouffe (2005) also underlines the role of emotions in political exchanges. In her assessment,

⁷ For a specific analysis of socio-state interfaces and their policy implications, see Pires and Vaz (2014).

⁸ Common knowledge is also recognized by Maffesoli (2010) as a fundamental field for the construction of the societal plot, based on the intersubjective sharing of the common experience of social subjects, which should be considered as a relativism device of specialized technical knowledge and political knowledge. This plot highlights the plurality of aspects of social life, with the plurality of perspectives and richness of controversies and approaches.

⁹ The quotation is based on Ion and Ravon (1998).

politics is made not only of a rational calculation of interests, but also of symbolic and subjective elements, such as affects. For the author, affects are one of the most powerful forces that move individuals in the field of politics.

Affections also seem to drive journalistic dynamics in publicizing the Chamber of Deputies' public hearings, as discussed below. Regarding the symbolic force of affections in the media, Ribeiro (2005) argues that, as much as politics, journalism is a mediator of affections, while it is also driven by affections, despite the clichés of objectivity and impartiality. These elements would be used to gain audience credibility, although the relationship of communication vehicles with their audiences is imbued with elements from the sphere of subjectivity, such as trust and preference. It is a form of symbolic domination, as pointed out by Bourdieu (1989; 2011b).

Following Bourdieu's arguments, unlike the bureaucracy that is legitimized by the appearance of impersonality, the political field and the journalistic field¹⁰ have in common personalization. The politician, despite being part of a party and a broader field, is elected and recognized in a personalized way and seeks the capital of personal reputation himself, which will be necessary to maintain his term of office and to win new electoral elections. The journalist likewise seeks reputation capital for himself, although he is a member of a media team, of a media institution, such as a newspaper or a TV station. As they are governed by their own rules, produced and endogenously legitimized, the political and journalistic fields are distinguished precisely by these internal rules. Both are understood by Bourdieu (2011b, p.195) as “universes in which their own evaluation criteria operate and which would not be valid in another field”.

For the author, the political field functions “as a place where a certain number of people, who fulfill the conditions of access, play a particular game from which others are excluded” (2011b, p.197). This means that the political field “rests on exclusion, dispossession.” After all, “the more the political field is constituted, the more it becomes autonomous”. Thus, the fact that the political field is autonomous and has its own logic, “the logic that is at the beginning of the positions of those involved in it, there is a specific political interest, not automatically reducible to the interests of the awarded of the term of office”. For the author, “there are interests that are defined in the relationship with the people of the same party or against the people of the other parties”. The operation of the

¹⁰We use the concept of field, defined by Bourdieu (2011b, p. 201), a field of forces, and a field of struggles to transform the relations of forces. “In a field such as the political field or the religious field, or any other field, the conduct of the agents is determined by their position in the structure of the force relationship characteristic of that field at the time considered”.

field produces a kind of closure:

This observable effect is the result of a process: the more a political space becomes autonomous, the more it advances according to its own logic, the more it tends to function in accordance with the interests inherent in the field, the greater the separation from the profane (BOURDIEU, 2011b, P.199).

One of the factors in this evolution towards increasing autonomy and, therefore, increasing separation from other fields, “is the fact that the political field is the place of production and operation of a specific competence, of a sense of the game proper to each field” (p.199). The political field can be described “as a game in which what is in dispute is the legitimate imposition of the principles of vision and division of the social world” (p.206). There are, therefore, in the political field, “symbolic struggles in which adversaries have unequal weapons, unequal capital, unequal symbolic powers” (p.204).

According to Bourdieu (2005), the journalistic field also works based on its own rules and presents relative autonomy in relation to other social fields. Relative autonomy because at the same time it is governed by its own rules and technical and professional protocols. The journalistic field is a porous social field, permeable to other fields, such as economics and politics. The journalist reports daily on what happens in social life, that is, the journalistic discourse is not about himself, as in the case of the political field, but about economy, politics, tourism, religion, the arts etc. Its own norms and technical protocols act as mechanisms to give journalism credibility, since their power lies in making individuals believe. Its main symbolic capital, therefore, is the credibility and trust of audiences, according to Bourdieu.

Drawing a parallel between the political field and the journalistic field, we can say that both are anchored in *symbolic power*, that is, a soft form of power that is established by *word power*, images and discourses, constituting and imposing a world view, a way of thinking and taking a stand on facts. It is a power that depends on the adhesion or complicity of the dominated, that is, the voters (in the case of the political field) and the readers, listeners or viewers (in the case of the journalistic field). Because they are communication relations, political and journalistic discourses dispute forms of imposition of a legitimate view of the social world.

As pointed out by Bourdieu (2005, p.36), “this imposition consists in defining the dominant principles of vision and division of social reality”. In other words: politicians and journalists dispute the symbolic power of naming and classifying the social world, that is, the establishment of the criteria for legitimacy of social action. This dispute,

according to Bourdieu, causes interference from the journalistic field in the political field, since the former builds symbolic representations about the latter. In addition, journalism reaches large audiences, unlike politicians. In addition to daily reports on politics, Bourdieu cites as an example journalists who specialize in commenting and analyzing politics. Thus, to describe the political field today, “we need to include these categories of agents for the simple reason that they produce effects in the political field” (BOURDIEU, 2011b, p.201).

