Online deliberation?
The case of Minas Gerais State Legislature in Brazil

Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça
Ernesto Friedrich de Lima Amaral

Department of Political Science
Federal University of Minas Gerais (Brazil)

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FAPEMIG

Focus

- Comprehension of an online public consultation through the lenses of deliberative democracy

  - Do consultations have the capacity to feed broader public deliberation?

  - Can they motivate citizens to discuss issues of public concern?

  - Or does the skepticism towards institutions undermine the possibilities of debate?

Structure

- (1) online deliberation

- (2) MGSL's context

- (3) methods

- (4) findings

Online Deliberation

- Systemic approach to deliberation

  - Importance of many arenas

  - Some contributions to online deliberation:

    - ✓ Wilhelm (2000), Dahlberg (2001), Jensen (2003), Graham and Witschge (2003), Stromer Galley (2007), Wright and Street (2007), Sæbø et al (2009), Wojcieszak e Mutz (2009), Lev-On and Manin (2009) Gerhards e Schäfer (2010), Raphael Kies (2010),

Consultations

- Consultations may have positive consequences:

  - to the strengthening of democracy; to civic education; and to the public image of institutions.

- It also has many risks:

  - frustration, fuel internal conflicts in the institution, promote the fragmentation of debates and, even, weaken citizens' participation in other venues.

The MGSL Institutional Context

- Deep transformations since the mid-1980s

  - Many mechanisms of participation were established

  - 2000`s – strengthening of the use of ICT, including the promotion of online public consultations

    - ✓ Attempt to enhance connection with citizens who live far from the capital city, besides facilitating the engagement of non-activists and youngsters.

Methods

- 745 comments distributed in 10 threads

  - *Inclusiveness*

  - *Reason-giving*

  - *Reciprocity*

  - *Mutual Respect*

  - *Common Good Orientation*

  - *Articulation between arenas*

Results

Percentage distribution of posts and population per regions of the state

Region	Percent of posts	Percent of population
Northwest	0.40	1.90
North	0.67	8.20
Jequitinhonha	0.00	3.60
Mucuri Valley	1.07	2.00
Triângulo and Alto Paranaíba	5.23	10.90
Center	0.81	2.10
Belo Horizonte	81.07	31.80
Rio Doce Valley	3.76	8.30
West	2.42	4.90
South and Southwest	0.54	12.40
Campo das Vertentes	1.21	2.80
Zona da Mata	2.82	11.10
Total	100.00	100.00

Distribution of posts per dominant and secondary position in each thread

Thread	Dominant Position (%)	Secondary Position (%)	Difference (%)	Grand Total
1) Election threshold	56.60	37.74	18.86	53
2) Electoral alliances	62.07	18.97	43.10	58
3) Date of inaugurations	47.22	36.11	11.11	36
4) Party loyalty	68.18	16.67	51.51	66
5) Party affiliation and electoral residency	81.58	13.16	68.42	38
6) Campaign finance	45.63	42.72	2.91	103
7.1) Reelection*	50.54	41.94	8.60	93
7.2) Term of office*	46.55	36.21	10.34	58
8) Electoral systems	76.92	14.10	62.82	78
9) Alternate senator	80.43	8.70	71.73	92
10) Unification of elections	68.67	24.10	44.57	83

Distribution of posts: presence of justification in each thread in categories of dominance

Dominance	With reason	Without reason	Total
0.00% – 70.00%	399 (65.09%)	214 (34.91%)	613 (100.00%)
70.01% – 100.00%	129 (56.09%)	101 (43.91%)	230 (100.00%)
Total	528 (62.63%)	315 (37.37%)	843 (100.00%)

Pearson's chi-squared test (with one degree of freedom) equals to 5.7919 (p=0.016)

Distribution of posts: presence of justification in each thread in categories of the dominance index

Dominance index*	With reason	Without reason	Total
0.00% |− 10.34%	132 (64.08%)	74 (35.92%)	206 (100.00%)
10.34% |− 51.51%	267 (65.60%)	140 (34.40%)	407 (100.00%)
51.51% |−| 100.00%	129 (56.09%)	101 (43.91%)	230 (100.00%)
Total	528 (62.63%)	315 (37.37%)	843 (100.00%)

Pearson's chi-squared test (with one degree of freedom) equals to 5.9277 (p=0.052)

Frame analysis

Frame	Frequency	Percent
Party vs. Individual	115	19.07
Proximity between representative and represented (Accountability and Transparency)	129	21.39
Costs and Logistics	105	17.41
Balance of political forces	54	8.96
Brazilian Political Culture	20	3.32
Change vs. Permanence	55	9.12
Public vs. Private	98	16.25
Other	27	4.48
Total	603	100.00

Distribution of posts per presence of reciprocity in categories of dominance

Dominance*	With Reciprocity	Without Reciprocity	Total**
0.00% – 50.00%	7 (2.88%)	236 (97.12%)	243 (100.00%)
50.01% – 100.00%	47 (7.83%)	553 (92.17%)	600 (100.00%)
Total	54 (6.41%)	789 (93.59%)	843 (100.00%)

