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The Role of Experts across Two Different Arenas in a Deliberative System

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Abstract

The notion of a "deliberative system" has become central to debates on deliberation. The plea to regard deliberative processes from a system-wide perspective is genuinely innovative and attractive, but little has been done to understand how deliberation in one arena or a separate institution relates to other arenas. This study investigates the role that experts play in public communication in two arenas that have distinct systemic functions. It compares how experts express and justify their opinions on a controversial public policy in legislative public hearings and when they are quoted in the news media. Our findings, based on an empirical case study, revealed that experts played a similar role in different contexts in micro- and macro arenas; and most debate participants appealed to technical knowledge to compel a particular decision. Our analysis concludes by reflecting upon the interconnectivities of the aforementioned arenas; and the systemic approach implications on empirical research.

Author Biography

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Keywords

Acknowledgements

Introduction

Recently, several deliberative scholars have called for a systemic approach to deliberation in order to expand the scale of analysis beyond individual sites or institutions and tap into the complexity of interrelations among parts in the political system (Bächtiger & Wegmann, 2014; Dryzek & Hendriks, 2012; Goodin, 2005; Maia, 2012; Mansbridge et al., 2012; Neblo, 2015; Parkinson, 2006, 2012; Steiner, 2014; Thompson, 2008). While empirical scholars have been developing ever more sophisticated analyses on deliberation and have brought careful empirical evidence to warrant their claims, most studies are conducted in one single arena or in a separate institution. Thus, interconnections among arenas remain poorly understood, and current research designs fail to take note (particularly through systematic measurement) of how findings in one environment relate to other arenas in regards to the larger purposes of democracy. Whereas the systemic approach to deliberation seems genuinely innovative and attractive, empirical research in this field is underdeveloped.

In this article, we attempt to add a layer to this field. While previous studies have compared debate across different assemblies or parliamentary settings (Stasavage, 2007; Steiner, Bächtiger, Spörndli, & Steenbergen, 2004), we are interested in investigating the role played by a particular actor – the experts – regarding a specific debate in two distinct discursive arenas: legislative public hearings and the media. Although the literature has asserted that this actor can play different roles within democracy (Brown, 2014; Christiano, 2009, 2012; Pielke, 2007), we still have a vague notion of how experts' opinions in face-to-face discussions in forums can be compared to the mediated comments in the media. We assume part of the systemic function of public hearings is to inform expectations about policy-making choices in face to face meetings. Media-based communication is important to draw public attention to issues of public concern and helping citizens to understand public processes and policies. Processes of mediation by media professionals, considering both technological apparatus and institutional organization, operate with their own logic, needs and standards of newsworthiness (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014; Ferree, Gamson, Gerhards, & Rucht, 2002; Gastil, 2008; Schudson, 2003). By paying attention to the news media within the deliberative system, we follow Dryzek and Hendriks' (2012, Kindle Locations 897-912) suggestion that "it might be a good idea to work on the parts of the political system that are the least deliberative, where policy debates are highly exclusive, and where the rationale for decisions cannot easily be scrutinized." Then, we ask how experts express and justify their opinions on public policy in a deliberatively designed forum as well as when they are quoted in the news media. We inquire into the kinds of reasons presented and whether it is possible to find experts' engagement with conflicting views in these settings.

Through a case study, we investigate the debate around a contentious issue – a bill of law proposing the relocation of a bus station from downtown to a more remote district in Belo Horizonte, Brazil. We look at how this controversy played out over two years (2007 and 2008) in: a) public hearings (ALMG) organized by the local government; and b) three major local daily newspapers. Our empirical procedures follow the guidelines of the Discursive Quality Index (DQI), as developed by Steiner, Bächtiger, Spörndli and Steenbergen (2004) and Steiner (2012). Findings reveal that experts, despite facing different conditions, played a fairly similar role in the legislative hearings and as sources in the mass media. Whereas partisan positions for and against the policy at stake had different configurations in these settings, the majority of speakers appealed to technical arguments, and they disputed experts' diagnoses, knowledge and recommendations to win political disputes.

While focusing only on two sites, we understand this study has some implications for suggesting how the systemic investigation of deliberation can be broadened. First, this study has analytical implications for current research on the role of experts on deliberation, which has proposed that citizens should conduct some checks on the experts' knowledge input that affects the decision-making process. This study examines practical circumstances of such exchange in both a micro-setting (public hearings) and a macro-situation of public debate (the mass media). Second, this article can contribute empirically by examining how a collection of experts can produce intelligibility of controversial policy proposals and clarify policy choices across different settings.

This article is organized in the following manner. First, it outlines a critique of experts in democratic processes and surveys theoretical attempts to reconcile the role of expertise with democratic deliberation. Second, the analysis discusses inclusion in debates, processes of reason-giving and discursive accountability, focusing on public hearings and the news media. Third, we characterize our case study, the methodology and the main issues that structure our research questions. The remaining sections present our empirical results and a discussion on the empirical and theoretical implications of our findings.

The Problem of the Expert in a Deliberative System

A deliberative system is composed of a variety of institutions and venues. Parliaments, courts, the media, civic entities and organizations such as schools, hospitals and universities can be conceived along the lines provided by a systemic approach (Mansbridge et al., 2012). A rigorous analysis unavoidably requires a selection of certain system components. Here we endorse Parkinson's (2012, p. 171) argument that "we have an analytical framework; and we have bits of

evidence" (see also Maia, 2012) and much work must nevertheless be developed to make demonstration more robust. Previous studies have analysed experts' participation in debates that occur in mini-publics (Fischer, 2000, 2009; Fishkin, 2009; Gastil, Nabatchi, Weisksner, & Leigninger, 2012; Stevenson & Dryzek, 2014) as well as in the news media (Albæk, 2011; Brewer & Sigelman, 2002; Peters, Wessler, Ecker-Ehrhardt, Dereje, & Sindram, 2008; Weiler, 1983). Yet, these studies have rarely interacted, and a comparative investigation of experts' expressions in a specific debate in the aforementioned environments has received little scholarly attention to date.

In this study, we started with the assumption that experts can play different roles in a democratic system; and they may shape their performances depending on distinct circumstances. Examining an expert's expression in deliberative settings first requires a clear understanding of this actor. What distinguishes an expert is not necessarily an academic title, but the possession of an amount of knowledge in a specific field, which is significantly greater than that of ordinary people. Experts have a set of skills that allows them to test beliefs, ideas and arguments with regard to a particular subject matter. These skills — shared within a community of peers — are not easily available to ordinary citizens (Bäckstrand, 2003; Christiano, 2009; Fischer, 2000, 2004, 2009).