That is why Bourdieu highlights some asymmetries between the political and journalistic fields when it comes to the production and control of political visibility. Even though politicians, as in the case of parliamentarians, increasingly have their own resources and own disclosure devices, such as websites, social media and press offices, the mainstream media still have more power when it comes to viewing space and judging policy, whether by the news, editorials and by the opinion of commentators of the vehicles themselves. Moreover, the media operate from devices that favor them, called by Bourdieu *invisible structures*, which result in a kind of *invisible censorship* or a way of *concealing showing*. Examples of such devices are the selection of themes to be reported and commented, the choice of the most impactful images, the use of audio recordings, the choice of journalistic sources to be invited and “allowed” to express themselves on political themes, speech time, speech clipping through editing, among other procedures.

In the case under study there is a particularity to be considered, as it is an institutional communication system, maintained by the Chamber of Deputies, which falls into the category of *media sources*, that is, vehicles maintained by public institutions themselves (SANT'ANNA, 2009) or *tactical media*, that is, alternative means to commercial vehicles, capable of producing different schedules and framings, according to the interest of the broadcasters (JURIS, 2005), such as the Chamber's media. These media systems do not yet have a defined identity, sometimes being analyzed as vehicles of institutional communication, sometimes as public communication, sometimes as advertising and public relations services, as discussed by Barros and Bernardes (2015), argue, who prefer the denomination of *hybrid communication systems*, since they combine techniques and strategies from various areas of communication, such as journalism, advertising, propaganda and public relations, even when they are labeled journalism, as is the case under consideration in this article. In analyzing the case of the Chamber of Deputies, the authors state that:

From an institutional perspective, legislative media are governmental or state-owned vehicles, that is, controlled by instances of government and with stated political objectives. However, producers have some restrictions on the concept, precisely because, as journalists, they do not want their activity to be identified as political communication, even though they admit the existence of this factor in their work (BARROS; BERNARDES, 2015, p.30).

The authors also point out that “in the case of legislative media, the journalistic authority of professionals is constantly challenged by the other social actors who participate in the institution” (p.32). These actors include the deputies themselves and the staff of the committees that promote public hearings. For this reason, these political and bureaucratic actors “continually try to interfere in the process of defining news rules and modify journalistic procedures” (p.32). According to these researchers, there is a constant dispute among the journalists of the institution, not only with the parliamentarians “who play the double role of “boss” and “source of information”, but also with their own colleagues from other sectors of the Chamber to define what it deserves and what does not deserve to be disclosed about the institution, such as public hearings.

According to the aforementioned authors, these disputes result in permanent tensions between the political, bureaucratic and journalistic information managers, with their divergent interests and their particular views on the role of the media. If for journalists the role of the Chamber’s media is to inform the citizen about what happens in the legislative arena, even when it is negative for the institution's image, for parliamentarians and committee staff, the main function is perceived as instrumental, that is, to select facts always from a positive perspective and favorable to the reputation of parliamentarians and institutions. These differences also appear when it comes to public hearings, as will be shown later.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Coming from Anglo-Saxon law, the public hearing is one of the mechanisms to ensure civil society participation in political and administrative debates. In Brazil, it is the result of the democratizing motivations that inspired the 1988 Constitution (BARROS; BERNARDES, 2010). The Internal Regulations of the Constituent Assembly provided for the presentation of suggestions from representative entities of the society by means of referendum, plebiscite and presentation of popular amendments. However, these forms that strengthened the democratizing character of the new Charter were extremely complex to implement and, therefore, they achieved little result (WAR 2010).

Public hearings, therefore, have become the most recurring instrument for popular participation in public policy-making, both in the legislative and other branches. In the specific case of the Legislative Branch, this instrument is one of the most expressive regarding the political function of Parliament as a mediating body between the state and civil society, as highlighted by Weber (1999) and Habermas (1997). This mediation, according to Troiano (2015) can also function as a mechanism for negotiating interests, as an institutional space for filtering access of actors and organizations to parliament, as well as institutionalizing relations between the actors involved.

It should be noted that this is a mechanism inserted in the list of rights of political participation. Thus, the institute of public hearings is based on the assumption that the citizen should not be a mere observer of the public scene or passive agent of the political or administrative process. It is therefore an expedient considered indispensable for the strengthening of the practices of democracy and citizenship in the current context. Unlike the public session, where the public only watches the debate, at the public hearing the representatives of the community can speak actively, assuring citizens the right to collaborate and to be heard. Thus, this instrument allows the strengthening of bonds between society and the State, as well as enabling the renewal of dialogue between public agents and the population. It is also considered “a suitable mechanism for the formation of consensus of public opinion”, as well as “element of democratization of power and mode of participation in public power” (DALBOSCO, 2002, p. 155).

