WHEN CONNECTED MUNICIPAL LEGISLATIVES HAVE ONLINE CONVERSATION SPACE: A STUDY OF THE COMMENTS ON THE LIVES ON FACEBOOK OF PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS

Paula Andressa de Oliveira[1]
Michele Goulart Massuchin[2]

Abstract: The article discusses the online conversations in spaces monitored by the municipal legislature that occur during the lives of the parliamentary sessions transmitted by Facebook, having as a cut five Paraná municipalities - Laranjeiras do Sul, Araucaria, Cascavel, Maringá and Curitiba, totaling in the empirical analysis 305 comments. The article considered the number of commentators, the topic present in the comments, the interaction of the House with the public, the type of commentators' approach, the moral judgment, the emphasis on political quarrels, the commentator's stance, the dominant persuasive strategy, the reflexivity and types of comments. The analysis is based on the assumption that this is a relevant moment for discussion of topics of public interest, being the proximity between representatives and represented relevant. The results indicated a conversation in this space with considerable information and low remnants of radicalization.

Keywords: Municipal legislature; Online conversation; Facebook; Parliamentary Sessions.

1 Introduction

How do online conversations take place among Paraná state citizens when they are connected with the municipal legislature on Facebook during plenary sessions? This is the question that guides the study presented in this article and that will be answered in the empirical part of the text, according to the content analysis of the comments made during live broadcasts. The proposed discussion is based on the assumption that, with the appropriation of the internet by political agents and public institutions - as is the case with Legislative Houses - it is possible to observe new spaces for dialogue that can bring citizens closer to political decisions (LESTON-BANDEIRA, 2018). The broadcast transmission of sessions reduces the distance between representatives and those represented and, consequently, leads to improvement in the mechanisms of accountability, transparency and relationships.

Various institutions - public, private and from the third sector - can include digital mechanisms to approach citizens. Some of such institutions are the municipal legislatures. In

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[1] Master's student in the Graduate Program in Communication (PPGCOM) at Federal University of Paraná (UFPR). Member of the Group for Research on Political Communication and Public Opinion (CPOP). ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5568-1139. E-mail: paulaandreolioliveira@gmail.com.

[2] Professor in the Graduate Program in Communication (PPGCOM), in the Graduate Program in Political Science (PPGCP) and in the Department of Communication (DECOM) of Federal University of Paraná (UFPR). Researcher in the Group for Research on Political Communication and Public Opinion (CPOP/UFPR). ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7918-4487. E-mail: mimassuchin@gmail.com.

2019, in Paraná state, 118 of the 399 municipalities had a Facebook page (OLIVEIRA, 2019). In addition, several studies show the efforts made by political institutions to occupy online spaces, whether through social media (MARQUES; MIOLA, 2019) or through their own websites (BARROS; BERNARDES; RODRIGUES, 2015). Unlike the state and federal legislatures, which have alternatives to mediate communication with citizens, as is the case of the Legislative TV Channel (BARROS; BERNARDES, 2009), in the case of municipalities, the internet comes to replace other parliamentary media so as to ensure that proximity occurs and that the events and decisions of the political realm can enter the public space.

With this regard, this article presents a content analysis of the comments made during Facebook's lives from ordinary meetings by five city councils in Paraná, with two live transmissions from each institution: Laranjeiras do Sul, Araucária, Cascavel, Maringá and Curitiba. Altogether there are 305 comments made in 10 live meetings in total, which were broadcast from August to September 2019. Such comments are observed according to variables that were previously selected and adapted from the literature: number of commentators, the topic in the comments, the council's interaction with the audience, type of commentator's approach, moral judgment, emphasis on political disputes, commentator's stance, dominant persuasive strategy, reflexivity and types of comments. Thus, it is discussed how a tool that highlights the transparency of legislative decisions can also promote debate with citizens. The proposal of the text, therefore, is to understand the characteristics of the dialogue between citizens and their representatives or also among the citizens themselves in pages that have as objective to provide more visibility to the acts of the legislature by broadcasting the sessions and making their content available to the public.

The sessions represent a moment when topics of public interest are discussed and there may be even greater and more important rapprochement between representatives and those represented, which is why this content has been selected for analysis. Those who cannot have on-site access to sessions can watch and interact with them when institutions - city councils, in this case - choose to create online spaces for broadcasting. However, this approach and instantaneous dialogue through the digital sphere can take place in a different fashion, based on deliberative aspects, or not, that are found in the conversations through comments.

Thus, it is understood that city councils' Facebook pages become a space that promotes transparency to a certain extent, as reported by Barreto (2019). This is because the online transmission of sessions, for example, which replaces TV broadcasts in the case of municipalities, also increases access to the political decisions made by representatives. Moreover, there is the fact that Facebook pages have an additional feature as compared to TV channels, which is the possibility of interaction through comments. Furthermore, a contribution to research on legislature is noteworthy, since it still has less space in discussions in communication and politics, reiterating Barros, Bernardes and Rodrigues (2015).

The second topic in this article, following this introduction, deals with mediatized legislatures by giving a brief description of the changes that have taken place in order to bring representatives closer to those represented, from the traditional format to the digital sphere. The third part presents an overview of social media as a space for providing online information and conversation in the spaces of social media. After the theoretical part, there are then the following steps that cover the methodological approach and data analysis. Next, the conclusions about the study are presented.