Deliberative scholars have long discussed the ambivalent role played by experts in deliberation (Bäckstrand, 2003; Christiano, 2009, 2012; Fischer, 2000, 2004, 2009; Peters et al., 2008). On the one hand, governing complex societies inevitably requires expertise and technical administration, and so experts' ideas, arguments and skills are fundamental resources for facilitating complicated decisions that involve conflicting interests in society. Experts can provide technical information and appraise the consequences of certain actions, thus clarifying controversial issues and helping political representatives and the public at large to engage more effectively in decision-making processes (Bäckstrand, 2003; Fischer, 2009; Pielke, 2007; Schudson, 2008).

On the other hand, an expert's authority and the amount of their knowledge represent a special problem for the criterion of equal participation in deliberation. According to Fischer (2004, 2009), the opinions of experts are usually treated with deference. Their ability to assess sophisticated theories always engenders power and a special status at the expense of other participants in debates; and they also receive more attention and consideration than others. Baber and Barlett (2002) contend that experts, in laying out their reasoning, may, albeit unintentionally, use words that are too specific or technical, which keeps them further at bay from lay citizens (Baber & Bartlett, 2002).

In the context of this study, we assume that experts do not necessarily need to engage in controversial debates as "ideal deliberators" (Brown, 2014; Pielke, 2007). Pielke's (2007) typology of different roles of expertise is useful for explaining under what circumstances they can become actively involved in political controversies. According to Pielke (2007), the expert's role can be assessed as: i) the *Pure Scientist,* who serves as an information resource, and is not concerned with a specific decision; ii) the *Science Arbiter,* who also serves as a resource of information by answering the factual question considered relevant by the decision-maker, but does not define what she/he should prefer; iii) the *Issue Advocate*, who explicitly engages with decision alternatives (such as choices and policy options) and seeks to compel a particular decision outcome or leads the decision-maker to a certain direction; iv) the *Honest Broker of Policy Alternatives*, who engages with a provision of information and clarifies the scope of choices, but also seeks to enable a decision-maker's freedom of choice

Pielke's key argument is that these four roles may be appropriate in democratic societies depending on the issue's context and the personal preferences of the experts. When values are shared and uncertainties are low, experts can perform as Pure Scientists and as Science Arbiters; and when values are in conflict and uncertainty is high, they can play the role of Issue Advocates or Honest Brokers of Policy Alternatives (Pielke, 2007). S*tealth issue advocates* are always problematic when people hide their value commitments behind science and stealthily present information as "technical," objective and neutral knowledge, that is, independent of the choices to be made" (Pielke, 2007, p. 135).

Since these categories are ideal-types, Pielke stresses that the real world is, of course, far more complicated than this model, and these roles exist in a continuum of political practices. For this reason, we are interested to investigate two settings where public debate among experts and lay-persons can take place. Bohman argues that a democratic division of labor in complex societies requires "extensive and reciprocal communication between experts and the wider public" (Bohman, 2000, p. 51). Fischer also points out that experts, when operating as facilitators, should translate specialized knowledge into ordinary language as well as interpret the language of lay people to "make available to decision makers a more in-depth and transparent characterization of the nature of public controversies" (Fischer, 2009, p. 166). Yet, these scholars do not specify under which practical circumstances this exchange is likely to occur. This study helps to shed some light on this question by investigating a micro-setting as well as a macro-situation of public debate.

In legislative forums, experts are typically called upon to explain the background of their policies and advice through face-to-face interactions with other specialists, policy-makers and citizens. In the news media, experts are supposed to speak to

broader audiences, that is, the citizenry as a whole; and they are often asked to provide background information and comments on policies. Insofar as the media constitute an institution in their own right in the political system, it should be kept in mind that experts' comments in the news media are always mediated, according to certain selection criteria and production routines; and a combination of factors related to professionalism, commercialism and political strategic goals shapes the news content (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014; Ferree et al., 2002; Gastil, 2008; Maia, 2012, forthcoming; Schudson, 2003).

These selected settings in our study offer different conditions for the experts' expression of opinions and discursive engagement. We admit that the environments do not fully shape the actor's behaviour, since ideologies, life situations, functional roles and other factors contribute to staking out the social subjects' discursive actions. Yet, we do not discard the idea that the environment – including institutional organizations, set of actors, norms and publics – exerts a relevant influence on the speaker's communication, as theoretical and empirical studies on deliberation have proposed (Chambers, 2005, 2009, 2012; Elstub & Mclaverty, 2014; Grönlund, Bachtiger, & Setälä, 2014; Niemeyer, 2014; Stromer-Galley, Bryant, & Bimber, 2015). In the next section, we explain our research questions.

Experts in Two Different Environments and Research Questions

To develop our research questions, let us briefly conceptualize in general terms the environments under analysis. More specific characterization of the settings selected in our study will be provided later.

Public Hearings: These typically take place in institutional settings in front of a decision-making body or government agency, where debate is structured with the aim of gathering information on a controversial issue to shape public policies, change legislation and support decision-making. They can also have the goal of ratifying a given practice, measure or public policy (Avritzer, 2009; Buttny, 2010). The design of public hearings usually provides a forum for listening to the different voices from the local community; and hearings typically involve political representatives, experts and citizens in controlled face-to-face discussions. Although great emphasis (and hope) has been placed on mini-public discussions, these settings may present several flaws for deliberative debates, as discussed below (Gastil & Levine, 2005; Grönlund et al., 2014; Gastil et al., 2012).

News Media: Discussions about a specific policy – such as the bill of law in our case study – are also developed across several media outlets – newspapers, TV news, online news and other media. In studies on political communication and the public sphere, the view of the news media as a forum for civic debate is well known

(Dahlgren & Sparks, 1993; Fossum & Schlesinger, 2007; Gastil, 2008; Habermas, 1991, 2006; Maia, 2012; Norris, 2000; Page, 1996; Wessler, Peters, Brüggemann, Königslöw, & Sifft, 2008; Wessler, 2008; Wessler & Rinke, 2014). In normative terms, news media can help raise people's awareness of issues that are of public concern, foster an understanding of consequences and outcomes of certain decisions and policies and contribute to political participation and mobilization (Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990; Norris, 2000; Rinke, Knobloch, Gastil, & Carson, 2013). There are also well-known problems in mass communication. Professionals from media organizations necessarily mediate political communication.

To understand how experts interact with political representatives, policy-makers and lay citizens in the public hearings and through media-based communication, we focus on: a) The inclusion and position of debate participants; b) Experts' reason-giving; c) Experts' discursive accountability.