The Legislative Branch has in the public hearings democratic spaces for debate between parliamentarians and society that subsidize parliamentarians for the exercise of their institutional functions (GUERRA, 2010). The holding of these hearings results from constitutional command (art. 58, paragraph 2, item II, of the 1988 CF), and the two Chambers of the National Congress are responsible for its implementation. According to Celso Ribeiro Bastos (1995) “public hearings with civil society entities are held when issues of social interest or even specific segments of society are raised, such hearings therefore constitute spaces for collective debate”.

The Chamber of Deputies incorporated into the work routines the debate with civil society entities. These debates are provided for in the Internal Regulation of the Chamber of Deputies (RICD, articles 255-258). The first of these sets out the guidelines that the committees should follow to carry out the debates:

Article 255. Each Committee may hold a public hearing meeting with a civil society entity to instruct legislative matters in progress, as well as to deal with matters of

relevant public interest pertaining to its area of activity, upon the proposal of any member or upon request of an interested entity.

Following this, RICD defines the dynamics of guest selection:

Article 256. Once the public hearing meeting has been approved, the Committee shall select, to be heard, the authorities, the persons concerned, and the experts associated with the participating entities, and the President of the Committee shall issue the invitations.

Paragraph 1 In the event that there are defenders and opponents on the matter under consideration, the Commission will proceed in such a way as to enable the hearing of the various currents of opinion.

Paragraph 2 The guest should be limited to the theme or issue under discussion and will have twenty minutes, which can be extended to the discretion of the Commission, and cannot be separated.

.....
Single paragraph. At any time, parts may be transferred or copies provided to interested parties”.

It is noticed that the main characteristics of the public hearings defended by the RICD are the transparency and the effective debate on relevant subject and of collective interest, with space for all currents of opinion found in society. It is an idealized conception of a Committee as an organic and functionally cooperative and integrated body of politics. In this regard, it is timely to mention Bourdieu's notion of committee as "a group of persons invested with a mission of general interest and created to transcend their particular interests to produce universal proposals" (BOURDIEU, 2011, p.123)

The first public hearing held by the Chamber of Deputies after the promulgation of the 1988 Constitutional Charter took place on 11/03/1988, promoted by the Minimum Wage Inter-Party Committee, with the presence of employers and trade union representatives, as reported in a speech published by the National Congress Official Gazette the then deputy Maurílio Ferreira Lima (BRASIL, 1998, p. 3784). Since 2000, Agência Câmara began to disclose information about public hearings, which immediately increased the volume of applications presented, as revealed in an interview¹¹ one of the occupants of the position of Journalism coordinator of the Chamber's Communication Office:

Disclosure in the Chamber's media has led to a rapid growth of these debates, which shows a clear effect of parliamentary visibility. Prior to disclosure, the number of hearings per year was insignificant. In 2000, for example, about ten hearings were held. In 2002, there were 32. In 2012 it went up to 320. This shows that, with the institutional media space, the volume increased visibly. What we observed is that the interest of the parliamentarians was not so much

¹¹ The interviews were conducted under anonymity regime, to avoid embarrassment to the interviewees, as it involves subjective judgments and criticism.

in the debate itself, but in the visibility guaranteed by the disclosure.

Each year, 23 standing committees and various special committees of the Chamber hold almost 1,000 public hearings annually¹². Most of them occur from Tuesday to Thursday, period when parliamentarians concentrate their activity in Brasília. In a simple calculation, it can be seen that the average of events from Tuesday to Thursday is almost 15 per day. On rare occasions deputies hold hearings in the states, usually to address issues of interest to special committees. For this reason, many events end up happening at the same time in Committee plenary sessions (BERNARDES and BARROS, 2010).

Table 1 presents a survey of public hearings held from 2001 to 2015¹³. The oscillation between odd and even years is explained by the interference of electoral years in reducing parliamentary activity in general, which also affects public hearings. The trend, however, has been one of growth. If in 2001 there were 492 hearings, in 2015 there were 931.

Table 1 - Public hearings by year

	YEAR	N	%
1	2001	492	6.94
2	2002	193	2.72
3	2003	562	7.93
4	2004	378	5.33
5	2005	418	5.90
6	2006	185	2.61
7	2007	602	8.49
8	2008	445	6.28
9	2009	626	8.83
10	2010	260	3.67
11	2011	487	6.87
12	2012	387	5.46
13	2013	772	10.89
14	2014	349	4.92
15	2015	931	13.14
	TOTAL	7087	100

Source: Own elaboration, with data from the Committees' Department of the Chamber of Deputies.

¹² In addition to the hearings, the Chamber holds almost 500 events per year, including seminars, conferences, congresses and exhibitions, as Bernardes and Barros (2010).

¹³ Although disclosure began in 2000, there is no documentary record of this year's data in the archives of the Committees' Department.

Table 2 presents a survey as committees hold public hearings. During the study period there was a predominance of public hearings promoted by parliamentary committees of inquiry (11.37%) and the so-called special committees (11.26%). In the case of permanent committees, the distribution is relatively similar, with little expressive percentages of difference, except in the case of Culture Committees; Urban Development; of Road and Transport. It should be noted that not all of these committees have been in operation since 2000. Some have been created over time, such as the Culture Committee, which was formerly part of the Education Committee and gained autonomy in 2013.