2 Mediatized legislatures: from the traditional format to the digital sphere

Municipal legislative branches are characterized by their proximity to the city's daily demands. The democratic representation exercised through the terms of office is linked to the community's interests, with the aforementioned branches being responsible for representing the population in plenary sessions and bringing daily concerns to debate. However, it is not uncommon for the leading role played by the municipal executive branch, represented by the mayor's figure, to overshadow the work done by councilors, given the overvaluation of the delivery of construction works, services and government projects and programs, as reported by Silva and Christopoulos (2013).

In addition, municipal legislatures have often been viewed as places for clientelist negotiations to maintain strongholds, and not as spaces where citizens' wishes at the municipal level must be represented (SILVA; CHRISTOPOULOS, 2013). Similarly, in research, there are still few investigations on the municipal legislative sphere, since a significant number of the studies observe either the Executive Branch, incorporating mainly the large cities, or the state and federal legislatures, as some studies have reported (SILVA; CHRISTOPOULOS, 2009; MARQUES; MIOLA E BARROS, 2014; BARROS; BERNARDES; RODRIGUES, 2015).

In this context, one of the ways to provide more visibility to and improve the image of municipal legislatures is through communication by the legislative media, either in the traditional format - as in the case of TV channels - or digitally - through websites, blogs and social media. According to Campos-Domínguez (2014), since the origin of political institutions, there has been the interference of technology in parliament members' activities and mode of action. This has always made the media responsible for mediating between citizens and their representatives, the former always being attentive to the latter's discourses and ways of acting. The internet has only brought an additional feature, which is the requirement for a new pace for information dissemination (CAMPOS-DOMÍNGUEZ, 2014).

In the international literature, the studies by Leston-Bandeira (2017; 2018), Aitamurto and Chen (2017), Bernardes and Bandeira (2016), Pečarič (2017), Ranchordás and Voermans (2017) and Asher and Bandeira (2019) show some reflections on digital communication and legislative branches, in addition to political and citizens' participation on the internet, which has

come to play a more representative role in public life. In this context, there is the contribution by Brooke (2016), which reports how technology and transparency favor democracy, but can also be used by the State to monitor and remove power from citizens.

With new communication tools, however, legislatures reap the fruits of the democratic gains provided by the tools in the online environment from different perspectives. Nevertheless, all of them are directed towards the construction of the public image, since they can provide greater visibility and the establishment of parliaments' image construction (MITOZO, 2018). This benefit is extended to the legislatures of municipalities, given the popularity of the internet and access to it by the most diverse strata of the population, which can now participate in the process more effectively by offering suggestions, criticizing and fostering online debate especially through social media. It is reported that both the representatives themselves (MARQUES; AQUINO; MIOLA, 2014; ANDRÉS, 2014) and institutions (PORTILLO; FERNÁNDEZ, 2013) are present in these spaces.

In this perspective, it is noteworthy that the occupation of online environments by legislatures allows greater proximity to the very concept of public communication. According to Brandão (2009), public communication comes to integrate political life in society, not by being the power of government branch in itself, but the result of organized citizens' power. Barros and Bernardes (2011) reinforce that one of the difficulties in Brazil is to make sure that public communication is put into practice, since the communication by public institutions has always been much verticalized. In this perspective, Leston-Bandeira (2018) brings a reflection on the political debate in the online environment, which can be a contribution to reinforce the interactive nature of public communication. For the author, who studies parliaments, the internet is an essential means of communication for debate to reach different social segments, even though many of its possible democratic uses still remain in the experimentation phase. In her study, the author observes the importance given to legislatures in this field, with the conviction that the internet can provide an expanded participation in politics by citizens (LESTON-BANDEIRA, 2018).

According to Recuero (2014), social actors - including politicians and State institutions, in their institutional character - started to appropriate digital media in order to be remembered by the public by proposing ideas, debating agendas and presenting their work, which can be praised or criticized. This fact is also associated to that which is proposed by Maia, Gomes and Marques (2011), emphasizing the provocation from digital media to State agents and institutions in order to bring the Public Power closer to the civil sphere, given the practicality and convenience provided by communication in these spaces. Williamson and Fallon (2011) argue that digital communication practices can change both the way in which communication is practiced by legislatures and how the internal processes of legislative houses take place. With this regard, live broadcasts can not only bring dialogue, but also change the way politicians use the stand.

The dynamics established in these spaces, namely in Facebook live broadcasts, as well as their benefits, such as effectiveness, low cost, reach and interactivity, should also be taken into account, as they can replace the absence of legislative TV channels in municipalities, which, according to Barreto (2019), represent a space to foster transparency and also to offer more complete content on legislative procedures as compared to the episodic and poorly contextualized coverage by professionals in journalistic companies.

Also, in addition to helping politicians remain in power, the improvement of legislative work emerges as reinforcement in order to raise awareness among representatives and those being represented of their role in the political sphere, surrounded by the impact represented by the transparency of acts, especially in the online environment, as described by Marques and Mitozo (2019). This reinforces the interactive dimension of the internet, which surpasses the capacity of traditional media, since it is increasingly popular and accessible. Therefore, it is important to analyze the use of social media, considering both their potential to distribute information and the possibility of conversation, which will be discussed below.