Inclusion and position of debate participants

To investigate the role played by experts in deliberation, we believe that it is crucial to ask whether there is a "real debate" at stake or not, encompassing different actors and competing perspectives and arguments. In public hearings, the internal organization of certain aspects – such as participant recruitment, information selection and moderation – may lead to manipulation and inequalities that obstruct deliberative debate (Parkinson, 2006; Grönlund et al., 2014; Urbinati & Warren, 2008). When there are conflicting interests, mini-public debates may favor more influential groups, who may define the political agenda and detain more rhetorical resources for conducting debates at the expense of disadvantaged groups. The governing majority parties may invite partisan participants and a number of experts aligned to their ideological agenda to gain political advantage. When the decision has already been made by the governmental body, public hearings can simply become a formality, i.e., a means of satisfying legal requirements or the opposition (Buttny, 2010; see also Grönlund et al., 2014).

Media debates can be disappointing in many respects. Through working routines and selection processes of various sorts, media professionals select *what* they consider to be the news, *who* they believe should be authorized speakers and *what* the official version of reality is (Schudson, 2003). Media agents may produce limited coverage of important issues, fail to deliver sufficient and qualified information or provide misinformation that elites use to manipulate the public (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014; Rinke et al., 2013). Journalists may filter the flow of communication from the expert community to the news media; and a certain group of experts can be routinely invited to provide comments, based on their political perspectives (Albæk, 2011; Fossum & Schlesinger, 2007; Page, 1996). In the face

of such considerations, we ask:

RQ1a: Who gains access to public hearings and who becomes the news sources in the debate at stake? What are the positions of speakers in these settings? Are there conflicting views and competing arguments in these arenas?

RQ1b: What is the experts' participation share in the debate as compared to other speakers in public hearings as well as in the news media? Are there divergent views within the group of experts in these settings?

Experts' reason-giving.

Recently, experts have been called upon to engage themselves in political debates, and it is not surprising that the work of experts is guided by values and partisan considerations (Bäckstrand, 2003; Brown, 2014; Pielke, 2007). Yet, experts can choose to play different roles, as was previously discussed. Legislative hearings occur in a constrained context; and they have a fixed agenda. The mass media is an open setting, and journalists seek the assistance of experts to gain background information as well as to interpret complex issues to build news stories on a daily basis (Albæk, 2011; Brewer & Sigelman, 2002; Weiler, 1983). There is always the possibility that journalists select desired comments and avoid undesired remarks, or choose certain experts to obtain quotes confirming pre-conceived news frames. A widespread view among commentators and researchers is that journalists will just contact others within the expert community to obtain the quotes they want when they are not satisfied with the information provided by an initial expert (Albæk, 2011; Brewer & Sigelman, 2002).

A further complexity arises regarding the level of justification provided by experts to warrant their claims in different settings. The view that experts should clearly explain their proposals and advice-giving is important to deliberative democracy, since a fruitful debate requires justification of claims to motivate and resolve disputes. Experts nevertheless may prefer not to contribute directly to certain circumstances that involve more complicated explanations and issues (Stasavage, 2007). Particularly in the mass media, there is a restriction of space, speakers' expressions are often edited, and information should be easily available to distinct sectors of society, and experts themselves may shape their speech to be brief (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014; Norris, 2000; Schudson, 2003). Furthermore, under the glare of publicity (Chambers, 2005, 2009), experts may not demonstrate implications of policy alternatives or the underlying logics of their positions; they might jump to conclusions and allow a large part of their arguments to be implicit. Christiano (2012, p. 46) has argued that "experts will express their views in newspapers and other media in a way that presents the ideas in fairly easily digestible form." In the

light of these considerations, our second set of research questions emerges:

RQ2a: What sort of arguments do experts themselves convey to public hearings as well as when they are quoted in the news? How do they express and justify their opinions about a given public policy in these settings? Do they use only technical justifications or do they balance out technical arguments and links to social life? Do they sometimes solely appeal to social values?

RQ2b: What level of justification do experts provide to support their claims in public hearings as well as when they are quoted in the news media?

Experts' reciprocity and discursive accountability

In the practical world of policymaking, experts face everyday decisions about how to position their ideas and skills in the context of broader politics. In some situations, there is no best answer from experts to solve complicated decisions that involve conflicting interests in society. Under these circumstances, experts might align themselves with partisan groups. They may therefore become actively involved in the political strife and compelled to be responsive to others' views and positions.

It can be argued that when performing their work in official settings, experts might be asked to neither express their views nor engage in conflict-ridden discussions with co-workers and peers. Yet, when experts have the opportunity to publicly discuss their experiences or recommendations for policies, they may express their personal views and values. Public hearings function to promote the advisory process; and sections are typically organized to provide technical information that is relevant to decision-making. In the news, previous research has shown that scientists have appeared more often to comment on an issue considered relevant to the general public than to communicate research results (Albæk, 2011; Brewer & Sigelman, 2002). Hence, we ask:

RQ3: Is it possible to find experts' engagement with conflicting views on public policy in public hearings and when they are quoted in the media? If so, do they incorporate opposing arguments in a degraded, neutral or valued way?

The Case

Transportation and public traffic policies widely impact social life in modern cities. These issues affect many people on a daily basis and are linked to social activities such as health, education, economic issues, development, technology and so forth (Costa, Koyama, Minuci, & Fischer, 2003; Neto, 2009). Hence, transportation and

traffic planning are essential policies that are mandated by the Brazilian Constitution. Problems of intense traffic in major cities have prompted a growing debate in Brazil. Within this context, in 2007, Bill of Law 1.508/07 was sent from the City Hall to the State Assembly. This bill proposed the transfer of the Belo Horizonte bus station from its downtown location to an "old" city district known as Calafate. As the state capital of Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte is barely over 100 years old. The city has a population of 2,258,096 inhabitants and 5,413,627 in its greater metropolitan area, according to the 2010 Brazilian Census.

Political representatives claimed that such a policy would yield two benefits: i) lesser transit flow in the hyper-central area and (ii) easier and swifter access of inter-city and inter-state buses coming to and from Belo Horizonte. The population dwelling in Calafate and its surrounding regions promptly disapproved of this proposal. They claimed the bus station's relocation would worsen the already-heavy local traffic and would generate problems related to a land takeover by the city, public safety and security issues, local economy and infrastructure concerns, as well as legal aspects related to the project itself. The project was led by then city councilwoman Neusinha Santos and was favoured by members of the political base sustaining the city's then Mayor Fernando Pimentel[1]. Both Pimentel and Santos are members of the ruling Workers' Party.

The debate on this bill of law escalated over two years and attracted growing media attention. Local politicians became involved in a dispute and organized three public hearings at the Minas Gerais State Assembly (ALMG) – *Assembléia Legislativa de Minas Gerais*. Our analysis covers two years of this debate, i.e., 2007 and 2008, in both arenas — local print newspapers and ALMG public hearings. The first year captured the repercussion of the launch of the bill of law. The second year, being a municipal electoral year, stimulated heated debates about this bill among the candidates running for Belo Horizonte's mayoral office.