It is noteworthy that we present the complete survey here only as an illustration, with the exception that the focus of the article are the permanent committees that have already worked since the implementation of the public hearing disclosure policy¹⁴. The justification for this choice is that it is a set of committees that act permanently and continuously, that is, they constitute the essence of the structure of the Chamber of Deputies, with a work that is part of the bureaucratic and political daily life. The others are distinct, created for specific purposes and with a certain duration. They are so diverse that studying them would require other methodological strategies, especially the case study.

Table 2 – Hearings by Committees (2001-2015)

	COMMITTEE	N	%
1	Parliamentary committees of inquiry	806	11.37
2	Special committees	798	11.26
3	Social Security and Family Committee - CSSF	481	6.79
4	Agriculture, Livestock, Supply and Rural Development Committee - CAPADR	373	5.26
5	Education Committee - CE	341	4.81
6	Committee for National Integration, Regional and Amazon Development - CINDRA	334	4.71
7	Labor, Administration and Public Service Committee - CTASP	332	4.68
8	Committee for Human Rights and Minorities - CDHM	319	4.50
9	Consumer Protection Committee - CDC	306	4.32
10	Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee - CREDN	301	4.25
11	Environment and Sustainable Development Committee - CMADS	288	4.06

¹⁴ For this reason, the committees created in 2015 were excluded from the study, which were still being structured during the research period and there was no background regarding the relationship with institutional disclosure managers. These are: [Women's Rights Committee](#), [Elderly Rights Committee](#) and [Disability Rights Committee](#).

	Financial Supervision and Control Committee - CFFC	283	3.99
12	Committee for Economic Development, Industry, Trade and Services - CDEICS	276	3.89
13	Science and Technology, Communication and Informatics Committee - CCTCI	258	3.64
14	Finance and Taxation Committee - CFT	224	3.16
	Mines and Energy Committee - CME	185	2.61
15	Tourism Committee - CTUR	175	2.47
16	Urban Development Committee - CDU	174	2.46
17	Committee for Public Security and Combating Organized Crime - CSPCCO	159	2.24
18	Committees created in 2015-2016	158	2.23
19	Road and Transport Committee - CVT	148	2.09
20	Participatory Legislation Committee - CLP	134	1.89
21	Constitution and Justice and Citizenship Committee - CCJC	84	1.19
22	Culture Committee - CCULT	52	0.73
23	Sports Committee - CESPO	48	0.68
24	External Commissions	44	0.62
25	Joint Budget Commission	6	0.08
	TOTAL	7.087	100

Source: Own elaboration, with data from the Committee's Department of the Chamber of Deputies.

INTERVIEW ANALYSIS – THE VIEW OF INSTITUTIONAL DISCLOSURES

The interviews draw attention to the existence of a multi-factorial process of symbolic, multi-stage struggles involving constant re-definitions and negotiations between CJor information managers and representatives of committees promoting public hearings, including parliamentarians themselves, the executive-secretaries and staff of the collegiate. From the thorough examination of the interviews were identified five phases of symbolic struggles, which will be detailed from now on. The first – and the most peaceful – consisted in increasing visibility and adapting content to journalistic standards, with coverage beginning (2000-2002). This initial phase is summarized by one of the informants as follows:

As this is new to us at Secom, as well as for deputies and committee staff, there was a certain internal euphoria, a climate of collaboration, with a spirit that we were doing something useful for the Chamber of Deputies, for parliamentarians and for society. In addition, the initiative was well received by the committees, as there was a diagnosis that the press was not interested in the work of the committees. Secom's initiative was seen as capable of addressing this information gap.

During this period, according to the reports of the informants, the committees prepared prior material on each of the public hearings held to journalists in the Chamber of Deputies, to make the most of the debate. “And as we were at the beginning of the project, with no previous experience to mark us, we published almost everything, without major changes in content and format”, describes the same informant. However, as time went on and the number of public hearings increased, “we had to be more selective as we could no longer cover all hearings and make lengthy stories, practically a report or minutes of the meeting. From then on, the conflicts started, explains the interviewee”.

Then it begins the second phase (2003-2005), in which the conflicts intensified, when the CJor began to establish specific editorial criteria for agenda and framing, which displeased parliamentarians and committee teams. Since *Agência Câmara* began to disclose information about public hearings, the volume of applications presented has immediately increased, as revealed in an interview¹⁵ one of the occupants of the position of Journalism coordinator of the Chamber's Communication Office:

Disclosure in the Chamber's media has led to a rapid growth of these debates, which shows a clear effect of parliamentary visibility. Prior to disclosure, the number of hearings per year was insignificant. In 2000, for example, about ten hearings were held. In 2001, there were 492. All this because of the effect of visibility in the media of the Chamber. This shows that the interest of the parliamentarians was not so much in the debate itself, but in the visibility guaranteed by the disclosure.