3 Social media as a space for providing information and online conversation

Based on the concept by boyd and Elisson (2008), social networking sites allow actors to connect. However, in the political sphere, they have been additionally used for a multitude of functions. Also, for a long time, politicians themselves avoided processes of interaction and relationship with citizens (STROMMER-GALLEY, 2000). This has changed, and some studies show a more promising scenario in this relationship process, at least during electoral periods (AGGIO, 2015). The problem is that, in many cases, there is no predisposition for representatives to interact with the public, even when tools are available (MENDONÇA; PEREIRA, 2018).

However, in addition to dialogue, digital social media bring increased circulation of electoral information, a new mechanism for forming a public image (MARQUES; AQUINO, MIOLA, 2014) and even a space to provide transparency and accountability (KLENK; PRUDENCIO, 2018; MASSUCHIN; SILVA, 2019), among other purposes already highlighted by both the abovementioned domestic literature and international discussion (AITAMURTO; CHEN, 2017; BERNARDES; BANDEIRA, 2016; PEČARIČ, 2017). Among the relevant findings, studies show the way parliaments have invested in public engagement in the past decade - aiming to facilitate involvement in various ways (BANDEIRA, 2018; VROMEN, 2017) - and as well as the radical effects that the emergence of social media and digital politics have had on the way organizations mobilize and organize citizens for participation (RANCHORDÁS; VOERMANS, 2017; ASHER; BANDEIRA, 2019). Other important data discuss how the internet has started to play a bigger role in politics, with a growing academic interest in how digital media are changing the way of doing politics, putting the hypotheses of innovation and normalization at the center of the debate in terms of how politicians communicate and the level of influence they

are reaching (KARLSSON, 2018).

In the case of City Councils, all these features can be appropriate, and the availability of information gains relevance - especially in the case of the broadcast of sessions - associated with the possibility of generating conversation among citizens, which can provide more effective results with respect to the characteristics of such dialogue. With this regard, it is possible for these institutions to bring together representatives and those represented and, at the same time, provide information that also promotes even more public transparency.

The first relevant aspect of digital social media is their role in the process of content circulation, which starts to gain a broader dimension based mainly on content sharing. This discussion about circulation is often found in the journalistic sphere, since news-producing institutions, likewise, use this space to distribute content more quickly and more widely (HERMIDA, 2010; HONG, 2012). In the case of the political sphere, when institutions make content available on social media, such as Facebook, for instance, they also make such content reach more citizens. Another positive point of this informational dynamics is that this space provides autonomy, since the contents do not pass by news production gatekeepers. Often, social media serve as a shortcut to institutions' websites, acting as a "bridge" that takes citizens to broader and more in-depth content than to mere teasers of posts.

In the specific case of the session broadcasting, the information provided to the followers has two very effective contributions: the approximation between those represented and representatives because the former come to know the decisions and positions of the latter, thus allowing management to be followed; and, finally, the possibility of making political processes more transparent, using the same argument as that by Barreto (2019), when the author talks about the legislative houses' television channels. As regards available information, it refers to providing material so that those represented are able to control what is done in the political sphere more effectively (BERLOT; TAEGER; GRIMES, 2010).

On the other hand, despite the resistance to interaction, more and more citizens have occupied the possibilities of discussion that are presented to them. In this way, followers' dialogues gain centrality because the platforms become a new discussion arena that can favor debate on topics of public interest, also serving as a thermometer for political agents. Although it is not a Participatory Budget forum or a discussion on the e-Democracy Portal of the Federal Chamber of Deputies, Facebook, for instance, provides space for comments.

For Graham (2008), such tools encourage more informal daily political conversations, which are as important for the public sphere as the abovementioned specific discussion spaces. For the author, online political conversation can be in the most varied spaces, and this should not be neglected (GRAHAM, 2008). It is important to mention that, in the case of the use that political institutions make of social media, there is a mix between deliberative spaces and non-political spaces of everyday conversation, since they are institutions of the political sphere that appropriate

that space for purposes related to it. This can also be a factor that generates dialogue that is more similar to that found in formal than in informal spaces.

Conversations on digital social media, however, go beyond the unidirectional relationship, which is almost always unanswered. This is because this space allows expanded interaction that goes further than the relationship between institutions and the public, thus transcending "one-way" communication to become "three-way", involving also the public - geographically separated - in a dialogical process with more participants and not only a sender and a receiver (FERBER; FOLTZ; PUGLIESE, 2007). Furthermore, as previously pointed out, institutions are not always open to dialogue and do not even respond to comments, in the case of digital social media.

Some characteristics mark non-political spaces, according to Wrigth (2012). It is the case of not having to share the same physical environment, but rather an interest in common issues. In addition, there is no problem in its being a social network. Access and inclusiveness are also important (WRIGHT, 2012) and, with this regard, social media end up facilitating an arena of non-political conversation for individuals to have access and discuss decisions by the municipal legislature, as is the case in this study.

The biggest problem, on the other hand, has been the characteristics of these spaces, which sometimes do not allow such a fruitful dialogue. The public debate process and the characteristics of the comments are far from the Habermasian normative model, according to which it would be necessary, among other things, to consider the others' arguments to reach a consensus (DAHLGREN, 2009) as well as several other elements listed in methodological approaches (JANSSEN; KIES, 2004). Often there is no progress in the discussions and not even consideration in relation to the content publicized by the pages, in the case of Facebook comments (CERVI, 2013), or there is much more of a monologue than of a dialogue. Often, in certain cases, when it comes to more specific topics, there may be a dominance of conversation by actors called super posters (CAPONE et al, 2017).