In regards to public hearings, we chose to analyse the ALMG's Transportation, Communication and Public Works Committee that deals with issues related to traffic and transportation. This committee is organized by groups of deputies (in a proportional representation of parties and parliamentary coalitions), who analyze bills of law in the ALMG, which precedes voting in the plenary. The committee conducts studies, monitors government acts and promotes public assemblies and debates on topics of public concern. The composition of the three public hearings on the proposed Calafate Bus Station was hybrid, since the committee invited

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[1]   Fernando Pimentel became the Minister of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade in President Dilma Rousseff's cabinet and is currently the governor of Minas Gerais.

experts in transportation and transit policies, representatives of the legislature (following proportional representation), leaders of affected communities and civic associations with a history of activism. The debate had a moderator; and it was typically initiated by political representatives, followed by experts and leaders of civic entities. Ordinary citizens were then offered the opportunity to participate voluntarily. Usually, there was flexibility in regards to the time allowed for participation; and in just one section the moderator restricted the time of speech (to 3 minutes), by justifying this measure due to the large number of enrolled speakers. These public hearings were not broadly divulgated; and citizens' participation was mostly restricted to local residents interested in the issue – a characteristic commonly stressed by studies on public hearings (Avritzer, 2009; Buttny, 2010). We analysed the transcripts of full sections of these three hearings, which were made available by the ALMG.

In regards to media material, we selected the three leading dailies in the state — *Estado de Minas*, *Hoje em Dia* and *O Tempo* — with an average compounded daily circulation of 170,000 issues. All published material related to the theme (the bus station transfer) was surveyed (newspaper pieces, reports, columns, op-ed signed articles, letters from readers).[2] Our study is different from the work of Rinke et al. (2013) which explores what they call "mediated meta-deliberation." Whereas these scholars analyse the quantity and character of the news coverage related to a specific mini-public experience (the Australian Citizens' Parliament), we aim at capturing the broader public debate and news coverage of a policy proposal during a two-year period.

Methodological Procedures

In order to analyze the content of the newspaper articles and the ALMG's transcript, we elaborated a 22-variable codebook. Most of our categories were shaped according to the *Discourse Quality Index* (DQI), developed by Steenbergen, Bächtiger, Spörndli and Steiner (2003) and Steiner et al. (2004). Theoretically tied to Habermas' discourse ethics, the DQI is a tool developed to evaluate the discursive quality of debates in legislative houses. The unit of analysis is the speech act, conceptualized as "the public discourse by a particular individual delivered at a particular point in a debate" (Steenbergen et al., 2003, p. 27). In this study, the

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[2]   The search was conducted using the words "Bus Station" and "Calafate," which had the "new" bus station as its main theme. In the *Estado de Minas* daily, data collection was via search mechanisms in the paper's Internet portal. For the other two newspapers, we searched their archives. Unfortunately, in *Hoje em Dia* it was not possible to retrieve material from the year 2007. However, given the large amount of material the archive team found for 2008, we determined it was relevant to include this newspaper.

DQI was adapted to analyse and compare the debates in public hearings and printed newspapers.

How can we compare quotes in newspapers and speech acts in public hearings? We developed a two-step content analysis. First, we analysed the transcripts of the ALMG public hearings. Every speech was broken down into several discursive units and each unit was separately coded. Not all speech acts were analyzed. In line with Steiner et al. (2004), we coded only the excerpts that contained a demand. Second, we analysed the news material. We began by compiling every direct quotation or close paraphrase attributed to a speaker in this material. We assumed that mediation constitutes the foundation of media-based communication; and exactly why journalists working in major local media organizations chose particular comments of experts to quote in their news stories is not an object of inquiry in this study. To the extent to which these quotes became publicized, they allowed different levels of analysis. We examined opinion pieces (op-ed signed articles, columns, editorials, letters from readers, etc.) as well as news pieces (reporting). The procedure for this analysis paralleled those of the public hearings transcripts. To gain a clearer perspective on how the arguments used in mediated expert comments resemble arguments issued by experts in the public hearings, we listed all arguments evoked in both settings. After clustering similar arguments, we found 48 arguments through our reading of the materials.

A summary explaining how the variables were coded is provided at the end of this study[3]. Our content analysis followed the procedures suggested by Steiner et al. (2004) to ensure codification and reliability. First, two coders conducted a "blind test" by reading the speech acts individually and coding them. Second, the coders compared the selected speech acts and assessed the compatibility between their selections. After obtaining a positive result, each coder separately carried out a new content analysis of the selected material, corresponding to 10 percent of the total sample. Next, a reliability test of both analyses was done using Krippendorff's Alpha (Hayes & Krippendorff, 2007). Yet, some of these variables did not score satisfactory results since they appeared to be too complex to code in different settings. For these variables (Type of reason and Reciprocity) the coders jointly analyzed the same material and debated and solved eventual disagreements before coding began. The results obtained ranged from 0.798 to 1.000, with an average of 0.888 and a standard deviation of 0.094 among the variables analyzed. Table 1 presents the results of our reliability tests.

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[3]   Because of space constraints, the codebook is not available in this text. However, any of the authors can provide this material.

Table 1: *Inter-coder reliability and Krippendorf's* α

| Variables	α
Actors in the Debate	1.000
Positioning	0.798
Type of Arguments 1	0.853
Type of Arguments 2	1.000
Types of Reasons Used	0.826
Characteristics of Speech Acts	0.822
Levels of Justification	0.806
Reciprocity	1.000
N	35

Source: Research Group EME/UFMG

Results

This section presents the findings related to the overall debate, which encompasses all actors. It then refines these findings by looking at the experts as a particular category of speakers in order to assess our research questions. Altogether, 374 speeches were analyzed, 67 from the ALMG's public hearings and 307 from printed newspapers. The fact that 2008 was an electoral year contributed to heightened news coverage focusing on the policy proposal at stake – indeed, 75.4 percent of all speeches in the analysis were obtained from newspapers published that year.