According to reports, "it was a phase of daily conflict, with complaints from all committees, all parliamentarians involved in the debates". On the other hand, while the demand for disclosure increased, the body of journalists to cover remained the same. “To cover these events, we had a team of about ten journalists at the time, which made it impossible to disclose all hearings”. Faced with this impossibility, “we are no longer seen as allies of the committees and parliamentarians in the work of disclosure, and now occupy the ungrateful role of ‘boycotters’ of the work of the deputies, according to the speech of the committee staff”. The symbolic disputes were intensified with the discussion about the criteria of each Secom vehicle (newspaper, radio, TV and internet). As one of the survey informants' comments:

¹⁵ The interviews were conducted under anonymity regime, to avoid embarrassment to the interviewees, as it involves subjective judgments and criticism.

Each vehicle has its own language, characteristics and limitations. Printed newspapers have page limits, radio uses short notes, and TV prioritizes events with expressive images, and so on. However, the deputies wanted each vehicle to cover in their own way, that is, each parliamentarian required as much time and space as possible for the public hearing he requested or presided over or in the debate in which he used the microphone. They were not satisfied with a note or a brief record within the possibilities of each vehicle.

An emblematic example of this phase is in the following report by one of the interviewees:

The situation became so difficult that some deputies barred the entry of Secom journalists in public hearings, so they reacted in such an extreme way that they refused to disclose. In fact, they not only refused, they also forbade us to do our work. In practice they were telling us, 'If it's not to serve us and do it our way, we don't want the disclosure to happen'. The President of the Chamber was needed to calm the spirits and explain to the deputies that the reality was different, with a high number of hearings and a small staff to cover the work.

The fourth phase (2006-2010), resulting from increased visibility, included new actors in the field of symbolic struggles, such as the entities and pressure and interest groups involved in the hearings' agenda. "The situation was even more conflicted, as in addition to the daily complaints from parliamentarians and committee officials, we began to receive a significant volume of e-mails and phone calls from representatives of the entities and interest groups participating in public hearings", reports another informant. We noticed in this fourth phase the intensification of conflicts due to the entry of new actors in the symbolic struggles around the disclosure of debates. The participation of these civil society actors on the one hand is positive, as it shows that the debate has gained greater social visibility, but also draws attention to the disputes for visibility between parliamentarians and these actors. This is what Miguel (2002) calls strategies to control political visibility, that is, each actor involved in the debates tries to interfere in the disclosure, to impose his vision on the subject discussed.

For the interviewees, this phase constitutes "a complication for the disclosure work, because besides the lack of journalists for coverage, we had to dedicate a lot to answer the phone calls and answer the e-mails of these entities". Because it is a dispute over the framing of information, "these people in general are very assertive, insistent and able to go to the last instance, such as complaining directly to the higher hierarchy, such as the Secretary of Communication of the Chamber or even the President of Chamber, in some situations". Because it was routine at this stage, reports show that "this generated a climate of internal distrust, as if we were boycotting the views and opinions of

representatives of these entities, as if we were working against civil society".

The fifth phase (2010-2014) further amplified this scenario, with the debate on media convergence and the start of hearing transmissions over the Internet. "As we started a new system, logically that problems also appeared on both sides, that is, from parliamentarians and civil society," reports another informant. The symbolic disputes in this case revolve around TV Câmara's reputation capital and the WebCâmara system:

It is worth remembering that we are talking about a time when TV Câmara was already consolidated as a recognized vehicle in the political environment, with more than ten years of a trajectory that had already made TV the most relevant vehicle for the disclosure of parliamentary activity in Chambers' own view. We have internal research that showed that. And suddenly there is a new window for public hearings disclosure, that is, the internet, which still lacked the popularity it has today. For us at Secom, offering the committees one more alternative was a very positive thing, but the idea was received with reservations, both by parliamentarians and civil society entities, explains one of the informants.

The conflicts arose not only as a result of the novelty of the live broadcast of public hearings over the Internet at the time, but also as a matter of hierarchy. Hearings considered "most important" by Secom were broadcast on TV, while those of minor importance were broadcast on the Internet. According to the reports, the difficulty, on both sides, was the understanding that one theme could arouse the attention of a larger number of people, while others, although important, "dialogue with smaller audiences":

For us at Secom it was clear that a public hearing on a theme such as combating violence against women, for example, was much more public than a discussion about native *açaí* fruit plantation. In such a case, for us, there was no doubt which would be broadcast on TV and which would be broadcast on the Internet. The problem is that both the deputy who was chairing the discussion on *açaí* fruit and the environmentalists present at the meeting did not agree with our perspective, but little by little this was changing, with the increased use of the internet and the recognition today that it can be a vehicle even more relevant than TV.

Questionnaire analysis – the committee's view

To assess how the staff of the Chamber's permanent committees perceive the disclosure made about public hearings, a census survey was conducted with the executive-secretaries of the 22 Chamber's permanent Committees in 2015¹⁶. Despite all the advancement in disclosure policy pointed out by Secom respondents, 50% of executive-

¹⁶ There are currently 25 permanent committees, but for the application of the questionnaire we excluded those created in 2015, as there is not yet accumulated experience. These are the Committees for the Defense of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CPD); Women's (CMULHER); and the Elderly (CIDOSO).

secretaries of Committee assess disclosure as regular, 45.45% think it is good, and 4.55% think it is bad, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 - How do you evaluate the disclosure of public hearings by the Chamber's media?