Pearson's chi-squared test (with one degree of freedom) equals to 7.0761 (p=0.008)

Distribution of frames within each thread

Thread	Dominant frame (%)	Secondary frame (%)	Grand total
1) Election threshold	30.43	28.26	46
2) Electoral alliances	55.10	28.57	49
3) Date of inaugurations	64.29	14.29	14
4) Party loyalty	75.93	16.67	54
5) Party affiliation and electoral residency	48.15	18.52	27
6) Campaign finance	30.08	22.56	133
7) Reelection and term of office	41.38	21.84	87
8) Electoral system	42.65	29.41	68
9) Alternate senator	67.31	11.54	52
10) Unification of elections	58.90	10.96	73

Disrespect

Mutual Respect	Disrespect	Respect	Total
Towards arguments	2 (0.27%)	743 (99.73%)	745 (100.00%)
Towards other groups and persons	13 (1.74%)	732 (98.26%)	745 (100.00%)

Articulation between arenas
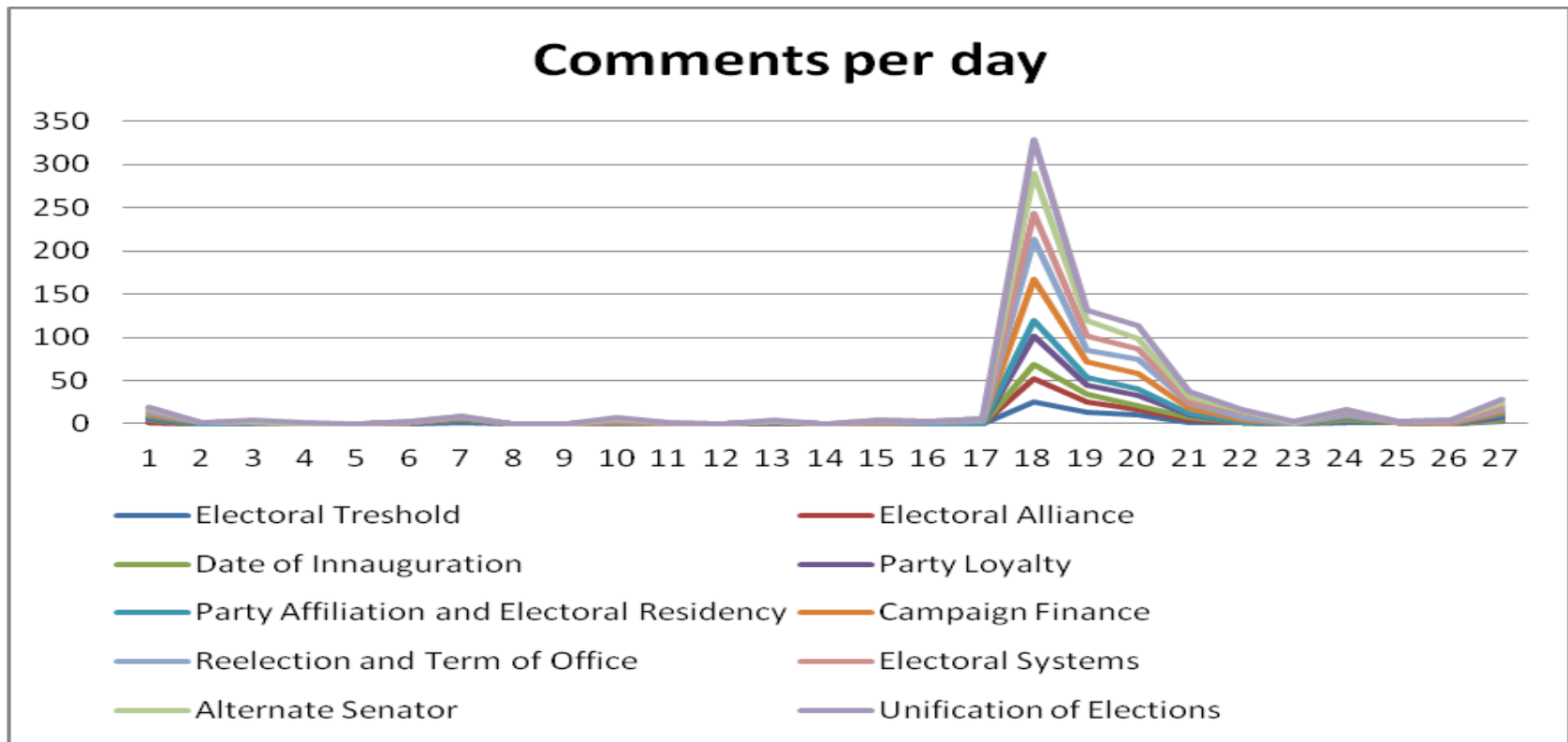
Thank you

Ricardo Fabrino Mendonça

ricardofabrino@fafich.ufmg.br