Participation and position. In the public hearings, office holders or persons speaking on behalf of government traffic institutions were the most prominent speakers, followed by local district leaders and experts, as is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: *Actors involved in the debate in each type of setting (% values)*
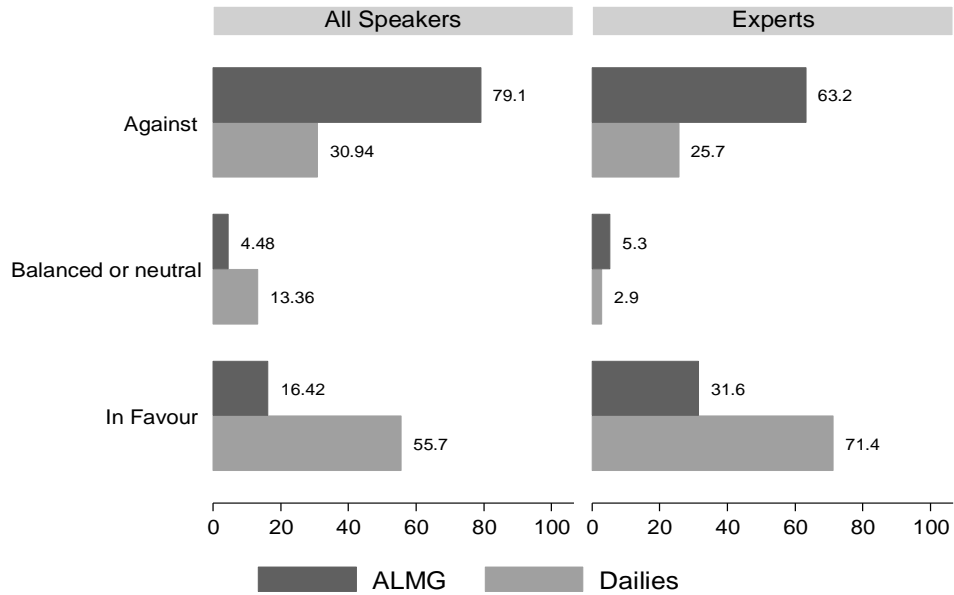

N = 67 (ALMG) and N = 307 (Dailies)
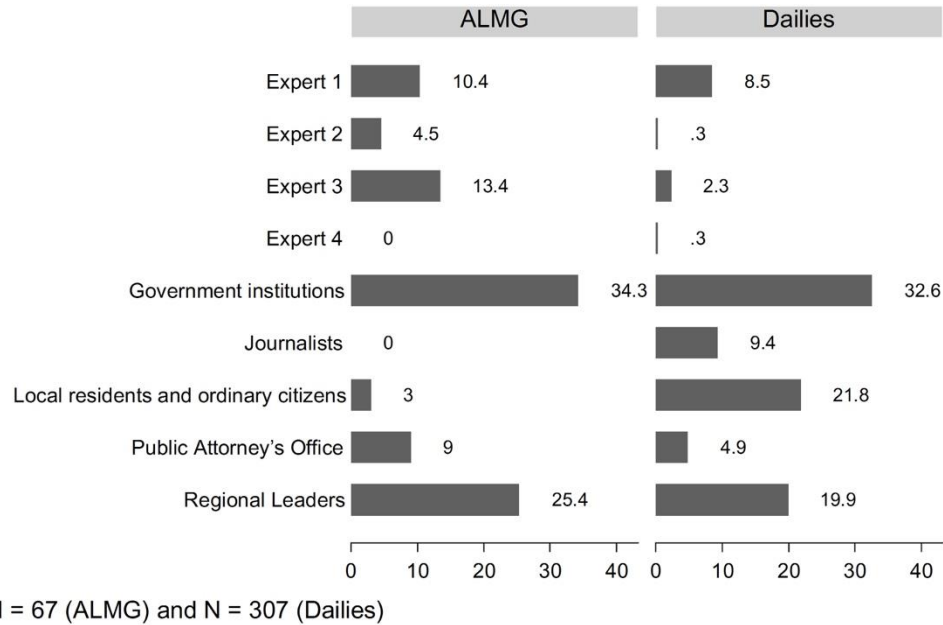
The newspaper material concentrated on two types of formats: reporting (66.4%) and news (24.8%). The issue was hardly discussed in opinion pieces (4%). As one might observe in Figure 1, speakers representing the governmental administration, regional district leaders and ordinary citizens were also prominent in the news coverage. It is possible to notice that citizens achieved a statistically significant higher presence in the news media than in the ALMG. While experts were not the most frequent speakers in both settings, specialists from the Public Attorney's Office and transit experts working directly on transit issues showed more significant participation, particularly in the ALGM session.

Figure 2: *Positon Against and Pro the Bill of Law of all participants and experts*

in each type of setting (% values)

All: N = 67 (ALMG) and N = 307 (Dailies); Experts: N = 19 (ALMG) and N = 35 (Dailies)

The majority of speakers in the ALMG forum opposed the bus station transfer, as in regard to overall participants (79.1%) as well as experts (63.2%). We found the opposite picture in the news media. The majority of overall speakers (56.7%) and experts alike (71.4%) were in favor of the of the policy proposal.

Types of Reason. The majority of actors used mostly technical reasons in the ALMG's public hearings and in the newspapers alike (see Table 2). Agents of the Public Ministry (76.2%) and journalists (89.7%) issued more technical reasons than the experts themselves (69.8%), followed by agents of governmental institutions (66.1%), ordinary citizens (52.2%) and community leaders (39.7%). Reason-giving-related social-appeals were more frequent in media settings than in the public hearings (27.4% in dailies *vs* 13.4% in the ALMG). Conversely, balanced arguments, referring to both technical aspects and social appeals, were more frequently used in the public hearings than in the media setting (28.4% in the ALMG *vs* 10.9% in dailies).

Table 2: *Classification of reasons used by all actors in each type of setting*

	ALMG	Dailies	Total
Technical arguments	58.2%	61.7%	61.1%
Social-appeal arguments	13.4%	27.4%	24.9%
Balanced arguments	28.4%	10.9%	14.1%
N	67	303	370

Source: Research Group EME/UFMG

Table 3: *Classification of experts' reasons in each type of setting*

	ALMG	Dailies	Total
Technical arguments	57.9%	76.5%	69.8%
Social-appeal arguments	5.3%	5.9%	5.7%
Balanced arguments	36.8%	17.6%	24.5%
N	19	34	53

$x^2 = (2, N = 53) = 2.42, p = .30$

Source: Research Group EME/UFMG

When we look at the expert category (see Table 3), we observe a higher percentage of arguments framed in a technical way in the news coverage than in the public hearings (76.5% in dailies vs. 57.9% in the ALMG). Debate in public hearings favored experts' expressions of balanced arguments in a higher proportion than in news media comments (36.8% in public hearings vs. 17.6% in dailies). Despite this difference, no statistical significance was obtained since the number of occurrences of this variable was too low. Hence, further research is required to confirm these results.

As is shown in Table 4, debate participants, including all categories of speakers, primarily used reasons that make no explicit reference to the common good, both in newspapers (71.7%) and in public hearings (65.7%). The use of the "common good" justification being associated to benefits and costs for certain groups was a little higher in the news media than in the ALMG (19.2% in dailies vs. 11.9% in the ALMG). Arguments that appealed to the common good in utilitarian terms, through considerations for "avoiding harm" and "maximizing benefits" for all citizens or the entire population, prevailed in the ALMG (22.4% in the ALMG vs. 8.8% in dailies). Arguments linked to altruistic reasons, referring to a willingness to create a benefit for others or for interest-bearers, were practically non-existent in both settings.