However, the re-readings and theoretical-normative adjustments have expanded the possibilities of considering more or less deliberative processes, including cases such as comments, outside of regulated spaces. The lack of consensus, for example, would not make the conversation less relevant and Wrigth (2010) even suggests that everyday debate practices should support the theory of deliberation since they are frequent and recurring, sometimes more than spaces that contemplate all deliberative assumptions. With this regard, comments in the broadcast of the sessions become relevant to understand the public's interest and the relationship between representatives and those represented.

Of all the issues that can interfere in the debate, in the case of social media, there is not so much emphasis on what the literature refers to as like-minded (BERROCAL; CAMPOS-DOMINGUES; REDONDO, 2014). Characteristics such as respect and civility among the actors

in the conversation or, at least, the predisposition to listen to the "other" draw more attention. If forms of approach become uncivilized, contrary to democratic values, there is a distance from the deliberation process and the emergence of radicalism in the debate (AMOSSY, 2011). On a broader, more diverse and non-formal platform, in political terms, there are chances of gathering followers from different political and ideological positions, especially when it comes to political conversation. For this reason, in addition to the importance of argumentation, emphasized by Habermas (1997), "it is important to consider the action of listening as fundamental to the debate" (YOUNG, 1996, p.130). Sharing this perspective by Young (1996), applied to digital environments and their possibilities for debate, when the "other" is not heard in the conversation process, it approaches what has been called radicalization.

The presence of radicalization is more likely to occur in digital arenas than in offline conversations because, if in the past the "different" was in distinct and isolated spaces, the internet has allowed them to meet and talk to one another. The presence of radicalization hinders debate, as it represents the commentator's unwillingness to listen to others and, with this, tries to end the discussion with his point of view and, often, in an uncivil way. Thus, this eventually leads to a high degree of incivility and also to virtually no possibility of argumentation because there is not even a predisposition to consider the presence of the "other". In this case, there is neither consensus nor contestation because the dialogical process is not productive. The problematic point, therefore, is the confrontation that is no longer controversial to become flames with hate speech and disrespectful, racist, prejudiced and homophobic terms, among others. Actually, not even the rudest messages are being considered here, since Papacharissi (2004) argues that there are differences between unpolished and uncivil messages. When it comes to radicalization of debate, the focus is on the lack of civility because the comments end up being more loaded with characteristics that show an association with the absence of democratic values.

4 Methodological approach to the study

This article analyzes the comments available on live broadcasts in five of the 118 municipalities that had been mapped and whose City Councils had Facebook pages[3]. The following municipalities were selected: Laranjeiras do Sul, Araucária, Cascavel, Maringá and Curitiba. All of them are in Paraná state, which is justified by the reduction of a broader investigation comprehending this study. Cases were selected according to the number of inhabitants established by IBGE, divided into: a small town, with up to 50 thousand residents, with the municipality of Laranjeiras do Sul being selected; a medium-sized city, with up to 300 thousand inhabitants, represented by Araucária; a medium-sized-to-large city, with 300 to 500 thousand residents, represented by Cascavel; a big city, with 500 thousand to 1 million

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[3] Mapping was previously performed based on data reported in the paper presented at the 3ʳᵈ Workshop on Communication and Political Behavior, Media and Public Opinion.

inhabitants, as in Maringá, and a metropolis, with more than one million inhabitants[4], which is Curitiba. In addition to such representation by municipality size, the Councils' pages should broadcast live sessions, since not all 118 Councils with a Facebook page had that mechanism available to citizens, but only 65 make lives of them.

The corpus of analysis was also built from a two-month time frame. Thus, the two live broadcasts for each previously chosen municipality with the highest engagement in the comment format, in the period from August to September 2019, were selected. This criterion generated a total of 305 comments available in ten different lives, two from each institution. The broadcasts by Laranjeiras do Sul had 59 comments; Araucária 192; Cascavel 10, Maringá, 22 and Curitiba, 22. The empirical analysis of the study was supported by the *Export Comments*[5] website, by which the conversations were extracted.

The analysis approach was mainly inspired in code books proposed by Rizzotto, Ferracioli and Braga (2017) and Massuchin, Mitozo and Cavassana (2017), with some appropriations for this study, as in the case of the creation of some variables and categories that would account for the analyzed object. Thus, the coding book used contained the following variables and categories for analysis of the deliberative potential of everyday conversations: the topic present in the comments, interaction of the Council with the public, type of approach by the commentators, moral judgment, emphasis on political disputes, commentators' posture, dominant persuasive strategy, reflexivity and types of comments. All of them had excluding categories among one another, and coding was performed by a single researcher.

It is important to highlight that, although the data were extracted through a website, collection was performed manually, allowing the reading of all comments and detailed observation of commentators' opinions. Thus, even with technical assistance, content observation was possible from the categorization of variables and debate measurement[6]. It is noteworthy that the selected comments contemplate the debate among citizens, with no involvement of parliament members in the talks and little interaction even by the parliaments.