ANSWERS	N	%
Regular	11	50.00
Good	10	45.45
Bad	1	4.55
Optimum	0	0
TOTAL	22	100

Source: Own elaboration.

In the comments field on this issue, respondents acknowledge that disclosure “is sometimes hampered by the large number of events held at the same time, which makes it impossible for all hearings to broadcast”. Others complain that "in some cases, disclosure occurs with considerable delay, which may occur a few days after the event". Another respondent made the following record:

Public disclosure has greatly improved. There was a time when disclosure only took place if a formal request was made to Secom, yet we were not always able to broadcast live or post-disclosure a summary of the discussions. Today I see how much it has evolved, mainly because of the internet.

Regarding the lack of staff for further disclosure, another respondent wrote:

I am aware of the lack of staff in the Chamber, and it cannot be forgotten that the number of permanent and temporary Committees is significant, but it is not acceptable that some events of relevant national interest are not properly disclosed.

Compared with the past, 50% see little difference from current disclosure, while 45.45% consider that there is a lot of difference, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 - Do you notice differences from past disclosure and current work?

ANSWERS	N	%
Little difference	11	50.00
A lot of difference	10	45.45
To some extent	1	4.55
No difference	0	0.00
TOTAL	22	100

Source: Own elaboration.

Regarding the complaints of parliamentarians, the data show a tendency to pacify symbolic struggles around the definition of the criteria for the disclosure of public hearings. Half of the respondents (50%) answered that deputies eventually complain; 40.91% answered that there is no complaint and 9.09% think that complaints currently happen with a medium frequency (Table 5).

Table 5 - Do the deputies requesting public hearings complain about how they are publicized?

ANSWERS	N	%
They Eventually complain	11	50.00
They do not complain	9	40.91
They complain with medium frequency	2	9.09
They complain too often	0	0
TOTAL	22	100

Source: Own elaboration.

According to the written report of one of the informants, "MPs who require public hearings complain mainly about the media space intended for the event, because they always think that a very important theme ends up being without emphasis or very brief and superficial". Other executive-secretaries pointed to complaints from parliamentarians about the lack of photographic coverage. "Often there is only the textual record, without any pictures of the parliamentarian who requested the meeting". In agreeing with the criticism of the deputies, another informant wrote: "the criticism of parliamentarians generally shows dissatisfaction with the non-recognition of the importance of the subject debated".

Asked what would be the most recurring complaints and criticisms from deputies, we got the following answers:

- The main criticism is not of coverage, but of its absence when it occurs.
- Eventually, there is criticism about content, which is considered insufficient or not covering aspects of interest to deputies.
- They ask for the event to appear in *Jornal da Câmara* or for TV Câmara to show flashes of what happens in committees. It is important for the Chamber that the work of the committees, little known to the general population and where so many positive things happen, is better publicized.
- They complain that the deputy's point of view is not always going to be prominent in the disclosure. Sometimes criticism of the parliamentarian's point of view predominates.
- There are situations in which the opinion of the people's representatives, elected by popular vote, is less important in matters that prioritize left social movements, as if they were the representatives of society.
- Disclosure focuses on the themes of greatest national repercussion, especially when the themes discussed are on the agenda of the mainstream media. The idea we have is that the agenda of parliamentarians that does not fit the "big themes" does not even matter to the Chamber's media.

As we can see, the repertoire of criticism and complaints is varied, but it points in a common direction: that disclosure addresses the claims of a disclosure focused on the perspective and on the parliamentarians themselves. This shows a view of the public hearing as an instrument to promote the visibility of parliamentarians from their personal views. Even testimonials that refer to the interests of the population and society are in fact centered on a culture that parliamentarians should be the center of the disclosure by the Chamber's media, although public hearings are considered participation tools to give voice to representatives of civil society.

The tendency of executive-secretaries of committees is to agree with parliamentarians' complaints about public hearings being publicized. What varies is the type of agreement, as shown in Table 6. The data show that 40.91% agree completely, while 27.27% agree in most cases and in some cases, respectively. Only one respondent (4.55%) does not agree.

Table 6 - Do you agree with the complaints and criticism of the deputies?

ANSWERS	N	%
I totally agree	9	40.91
I agree in most cases	6	27.27
I agree in a few cases	6	27.27
I do not agree	1	4.55
TOTAL	22	100

Source: Own elaboration.

In relation to all committee teams, 36.36% of the servers do not complain about public hearings disclosure, while 31.82% eventually complain, 27.27% complain with medium frequency and only one answered that the servers complain very often. (Table 7).

Table 7 – Are there criticisms and complaints about the disclosure by the team of servers and collaborators of the committees?

ANSWERS	N	%
The servers don't complain	8	36.36
The servers eventually complain	7	31.82
Servers complain with medium frequency	6	27.27
Servers complain too often	1	4.55
TOTAL	22	100

Source: Own elaboration.