Table 4: *References to the "common good" made by all actors in each type of setting*

	ALMG	Dailies	Total
No explicit reference to the common good	65.7%	71.7%	70.6%
Common good used as an interest group	11.9%	19.2%	17.9%
Common good used in utilitarian or collective terms	22.4%	8.8%	11.2%
Altruistic reasons used	-	0.3%	0.3%
N	67	307	374

Source: Research Group EME/UFMG

When considering just the experts' reasons that associated the bus transfer policy to the common good, we observe in Table 5 a higher percentage of issues interpreted in utilitarian terms (31.4% in dailies vs. 21.1% in the ALMG) than in terms of benefits and costs to certain groups (14.3% in dailies vs. 15.8% in the ALMG).

Table 5: *Experts' references to the "common good" in each type of setting*

	ALMG	Dailies	Total
Generally no "common good"	63.2%	54.3%	57.4%
"Common good" for an interest group	15.8%	14.3%	14.8%
"Common good" in utilitarian terms	21.1%	31.4%	27.8%
N	19	35	54

$\chi^2(2, N = 54) = 0.67, p = .72$

Source: Research Group EME/UFMG

Level of justification. In the general debate, we found that participants more often used arguments with inferior levels of justification (with just a single reason) in both settings, appearing in nearly half of the samples analysed (see Table 6).

Table 6: *Justification levels by experts and non-experts in each type of setting*

Level of Justification	ALMG			Dailies		
	Experts	Non-experts	Total	Experts	Non-Experts	Total
No justification	2.1%	5.3%	3.0%	-	3.3%	2.9%
Inferior	52.1%	15.8%	41.8%	28.6%	49.6%	47.2%
Qualified	22.9%	42.1%	28.4%	57.1%	36.4%	38.8%
Sophisticated	22.9%	36.8%	26.9%	14.3%	10.7%	11.1%
N	48	19	67	35	272	307

Source: Research Group EME/UFMG

The experts used more qualified and sophisticated levels of argumentation as compared to non-expert speakers in both settings (see Table 6). The volume of experts' demands without any justification was very low in the ALMG (5.3%) as well as in dailies (0%). Arguments articulated through less complex reasons (inferior and qualified reasons) were more frequent in newspapers (85.7%) than in the public hearings (57.9%); and arguments with a "superior" level of justification were more frequent in the ALMG hearings than in the media (36.8% in the ALMG vs. 14.3% in dailies).

Reciprocity. Table 7 shows that the reciprocity level in the ALMG hearings was low (31.6%); but it was much higher than for the newspapers (3%).[4] In addition, one might notice that the level of ignored counter-arguments was significantly high[5], both in the public hearings (68.4%) and in the news media (97.7%).

Table 7: *Experts' levels of reciprocity in each type of setting*

	ALMG	**Dailies**	**Total**
Counter-arguments ignored	68.4%	97.0%	86.5%
Counter-arguments included, but depreciated or rebutted	15.8%	-	5.8%
Counter-arguments included, but neutral	15.8%	3.0%	7.7%
N	19	33	52

Source: Research Group EME/UFMG

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[4]	In line with Siegel and Castellan (2006, p. 147), it is possible to claim statistical significance for the chi-square test since Table 7 is 2 x 2 with r > 2 and none of the expected frequencies below 1.

[5]	We detected that there was no counter-argument included and valued in the collected sample.

Discussion

Inclusion in the debate and plurality of views

The battle over science can be played out across different arenas. The first research question asked whether there are different speakers in the debate at stake as well as competing views in both public hearings and news media content. We also inquired into the experts' positions in the controversy at stake. Rather than individual experts, our study examines the expert category as a whole[6].

Our analysis shows that there was a plurality of speakers in both settings, and the debate was configured by conflicting views and values in both arenas. The public hearing settings were mostly hostile to the local government's bill of law proposal. The fact that the vast majority of participants and experts from the Public Attorney's Office and *BHTrans* (the largest group within the expert community) were against the bus station relocation suggests there was internal conflict among governmental institutions. It is then plausible to assume that transit professionals as well as organized interests of local residents and district leaders reacted against the government's bill proposal, by putting forward opposing perspectives and attempting to exert political pressure in the legislative hearings.

In the civic arena of the mass media, the majority of sources favored the bus station transfer, and most experts' quotes congruently approved this policy proposal in news stories. Arguably, there might have been an effort by journalists to select experts' comments to enhance a favorable standpoint to the policy at stake. Yet, the media material presented a more balanced share between pro and con positions than the ALMG. This can be explained by the fact that Brazilian news media organizations, like the US model of journalism, tend to emphasize an internal diversity of reporting, by providing contrasting perspectives in the news (Albuquerque, 2012; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Norris, 2000). The typical mainstream news pieces tend to present both sides of the dispute, balancing policy proposals.

Thus far, our findings suggest that the debate had different majoritarian positions in the selected settings; contending parties were able to articulate different discourses toward the bus transfer bill; and the preponderant position was supported by the majority's group of experts in both forums. Yet, inclusion of diverse experts'

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[6]   The four categories of experts defined in the codebook – professionals working in transit organizations; transit consultants and academics working in this field; experts from exact areas; experts from the Humanities and Social Sciences – were clustered into only one group.

insights from multiple disciplines and types of evidence existed.

Reason-giving

Our second research question inquired into the type of arguments experts convey in public hearings and mediated comments. Our findings show that experts' reason-giving was quite similar in both environments. During the advisory processes for the public hearings, as well as in comments in the news media, experts provided a set of information and formulated their concerns primarily as technical issues (57.9% in the ALMG and 76.5% in dailies). Technical arguments against the bus station relocation reinforced the lack of infra-structure of the Calafate district; illegalities concerning the bill of law; an absence of impact studies on the proposed policy; as well as indications that such an enterprise would not solve the traffic problem in the city center. This type of argument in favor of the policy at stake stressed the tactical facilities present at the chosen location (such as access to several highways); the new bus station's design, including terminal capacity, platforms and utilities; and evidence supporting the diagnosis that the policy proposal would promote rapid-transit flux in the city center.