5 Data analysis: conversation in legislative spaces

This topic presents and discusses the data based on the previously presented theoretical assumptions. The first analyzed variable observes the relationship with the presence of super

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[4] With 423 thousand inhabitants, Maringá represents a medium-sized-to-large municipality, as classified by IBGE. On the other hand, besides Curitiba, there are no municipalities with more than 500 thousand inhabitants in Paraná state that can represent large municipalities. Maringá was then allocated to that category because it is the most similar city to those with the assumed characteristics.

[5] Although the tool has a limitation of up to 500 comments per analysis, its mechanisms managed the topic proposed in this article.

[6] It is noteworthy that since this is not a comparative study, the data are analyzed in an aggregate manner, without considering similarities or divergences between the agendas and the characteristics of the sessions, which could occasionally have resulted in a different number of comments between a live broadcast and another.

posters[7] in the comments. The importance of observing this phenomenon - already observed in conversational processes in Brazilian experiences (CAPONE et al, 2017) - lies in the fact that there would be a "false" extension of the conversation, which would be restricted to a few participating agents. However, the data presented by the table below show that, in fact, in the broadcast of the sessions, there is a plurality of actors who participate through the comments.

Table 1 – Topics of comments

Number of comments made	Number of commentators
19 comments	1
14 comments	1
13 comments	1
12 comments	2
11 comments	1
10 comments	1
9 comments	1
8 comments	4
6 comments	3
5 comments	3
4 comments	4
3 comments	6
2 comments	21
1 comment	64

Source: Designed by the authors, 2019.

The data show little incidence of users with recurring posts, since there are only seven overactive commentators who could dominate the debate with more than 10 comments out of the total 305. On the other hand, there are multiple participations, with 113 different commentators for the 305 posts. This information can emphasize the low concentration of voices in the topics under discussion as well as an amplitude of citizen participation (CAPONE et al, 2017). This shows, among other things, that in addition to citizens' taking advantage of the mechanism provided to discuss the sessions, there is room for a diversity of citizens, which reinforces the proposal of the live broadcasts.

The second analysis criterion is related to the topics of the comments on the live broadcasts. The categories were created from the main topics previously identified in each of the five pages analyzed, as shown in Table 2. According to that table, 44% of comments show greetings or personal introductions. Category Legislative Proceedings, which is directly related to laws and actions by the Legislative Houser appeared in 34% of the discussions, followed by the topics Infrastructure (7%) and Economy (4%). An example of this is the reduction of seats in

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[7] Term used for users with an above-average number of posts.

the Council of Laranjeiras do Sul. Economy and Legislative Proceedings were mentioned several times in comments opposing the reduction in the number of councilors, on the grounds that having fewer representatives does not necessarily mean less spending, since the transfer of funds from the Executive Branch will be the same. "It does not have to be spent. There are Councils in the region that return more than one million at the end of the year. The current board will return more than that this year" (08/26/2019, at 10:57 p.m.). Araucária also brings debates on infrastructure, especially in relation to a bill that aims to renew the municipality's contract with Paraná Sanitation Company (Sanepar). On the occasion, a citizen explains why he is against its rapid approval by the plenary. "Since the contract with Sanepar expires in 12 years, renewing it at this time, without presenting it to or debating it with the population, and even without carrying out a technical study, shows hurry, Mr. President. Now we need to know the reasons that have led to such a decision!" (08/20/2019).

These figures and examples, on the part of the commentators, represent a focus on political dynamics and on the decisions that take place in the political sphere in a very evident fashion, which can associate this positive characteristic of the comments - showing public knowledge about the Council's issues - with the effective role of broadcasts by bringing more information and transparency to the actions carried out by the institution. Barreto (2019) had already mentioned this role for TV channels, which can be translated to the cases studied, as a contribution of the action carried out by the Councils is perceived through the comments. In order to exemplify especially the knowledge about the political environment, the following comment can be mentioned: "Health is abandoned. The Industrial Health Care Unit, Capela Velha, just been closed because the members of the parliamentary committee of investigation (CPI) concerning the Araucaria City Hospital (HMA) did not vote. There was legislative omission. Araucária's population is watching and will not let what you are doing go by unnoticed". This was said by a commentator on August 13, shortly after the CPI against the management company of Araucaria City Hospital was rejected. The outburst shows not only the monitoring of the agenda under debate that day, but also the knowledge about the parliament members' votes and the health care situation in the municipality.

Table 2 – Topics of comments

Topic	N	%
Greetings/Personal introduction	135	44
Legislative procedures	103	34
Infra-structure	22	7
Economy	12	4
Executive Branch	11	4
Health	10	3
Agriculture	5	2
Education	5	2
Total	305	100

Source: Designed by the authors, 2019.

It is noticeable, therefore, that the commentators used the space to present concerns about the routine of public power, which highlights the role of debate in effective public communication, and this is another point that was highlighted by the aforementioned literature. The data also touches on the initial theory about the development of the democracy model on deliberation based on Habermas (1997), with regard to finding a common guide for the most valid, fair and legitimate way of debating socially controversial issues, which considers the public sphere an appropriate environment to allow the formation and presentation of collective will. The commentators felt free to talk about topics related to the discussions on the plenary floor or even about the day-to-day problems of the municipality. It is not a question of deliberative democracy, but of deliberative aspects that are in digital conversations.