Asked if there would be aspects to be improved in public hearing disclosure (open question), we obtained the following answers:

- Disclosure should be made to reach the public interested in the subject of the public hearing, not only internally, since the public hearing is an opportunity for the Chamber to be in contact with the demands of society. When the deputies themselves are in charge of publicizing their events, the target audience is reached, and the hearing has a large popular participation.
- I believe the most relevant public hearings should be featured on the homepage of the Chamber website. A banner that kept updating from time to time. I find the path to be taken by the general public on the site too long to gain access to the disclosure of important events.

Regarding the evaluation of the Chamber's communication vehicles regarding the public hearings disclosure, 32.26% of the respondents consider that the Agência Câmara is the one that best fulfills this function. Rádio Câmara appears in second place, with 29.03%, while 25.81% answered that they do not perceive difference and consider the vehicles equally efficient. Jornal da Câmara and TV Câmara have the same preference percentage as informants, that is, 6.45% (Table 8).

These data show that the disputes of parliamentarians for public hearings to be broadcast preferentially by TV Câmara are no longer relevant today. If TV was considered to be the most reputed vehicle in terms of publicizing parliamentary activity, it has lost its popularity to the internet today, with the primacy of Agência Câmara (on the Internet). Although the answers were not given directly by parliamentarians, this can be deduced since executive-secretaries of committees deal directly with parliamentarians

on a daily basis and hear the opinions of deputies. Regarding the role of the internet today, one respondent wrote the following report:

One service that helped a lot in publicizing the Committee's work was the live webcasting of all events, as TV Câmara has no technical resources to fully cover all committee meetings. This has been a very positive gain for the society that seeks us to know if the event of their interest will be broadcast live over the web.

Specifically about *Agência Câmara*, we highlight the following comment from one of the survey informants:

The *Agência Câmara* is the best vehicle for public hearing in two respects. First, it announces the event in advance. Second, it covers the guest exhibit by briefly summarizing each exhibitor's speech, highlighting all relevant placements of the theme under discussion. For the general public it is possible to get an idea of what was addressed only by reading the news from *Agência Câmara*.

One of the executive-secretaries drew attention to the low performance of parliamentarians in the debates promoted by the committees in the form of public hearings:

In fact, I don't see that the problem is in the advertising or the vehicles. They all do their job, but I don't see much scope in publicizing such hearings. The problem is that those who should be the most interested, the parliamentarians, rarely make up a qualified cadre, very few attend the hearings, and when they do, it is just to make the photo or a short statement in front of cameras and microphones.

Table 8 - Which vehicle do you think best fulfills the disclosure function the public hearing?

ANSWERS	N	%
The Agência Câmara is the most efficient	10	32.26
The Rádio Câmara is the most efficient	9	29.03
I see no differences between vehicles and I consider them all equally efficient	8	25.81
The Jornal da Câmara is the most efficient	2	6.45
The TV Câmara is the most efficient	2	6.45
TOTAL	31	100

Source: Own elaboration.

The data from the questionnaire reveal disputes for visibility on another level, namely within the legislative agenda. Table 9 shows that 72.73% of respondents feel that certain themes receive more attention than others in public hearing disclosure.

Table 9 - Do you think there are themes that receive more adequate coverage than others?

ANSWERS	N	%
Yes	16	72.73
No	6	27.27
TOTAL	22	100

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 10 shows the themes considered the most and the least relevant in the disclosure of public hearings by the Chamber's media. Among the themes that informants think are most prominently addressed are human rights, including the rights of persons with disabilities (19.35%). The Finance and Taxation Committee appears with 16.13%, and the themes related to law, justice and citizenship register 12.90%. Consumer protection and social security and family tie, with 6.45%. Finally, also tied, are agriculture and livestock issues, education, sports, regional and Amazonian development, participatory legislation and public safety.

If there is a perception by some of the executive-secretaries committees that the area of human rights is one of those that receives the most space for disclosure, the person responsible for this issue said the opposite:

I have no elements to assess adequacy in all themes, but I can say that my committee's theme – human rights and minorities – receives less space / attention than it deserves, given the relevance of the theme and the size of the affected population and interested in it.

Table 10 - Themes that receive more adequate coverage

ANSWERS	N	%
Defending the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	6	19.35
Human Rights and Minorities	6	19.35
Finance and Taxation	5	16.13
Law, Justice and Citizenship	4	12.90
Consumer defense	2	6.45
Social Security and Family	2	6.45

Agriculture, Livestock, Supply and Rural Development	1	3.23
Education	1	3.23
Sports	1	3.23
National Integration, Regional and Amazon Development	1	3.23
Participatory Legislation	1	3.23
Public Safety and Combating Organized Crime	1	3.23
Science and Technology, Communication and Computers	0	0.00
Urban Development	0	0.00
Economic Development, Industry, Commerce and Services	0	0.00
Environment and Sustainable Development	0	0.00
Mines and Energy	0	0.00
Foreign Relations and National Defense	0	0.00
Labor, Public Administration and Public Service	0	0.00
Tourism	0	0.00
Road and Transport	0	0.00
TOTAL	31	100

Source: Own elaboration.