Previous studies have shown that political elites and policy-makers can use science to advance their own agendas by claiming that technical knowledge is neutral and can be separated from politics (Bäckstrand, 2003; Brown, 2014; Pielke, 2007). In our study, it may come as a surprise that, overall, speakers mostly invoked technical issues and practical needs in both settings. Even ordinary citizens and regional leaders, who vocalized the majority of value-based arguments, appealed to technicalities to defend their views. Journalists, who are usually not expected to inject their own thinking and judgments into news pieces due to professional norms of objectivity, chiefly used technical and factual knowledge to build news stories. These results support the argument that journalists need "compensatory legitimation" derived from the authority of experts if they want to tacitly advance interpretation in a preferred direction (Albæk, 2011;, see also Weiler, 1983). However, further examination complicates this assessment in several ways.

Since all categories of speakers used specialized discourses to pursue their interests, we can argue, in line with Pielke (2007), that science by providing an "excess of objectivity" can support actors who appeal to conflicting positions as well as those who do not want to make difficult decisions. To gain clearer insight into how experts attempted to justify policy, we investigated how technical arguments are (politically speaking) connected to policy options and their outcomes.

Our results suggest that experts operated like Pure Scientists and Science Arbiters (Pielke, 2007), as they preferred to present diagnosis in technical terms in their field

of expertise, even if they disagreed with some of the bus station bill of law's points. As compared to other actors, they presented the highest share of balanced arguments, combining technical input and social values (36.8% in the ALMG and 17.6% in dailies). They rarely expressed arguments with social appeal alone, i.e. reasons-related issues like social benefits or harm to the region, housing, land devaluation, the geographical district's symbolic value and so forth. The volume of arguments referring to benefits or costs for specific groups was equally low in both settings (15.8% in the ALMG and 14.3% in dailies).

However, we found some nuances in experts' expressions in distinct contexts. Particularly in the public hearings, experts tended to avoid interfering with the government organizations' decisions. In reading the ALMG transcripts, we found that professionals working in transit organizations were more prone to defend the projects of the companies they were connected to (especially *BHtrans* – with jurisdiction over traffic in the state capital's greater metropolitan region – or some state institutions) than in the news media. It is feasible to assume that experts never placed the companies they worked for in embarrassing situations; and they were also aware of the costly implications of contesting their superiors.

The experts' type of reason with appeals to the common good, interpreted as benefits or costs faced by the entire population, was more frequent in the news media (31.4% in dailies vs. 21.1% in the ALMG). In this case, we found a statistically significant difference. This result can first be explained by the expected role of the news media to cover issues of public concern in democratic systems. The media reports on developments that are likely to interfere, both positively and negatively, with the citizens' welfare (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014; Gurevitch & Blumler, 1990). Second, our findings are congruent with an empirical analysis of the use of experts as sources in the news over time (Albæk, 2011), which demonstrates that researchers increasingly comment on political matters and issues of public concern placed in the political agenda by politicians, parties and interest groups; and communicate research results much less than in the past (Albæk, 2011; Norris, 2000).

Regarding the level of justification, we observed that overall arguments without any justification were rare in both environments; and the category of experts provided more elaborate arguments than all other speakers. Our analysis shows that there are more sophisticated and well-developed arguments in the ALMG, but the quality of argumentation did not decrease dramatically in the mass media, in the ways one might expect (Chambers, 2009; Christiano, 2012). Over 45 percent of experts' arguments presented good levels of justification (qualified and sophisticated) in the ALMG (45.8%) as well as in the newspapers (47.1%). In our case, the need to produce information in an accessible format to a broader audience

(i.e., to publics with different backgrounds, interests and cognitive skills) or the strategic use of information under the glare of publicity by interested actors did not produce shallower arguments in the media.

Discursive Accountability

This study's third research question addresses whether experts openly engage with conflicting views and whether there are differences on how experts incorporate opposing arguments (in a degraded, neutral or valued way) in both the public hearings and the news media. Our analysis indicates that experts typically did not reveal their personal preferences in public hearings or in their published opinions, as already mentioned; and they avoided explicitly venturing into social conflicts or moral disagreements. In both settings, professionals working in transit organizations, transit consultants and academics in this field typically ignored counter-arguments and they did not incorporate conflicting opinions into their own argumentation. They usually were not politically accountable when confronted with other interests and goals for society.

Although experts were mostly unresponsive to those who challenged their professional knowledge, the lack of accountability of individual experts may not be deeply disappointing to deliberative purposes. As would be expected from mini-public studies, participation of experts can contribute to an increase in the quality of justification of debate (Fishkin, 2009; see also Gastil et al., 2012). Our qualitative analysis showed that experts made valuable contributions to the advisory debate in the public hearings as well as in their comments to the media: they provided useful information on several aspects of the bus station's relocation; clarified more opaque and counterintuitive issues; tested methods or assessed problems within the proposed policy; and diagnosed unexpected complications related to the project. Even if most experts did not directly respond to adversarial views and judgments — and thus avoided becoming personally engaged in political controversies in both settings — several speakers resorted to these actors' arguments to defend positions across ideological lines and particular interests.

If we do not expect experts to perform the role of "ideal deliberators," these agents' lack of discursive accountability may not be harmful for deliberation, when seen from a systemic approach. It may be sufficient that they provide information to help deliberators understand the associations between different choices, their side-effects and outcomes. Since experts usually enjoy a higher degree of authority than other deliberators (and they can easily use their knowledge to impose their points-of-view on others), their hesitance at giving decisive answers may contribute to debate participants reflecting on the issues for themselves (Brown, 2014; Fishkin, 2009). While retaining a core emphasis on specialized knowledge, debate

participants — by learning that experts disagree — may feel freer to discuss the aims of society or trade-offs among aims, either during face-to-face meetings or mediated communication.

Conclusion

In this article, we assume that experts can play distinct roles within a deliberative system. We sought to assess the role of experts in deliberation in two arenas that enable public communication. What does this research entail for a systemic approach to deliberation?

First, thinking in terms of a system makes us more sensitive to inquire into complexities in the nature of forums, practices and communicative processes in different spaces within society. This study urges caution to consider speakers' accessibility, building of arguments and discursive accountability in each particular situation (Bächtiger & Wegmann, 2014; Dryzek & Hendriks, 2012; Elstub & Mclaverty, 2013, 2014; Maia, 2012; Mansbridge et al., 2012; Mendonça, 2016; Neblo, 2015). In empirical terms, this study has contributed by showing that experts played a fairly similar role at micro and macro levels, in spite of facing different conditions to have a voice and advance certain interests. Experts in the legislative hearings as well as in mediated comments provided informed prospects about policy-making choices and their possible social consequences, but did not define their preferences. Although arguments related to social appeals and the common good were more frequent in the media quotes, which are addressed to large audiences, experts rarely referred to benefits or costs for specific groups. Experts typically presented good levels of justification for their claims in both settings; and they avoided becoming personally engaged in adversarial disputes.