The next characteristic analyzed sought to evaluate the interaction of the Councils with the public, related to the existence of direct proximity between the community and the institution, as shown by answers, clarifications on the agendas and other questions. However, the City Councils did not respond to any of the 305 comments analyzed. Therefore, there was no such interaction. This agrees with the literature showing that institutions are not always able to engage in the dialogue process, despite being present on social media. In addition, the process of conversation often takes place among the citizens themselves, not including the institutions or parliament members. In the case of parliament members, the explanation is that they increasingly prefer their own means of information, such as their personal digital networks instead of institutional networks.

A possible explanation for this may be the lack of availability to interact, as pointed out in a study by Mendonça and Pereira (2018), although this has partially changed, and some public institutions - such as Curitiba's City Administration and the Federal University of Paraná - already use dialogue with followers on a recurring basis. It is noteworthy that the presence of answers from organizations is a relevant factor for the relationship process when it is explored from the perspective of public relations and considering that it would, in fact, show close ties between representatives and those represented in the case studied. Although the conversation between participants is still important to think about democratic processes and accessibility of information, public image is also an important factor for legislative institutions, as discussed earlier.

The next variable considered the type of approach by the commentators, dividing them into two categories: "social" and "problem", the first being about welcome declarations, personal introductions and general chatting, for example. Meanwhile, "problem"-type comments are those focused on the content of the debate in the sessions, and they may present opinions, facts, questions about the topic being discussed, as well as disagreements and agreements with interlocutors and/or with the transmitted content. Although the "social" category shows more than half of the comments, 47% of the comments were related to subjects on the agenda, being included in "problem" category. In order to exemplify, there is the following comment:

> Someone, please, tell them that laws are for harmonizing animals and humans, human well-being in contact with dogs. They improve places so that they are better for men, when they are in contact with animals. Making them harmonious and healthy for both, and not always favoring one side (08/20/2019).

This comment was made by a commentator who opposed a bill at Curitiba's City Council that envisaged fining dog owners who kept their animals in chains. Another comment is related to the capital city's infrastructure, at a time when city councilors demanded more investments in urban planning:

> We, from the Community Safety Council (Conseg) Amoem Mercês-Vista Alegre, have been asking for projects for the Manoel Ribas - Jacarezinho intersection, where the Inter 2 Bus Line runs, for more than three years. The Institute of Research and Urban Planning of Curitiba has not commented on this project. Will that be solved as well, since that line runs through here? Why not debate it with the community? (08/27/2019).

This is a positive fact to reinforce the participatory potential of networks, even though this dialogue process does not have a direct effect on decisions or does not even include the organizations themselves in the conversation, as noted above. Nearly half of the comments show that people are concerned with the discussions and are, at the very least, connected with the content of the live broadcasts, which also shows an effect of the transmission by providing content that supports the conversations. This is also a relevant aspect, as pointed out by Leston-Bandeira (2007), because democracy occurs effectively in networks, especially in parliament, from the provision of channels for people's participation.

When evaluating another characteristic of the conversations - the intensity of moral judgment by the participants - the predominant absence of judgment regarding the way other participants and/or legislators act is observed in 78% of cases. Examples of judgment found in 22% are: "there are lukewarm councilors", "Xandão is well bribed" or "[..] once again disappointing the people". It is also noteworthy that such value judgment is almost always directed at city councilors based on the content and statements present in the broadcasts. Despite this figure (22%), the data contradict theoretical assumptions about the little admiration for City Councils reported by Silva and Christopoulos (2009), at least in digital social media and in these studied cases. Although discontentment may be greater than that presented quantitatively, the population did not use the tool for criticism in large volume, as might be expected given the context brought by the literature that focuses on local legislative studies.

Regarding the emphasis on political disputes - when political fragmentation is criticized or at least mentioned in the comment, including the disputes of demonstrations for and against councilors' actions - the data indicate 42% of comments with the presence of an exchange of reasons in this regard. It is, therefore, a positive fact from the deliberative point of view, as comments are, once again, in some way related to the arena of political debate, even if not

necessarily related to the proposals in dispute in ordinary sessions. Apparently, they show that citizens are participating in the political sphere and are a little aware of the local political scene.

The next variable examines the persuasive strategy in the debate, subdivided into five aspects, which are: propositional rhetoric, critical rhetoric, seductive rhetoric, ethical and moral rhetoric and when there is no rhetoric. The latter case deals with a simple marking comment or a comment that is characterized as social or metaconversation, which came to represent 47% of the comments. This subcategory does not address the problem or is not focused on convincing an interlocutor (examples: good morning! Good job!), therefore being categorized as social rhetoric.

Table 3 – Dominant Persuasive Strategy

Rhetoric Strategy	N	%
Social rhetoric	142	47
Propositional rhetoric	48	16
Critical rhetoric	48	16
Seductive rhetoric	37	12
Ethical- moral rhetoric	30	10
Total	305	100

Source: Designed by the authors, 2019.

According to Table 2, the other aspects are balanced, with emphasis on propositional and critical rhetoric, with 16% each. The former represents comments on effects and practical consequences, when the debater shows the facts as they are or when he presents a proposal, such as "the number of councilors must be reduced!". Critical rhetoric, on the other hand, refers to criticisms that had subjects as their main focus, such as "six councilors are still a lot" (08/26/2019).