In the space for comments, some informants pointed out that “the greatest coverage relates to the importance and repercussion of the theme to be discussed at the public hearing and not with the thematic area of the committees”. Another wrote as follows: "In my view, the Chamber's media are very focused on the activities of the Plenary and the Chamber's president, leaving aside institutional disclosure". Another informant alluded to the changes in the policy for publicizing legislative activities due to the style of management of those who preside over the Chamber: Starting this year¹⁷, there is a reduction in space for themes related to human rights, citizenship, social movements, civil society in general”.

Conclusions

The initial conclusions draw attention to the existence of a multi-factorial process of symbolic and multi-stage struggles involving constant redefinitions and negotiations between CJor information managers and representatives of committees promoting public

¹⁷ Allusion to the management of Eduardo Cunha as Chamber's president.

hearings, including parliamentarians, secretaries, the executive-secretaries and staff of the collegiate and the interest groups involved in the debates. So far five phases of symbolic struggles have been identified.

The first – and the most peaceful – consisted in increasing visibility and adapting content to journalistic standards, with coverage beginning (2000-2002). In the second (2003-2005), the conflicts intensified, when the CJor began to establish specific editorial criteria for agenda and framing, which displeased the parliamentarians. The third widened the symbolic disputes, with the discussion about the criteria proper to each Secom vehicle (newspaper, radio, TV and internet). The fourth (2006-2010), resulting from the increased visibility, included new actors in the field of symbolic struggles, such as the entities and pressure and interest groups involved in the hearing agenda. The fifth and final phase (2010-2014) further amplified this scenario, with the debate on media convergence and the start of interactive hearings.

The study reveals how fierce and continuing symbolic disputes are about what should be disclosed and how disclosure should take place. Each bureaucratic segment presents discourse that points to a normative horizon about the disclosure of public hearings. From the point of view of Secom's institutional communication managers, this normative horizon refers to the so-called news criteria, that is, the themes of greater public repercussion should receive greater attention. For parliamentarians, in turn, the criterion of relevance is defined based on the direct involvement of the parliamentarian with the disclosed activity. It is, as we saw earlier, a dispute over the symbolic power of words and images, with each segment trying to interfere to secure its perspective. This is what Miguel (2008) calls visibility control. For this reason, the institutional policy of publicizing the Chamber's media is continually questioned by parliamentarians and their bureaucratic operators, that is, the servants who work in the committee's bureaucracy. It is a dispute between the technical values (represented by the speeches of journalists) and the political values (the speeches of the deputies and their bureaucratic allies), in a clear symbolic dispute, according to Bourdieu.

It is interesting to note here the configuration of two types of bureaucracy. One is represented by the body of journalists and information managers (Secom servers) and the other is as if it were a “hybrid bureaucracy”, the teams working on committees that promote public hearings. Although they are all part of the same bureaucratic system of the Chamber of Deputies, in practice it is as if they were two bureaucratic worlds, each with a specific rhetoric. The closer to parliamentarians, the more bureaucratic teams

adhere to the values, ideas and opinions of deputies, such as the bureaucratic body of Committees, whose presidents are parliamentarians. In the case of Secom, there is no parliamentary in the management of the Chamber' media¹⁸. All chiefs, journalists, and information managers were career servants at the time of the research.

It is also worth mentioning the disputes between the committees themselves and the parliamentarians. The research draws attention to the diversity of commissions, with their agendas and strategies of symbolic struggles that occur between them. Just as the parliamentarians who chair the commissions have their political performance marked by the pursuit of political distinction, the individualization of their deeds and the achievement and maintenance of their own political reputation, the committees also reproduce this form of action. As we have seen in the analysis, in the case of the disclosure of human rights-related issues, while about 40% of the executive-secretaries of Committees think this is the thematic area that receives the most attention from the Chamber's media (Table 10), in the evaluation according to the Executive-secretary of the Human Rights and Minorities Committee, the public hearings promoted by this Committee do not receive due disclosure.

The controversies surrounding these symbolic struggles are relevant as elements to perspective the action logic of each segment involved in managing the effects of parliamentary visibility. Moreover, they concern a fundamental aspect of politics, which is visibility, which increasingly occurs through the mediatization of politics. So much so that we are dealing with an institutional system of mediatization of politics.

We believe that the results of this research may contribute to the understanding that symbolic struggles are part of the political-institutional process of the Chamber of Deputies and that their effects can be understood and, where appropriate, mitigated to make the political-legislative process as adequate as possible to contribute to the resolution of society's conflicts and aspirations.

¹⁸ Since Secom was created in 1998, that's how it worked. The situation changed in 2015 when then-president Eduardo Cunha appointed a deputy to oversee the management of Secom's communication activities. Even so, what the current managers say is that the deputy knows little about the vehicles and cannot interfere so much. He acts mainly in defining the general communication guidelines, which explains the maintenance of a bureaucratic culture without much proximity to the deputies.

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