Second, the system-level perspective enables us to interpret research findings in a broader way, in order to investigate how system components relate to larger dynamics of deliberation. To start with, in our case, a linear model of analysis of a single forum would not grasp the preponderance of con-position within the debate in one setting (public hearings) and pro-position in another (news media). Insofar as there are usually multiple participants with conflicting interests involved in any issue in complex and pluralistic societies, contestation and struggle among and between different interest groups, political parties and ordinary citizens may assume different configurations in distinct settings.

In more specific terms, a systemic approach provides a better outlook for duelling experts' diagnoses, recommendations and insights. Our findings reveal that experts in public hearings as well as in their published comments operated more as Pure Scientists and Science Arbiters. The role of Honest Brokering of Policy

Alternatives seems rather utopian to be performed by singular individuals. Yet, our findings suggest that expertise to brokering policy options can be better achieved at a system level, i.e., when we take a broader perspective to conceive "a collection of experts working together with a range of views, experiences, and knowledge" (Pielke, 2007, p.3). When there is high political strife and controversy about different courses of action, it is neither plausible nor desirable that a single group of experts motivates the entire public to embrace its position (Brown, 2014).

Lastly, this article has provided some general insights into how communication between experts and the public is attained in practical situations, in micro as well as in macro forums. In theoretical terms, this study largely corroborates the view that expertise never answers basic moral and political questions (Gutmann & Thompson, 1996; Habermas, 1996) and those pursuing distinct lines of action, in a situation of political controversy and uncertainty, can rely on different types of expertise (Bäckstrand, 2003; Brown, 2014; Pielke, 2007). Here the systemic approach allows us to envisage multiple chains of "translators" to produce intelligibility of expert considerations for citizens and vice-versa, as advocated by Christiano (2012) and Fischer (2009). One key argument of this article was that a variety of political representatives, interest groups, journalists, civic associations and ordinary citizens used technical arguments to support these sectors' interests, in micro and macro arenas alike. Arguably, these multiple actors' attempts to frame and re-frame expert knowledge across different settings with distinct political goals might help to expand and clarify policy choices at a system level.

This research has several limitations. Since only two settings were examined, we cannot of course say how experts behaved in the debate at stake in other spheres within the national context. We limited ourselves to analyzing "published opinions," and future research might develop a full-fledged analytical framework to examine journalists' interactions with their sources in diverse contexts of the political system. Future studies might extend the comparative analysis to debates in parliaments or forums organized by activists or discussions in online platforms, for instance. How experts participate in deliberation across different subject matters or policy conflicts could be assessed. Experts might well play a different role in other issues and feel compelled to engage discursively with different groups in society. The development of a broader systemic analytical framework is a challenge for future research. We do, however, believe this challenge is worth pursuing.

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Appendix – Summary of Codes for the Variables

Six variables in our codebook are designed to characterize our material. They are self-explanatory, and there is no need to discuss them in detail: *identification of the material* (1 = ALMG transcripts and 2 = newspaper material), *date*, *purpose of the ALMG public hearing*, *newspaper name* (1 = Estado de Minas, 2 = Hoje em Dia, and 3 = O Tempo), *title of news piece*, and *news piece format* (1 = News, 2 = Reporting, 3 = Op-ed Signed Article, 4 = Editorial, 5 = Signed Column, 6 = Interview, 7 = Note, 8 = Front Page, 9 = Letter from Readers, 10 = None of the above, and 11 = Not possible to classify).

The other variables demand an explanation. They can be divided into two groups. The first one is linked to a qualitative reading of the material. They are:

Actors: This variable classifies speakers and different groups that participated in the debate. 1 = Public Attorney's Office (attorneys general, state and county attorneys and other professionals in the legal system); 2 = Expert 1 (professionals who work in transit organizations, such as *BHtrans*, whose jurisdiction is the greater state-capital metropolitan area, and *DER*, the state highway department, etc.); 3 = Expert 2 (transit experts working directly on this topic, such as university professors or consultants, albeit not linked to transit organizations); 4 = Expert 3 (graduates in exact areas, such as architects, urban experts and engineers); 5 = Expert 4 (graduates in humanities and social sciences, such as sociologists, anthropologists and political scientists); 6 = Journalists; 7 = Regional Leaders; 8 = Local residents and ordinary citizens; 9 = Government Institutions; 10 = Others (if any).

Positioning: Considers the actors' judgments and reactions to the proposal of transferring the bus station to the Calafate district. 1 = Against, 2 = In Favor, 3 = Balanced or neutral, and 4 = Not possible to identify.

Type of argument: Examples of arguments against transferring the bus station to the Calafate district are: "No adequate technical studies of impact were carried out which might have made transferring the bus station to the Calafate region feasible" and "There is no existent physical space for the allocation of the bus station in the proposed region." Examples of arguments favoring the policy at stake are: "The Calafate bus station project is attuned to the city's Master Plan, which is thus in balance with public interest" and "The Calafate region will increase in value with the transfer of this project." The actors' speeches can be classified into more than one type of argument (minimum of one and maximum of three).

Type of reason: Indicates whether actors use only technical justifications in their

speeches, or whether they balance out technical arguments and links to social life. 1 = Speaker uses only technical arguments, 2 = Speaker uses only arguments appealing to moral, ethical or social values, and 3 = Speaker balances out technical and social arguments.

The second set of variables were literally derived or adapted from the DQI to fit our research goals. They are:

Level of justification of arguments: Captures the number of reasons offered to support a demand as well as linkage between premises, evidences and conclusions. 0 = No justification, 1 = Inferior justification, 2 = Qualified justification, 3 = Sophisticated justification.

Reciprocity: Indicates whether or not counter-arguments are assimilated by a speaker. 0 = Counter-arguments ignored, 1 = Counter-arguments included but depreciated, 2 = Counter-arguments included but neutral, and 3 = Counter-arguments included and valued.

Content of justification - Common good defined in utilitarian terms: The speaker refers to common good interpreted as "the greatest good for the greatest number." *Common good related to specific group:* Captures whether speakers' reasons take into account benefits or costs for particular groups. *Common good defined in altruistic terms:* Refers to a willingness to create a benefit for others or for interest-bearers. 0 = No explicit reference to groups or to the common good in general, 1 = "Common good" used as an interest group, 2 = "Common good" used in utilitarian or collective terms – for a large number of people, the best solution, and 3 = Altruistic reasons used.

Reflexivity: Considers whether or not participants acknowledge a change in their opinions due to arguments presented by others during the debate. 0 = Argument presented by another participant is neither recovered nor included in the speaker's discourse, 1 = Argument presented by the speaker himself/herself is later recovered and included in the speech, and 2 = Argument presented by another speaker is retrieved and included in the speech, inasmuch as the speaker agrees with it.