In general, when the persuasive aspects proposed are added, except in the 47% of the cases in which the strategies do not apply, in 53% of cases there was an attempt, on the part of the interlocutor, to present his point of view about the debate, whether in the two topics previously approached or basing his opinions about what is "right" or "wrong", as is the case with ethical-moral rhetoric (10%) or seeking to convince the interlocutor through persuasion by emotional arguments, as presupposed in the seductive rhetoric (12%). In any case, the predominance of propositions is noteworthy, which shows possible contributions from the participative process by those represented.

Then, the article analyzes the "commentator's posture" (Table 4), with emphasis on the interaction between commentators and the session itself, which appears 55% of the time. These data are in line with those already presented, showing that the public take a stand and interact with political topics, presenting a dialogue based on the content transmitted. In addition, in 10% of the cases there was dialogue between other commentators in the sphere of live broadcasts, with questions and answers, agreement and complement of questions raised.

It is worthy of note that even without institutional interaction, the public continues to dialogue with the very content of the live broadcasts. The data contradict the theoretical discussion

regarding the limited participation of participants described by Dahlberg (2010) and Cervi (2013) in other analyzed scenarios, which deals with difficulties in interaction through online tools, whether in relation to content or in relation to other users. In this case, the commentators who participated monologically reached 34%, but the dialogue with the session and among the peers, together, stands out in 65% of cases, which is a figure well above that observed in other studies (MASSUCHIN; MITOZO; CARVALHO, 2018).

Table 4 – Commentators' posture in the live broadcasts

Posture	N	%
Dialogue with the session	169	55
Monologue	105	34
Dialogue with other commentators	31	10
Total	305	100

Source: Designed by the authors, 2019.

As reinforced by Sampaio, Mendonça and Barros (2017), conversation in online spaces works as an arena amidst discursive processes, contributing to fuel debate as much as when it takes place face to face. These data, shown in Table 4, reinforce a previously reported assumption, suggesting live broadcasts as a potential scenario for the community to present its wishes, which, until then, had to go to institutions in order to report their demands or use more formal mechanisms to contact municipal legislative institutions.

In relation to the next variable entitled "type of comment" (Table 4), attention is drawn to its inclusion in the debate based on criticism and praise, despite the 67% that do not fall into any categories. Criticism of councilors amounts to 11%, while praise for them reaches 10%, showing a balance in the way they are seen by the community in the space of transmissions, reiterating that there is not such a negative view as that presented in the literature on legislators. On the other hand, the data also show the importance of the councilor's figure in the center of these live broadcasts and the feedback to voters. They also reinforce the relevance of the transmissions in the process of providing more transparency of legislative activities that are specific to each representative, since this seemed to be one of the desires of those represented.

As an example of a comment related to councilors, we can mention: "Congratulations, councilman Sete. You've said it all. I want to see who will be willing to cut their own flesh" (08/27/2019). Such comment was made by a spectator at the moment the aforementioned representative, opposing the reduction of seats in the City Council of Laranjeiras do Sul, defended the presentation of a bill that, instead of reducing seats, would reduce councilors' salaries in order to ensure the reduction of expenditure and guarantee representativeness. The same occurs in Araucária, a municipality that was also in the highlight among commentators. A spectator of the live broadcast congratulates the President of the Council for criticizing the renewal of contracts with Sanepar without an effective dialogue with the population. "That's right, Councilor Tatiane.

You are there for the people, and you do not give people a voice. The people should have a voice" (08/13/2019).

Table 5 – Types of comments made by citizens

Groups	Type of Comment	N	%
Criticism	Criticism of the City Council	4	1
	Criticism of the City Administration	16	5
	Criticism of the topic being debated	9	3
	Criticism of councilors	34	11
Praise	Praise for the City Council	1	0
	Praise for de City Administration	2	1
	Praise for the topic being debated	3	1
	Praise for commentators	4	1
	Praise for councilors	29	10
Greetings and personal introductions		203	67
Total		305	100

Source: Designed by the authors, 2019.

Institutions, on the other hand, are seldom mentioned in this context, which can resume a discussion on the personalization of broadcasts and the role of legislative media in this process. City Councils, for instance, are not included in praise statistics, while receiving 1% of criticism. In general, criticism stands out, and these data generally show how actors and institutions are judged when they enter the online space, which helps to understand why politicians often avoid dialogue. It is worth mentioning that the evidence of criticism was also perceived in the study by Massuchin, Mitozo and Carvalho (2017) when it came to the journalistic institutions analyzed.

Finally, Table 6 refers to the assumption of reflexivity, which concerns the type of behavior and objective expressed in the message. In this variable, the concentration of interaction in the "progress" category was considered (43%), which seeks to present complementary information to the debate or when the conversation does not attempt to persuade or radicalize. Although there is 9% radicalization of comments, this figure is lower when compared to that in other scenarios, which makes the Councils' comment discussion environment positive. The least present category was "persuasion" (6%), that is, there was little attempt to convince others about political positions, which may be more present during electoral periods than during terms of office.

Table 6 – Reflexivity of comments

Reflexivity	N	%
Progress	131	43
Greetings/Personal introduction	108	35
Radicalization	26	9
Opinion reinforcement	24	8
Persuasion	16	5
Total	305	100

Source: Designed by the authors, 2019.

The data in the table show, therefore, that there are online spaces for conversations with minimal characteristics that refer to the assumptions of dialogue by Habermas (1997) or to the idea that a digital public sphere is possible (DALBERG, 2010), even if there are some limitations, as shown by the percentages of radicalization and rhetoric absence. Therefore, it is necessary to consider differences regarding the type of space and who monitors such space. Hence, the results found may be related to other aspects, such as the fact that it is a live broadcast and also because it is on a political institution's page, which could already include citizens previously interested in politics, even though there are no super posters. In any case, as well as in thematic forums and closed groups, the study showed important characteristics in the conversations, reiterating the role of Facebook as a diffuser of content - through broadcasts - fostering qualitative dialogue, with important characteristics for political debate, but always remembering that the focus of the analyzed conversations is on interactions among citizens.

6 Conclusions

The article proposed an analysis of the conversation on the pages of City Councils in Paraná, taking into account municipalities of different sizes, and specifically observing the dialogue from sessions transmitted through the institutions' Facebook pages. When presenting a content analysis of the comments, it was assumed that the Facebook sessions represent a space that shows transparency of the public organization mediated by social media, and that this would also stimulate conversation because they have content concerning legislative decisions that would raise debate between representatives and those represented as well as among citizens themselves.

Based on the theoretical framework, the analysis variables used to categorize 305 comments collected from 10 live broadcasts by five municipalities were constructed, including: Laranjeiras do Sul, Araucária, Cascavel, Maringá and Curitiba. Based on the empirical data, the results were discussed in the light of the literature, enabling the comprehension of characteristics that bring to surface very relevant issues in understanding the potential of social media conversations spaces in order to foster political discussion, thus corroborating the reach of communication, which has increasingly expanded through the development of digital mechanisms and served as a factor responsible for the operationalization of proposals.

With this regard, through several variables, the considerable percentage of comments referring to greetings and salutations was noticed in the middle of the process of dialogue on the topics of the transmitted sessions, complementing with analyses representing a potential scenario in order to associate online media with the debate on the agenda of municipal legislatures. This is noticeable from the observation of topics and commentators' posture that highlight minimum understanding of legislative procedures, demands to councilors and knowledge of agendas being voted. This further indicates that citizens access live broadcasts and, through the legislative media, obtain more political information.

Although the literature shows the little importance given to legislative branches, especially the local ones, the attention to the sessions shows positive data concerning the relationship that has been created between representatives and those represented and that is mediated by digital technology materialized by the social media. It is also noteworthy that there is a plurality of ordinary citizens who dialogue, which is evident from the absence of super posters. This shows that they are not representatives of institutions or people already active in the public sphere, who could have an engagement that would dominate the debate.

The commentators' posture also draws attention, as they seek dialogue associated with legislative procedures, which demonstrates that they are "talking" to and about the broadcast session. These are not comments that wander away from the post content, as commonly occurs on digital social media (CERVI, 2013). The dialogue between the sessions and the public is noticeable, which shows that the content made available is absorbed and used to mobilize arguments and opinions. The protagonist role played by citizens in the debate is noteworthy, as it signals civic engagement that represents an individual and collective awareness of the importance of the community's direction. On the other hand, it is an almost unilateral engagement, in view of the silence by the institutions and the absence of parliament members, breaking the ideal of power shared between the government and those governed, which requires a reflection on the possibilities that such sharing could bring. Further studies can seek to understand, for example, how the public's requests and demands through these informal channels are or are not considered by the political elite.

The search for arguments in the exchange of reasons is also clear. Although there is radicalization referring to reflexivity, it also does not stand out, with only 9%, which is below the data reported by other studies in the field (MASSUCHIN; MITOZO; CARVALHO, 2018). This can be considered relevant to think that the information made available by public institutions, even if it is on social media, can bring more progress to discussions, which was a characteristic that stood out in the analysis. It is important to reiterate that progress occurred, whether with other actors or with the content of the live broadcast itself.

When public institutions use media tools - whether traditional or digital - they allow more information to circulate and support citizens' conversation processes with less radicalization and also less value judgment on political processes. In addition to the low presence of value judgment, the discussion and presentation of problems that appear in almost 50% of the comments are also mentioned as relevant. Although the proposal of sociability, which is typical of digital social media, predominates, attention to political problems/issues is also evident.

Therefore, citizens' initiative to make the debate progress instead of approaching radicalization is noticed. On the other hand, a negative result refers to institutions' responsiveness, as there was no argumentation from the administration of the City Councils, since they appeared as passive agents in a scenario of deliberation among citizens. In none of the 10 live broadcasts

was there a manifestation by the Legislative Councils, which shows that providing more information is not always associated with the strategy of approaching citizens, which is still an issue to be developed by the institutions.

It is relevant to mention that the investigation calls for a larger set of cases to be analyzed in order to provide a larger scope to the study or to be able to observe the data in a comparative fashion, either by comparing with other regions or by comparing the influence of the contents in the live broadcasts on the intensity and quality of debate. However, this analysis already indicates that when legislative institutions use digital media, especially social media, to distribute institutional content, the conversations follow more positive parameters than when they occur in spaces operated by journalistic companies, for example. In addition, the data can be evaluated in other instances of the legislative branch, such as the Senate and the Federal Chamber of Deputies in order to verify whether the results found here could be generalized to other scenarios. Finally, and not least, it is believed that research on these evaluative parameters seeks to support the development of a research network that observes engagement and online conversation, in addition to contributing to a better understanding of the dynamics involving local parliaments.

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