Deliberation in parliaments: a review of the empirical, rhetorical and systemic approaches

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ABSTRACT Introduction: This essay discusses three different approaches to the study of deliberation in parliaments: empirical, rhetorical and systemic. **Materials and Methods:** Through a critical review of the scientific literature, this work addresses some conceptual and analytical problems of the empirical-quantitative strategies aimed at measuring parliamentary deliberation, emphasizing the utility of the rhetorical and systemic approaches to grasp the agonist component of parliamentary debates and also their embeddedness within the broader political system. **Results:** The paper shows that deliberative dynamics within the democratic chambers cannot be reduced to a formal, closed and quantifiable debate. Hence, it proposes an alternative model for the analysis of deliberative processes in this institution. **Discussion:** The heterogeneous nature of parliaments recommends studying the deliberative phenomenon in different moments and instances, which includes formal debates, closed door meetings and even informal exchanges outside the plenary and committees. This view challenges the dominance of the empirical-quantitative framing of parliamentary deliberation in the scientific literature and supports a more holistic research strategy based on the combination of the empirical, rhetorical and systemic approaches.

KEYWORDS: parliaments; deliberation; rhetoric; Discourse Quality Index; literature review.

I. Introduction[1]

With the new century, the 'empirical turn' in research on deliberation has focused on assessing to what extent the normative postulates of deliberative theory may be transferred to daily politics (Habermas 2005). However, the success of the empirical approaches on deliberation on a small scale (Ryfe 2002; Gastil & Levine 2005; Fung 2007) and in experimental groups (Mendelberg 2002; Delli Carpini et al., 2004; Fishkin & Luskin 2005; Karpowitz & Mendelberg 2007) has not been transferred with the same emphasis to the analysis of central institutions in representative democracy. In addition, while the debates on democracy of the 1920s and 1930s placed the parliament in a central position, recent research on democracy theory has made evident a notable lack of attention to parliamentary deliberation (Rosales 2014). This is the case even when, at least normatively, parliaments are considered a deliberative institution.

The presence of political parties in legislative assemblies at the beginning of the 20th century modified key elements in the praxis of classical parliamentarism (Manin 1997, pp.195-196), stressing the agonist component of debate in parliaments. The tension between the deliberative ideal and the empirical reality of modern parliamentarism was crudely expounded by Carl Schmitt in *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy* [1923], where he denounced the assemblies of the liberal period that had ended up turning into the scene of confrontation among parties, reducing the meaning of the institution to the display of conflicts, negotiation and vote counting (Schmitt 1985, pp.48-50). Thus, since the Second World War, parliaments have been mainly studied by political scientists as a field for partisan battles where voting prevails over argumentation. How-

ever, neither the predominance of contemporary executives nor the weight of the political parties in the operation of most democratic parliaments necessarily mean that this institution has completely lost its deliberative function, i.e., its capacity for reflection and rational exchange of arguments about the issues covered.

After Mezey's seminal work (1979), most of the comparative studies on parliaments have focused on their legislative performance and, specifically, on their active or reactive position before the Executive's initiatives, i.e., their ability to pass their own policy proposals or, at least, to modify or reject those formulated by the Government (Norton 1998a, 1998b; Arter 2006; Baldwin 2005). But addressing parliamentary deliberation involves studying the embeddedness of this institution in the democratic sphere, which means analyzing not only its legislative performance but also other functions such as the control of the Executive or the way that the main political debates are displayed.

However, until recently, empirical research on parliamentary deliberation has been almost non-existent. The publication of *The Mild Voice of Reason* (Bessette 1994) may be considered a turning point. This work criticizes the dominant interpretation that considers decision-making in the American Congress as a preference aggregation procedure. In contrast to this view, Bessette relies on the study of specific legislative debates to state that the House of Representatives is still a deliberative entity. Subsequently, the work of Lascher (1996) sets the ground for an empirical approach to this matter by suggesting indicators as well as explanatory factors of legislative deliberation. A decade later, the group made up of Steiner, Bächtiger, Spörndli & Steenbergen (Steiner et al., 2004) opened a quantitative line of research based on their own instrument for measuring deliberation - the Discourse Quality Index - applied to the discourses generated in parliamentary debates. Other researchers have also used the Discourse Quality Index (hereafter, DQI) to quantify parliamentary deliberation. For example, Roald & Sangolt (2011) and Lord & Tamvaki (2013) rely on the DQI in their studies about the level of deliberation in the European Parliament, while Marcos-Marné (2015) uses it in his assessment of debates in the *Congreso de los Diputados*. In this sense, the DQI constitutes a dominant instrument in the measurement of parliamentary deliberation. In addition, other quantitative approaches - Mucciaroni & Quirk (2006), Bara et al. (2007), Esterling (2011), Weale et al. (2012) - also focus on the minutes generated by formal debates within the chambers.

In contrast to the current predominance of this approach, this paper holds that the study of deliberation in contemporary parliaments cannot rely exclusively on the quantitative analysis of formal debates within the chambers, as this strategy is insufficient to grasp the complex interconnection of this institution with other actors of the political system. A merely formal analysis of parliamentary discourses leads to an assessment of deliberation on the basis of a rather partial manifestation of what goes on in parliaments, dismissing the possibility of deliberation occurring in private and informal interactions taking place before the official debates. Alternatively, focusing on the rhetorical dimension of parliamentary debates makes it possible to capture the agonist nature of this type of communication and to reveal important determinants in the deliberative capacity of this institution.

Furthermore, the paper argues that assessing the deliberative impact of this institution requires a conceptual differentiation between internal deliberation, aimed at forming the will of the parliament in legislative matters, and an external contribution of this body to the debate in the public sphere: both dimensions broadly correspond to different parliamentary functions, use different communicative logics and produce different effects on the political system. Therefore,

the study of deliberation in parliaments also benefits from the 'systemic turn' in deliberative theory (Goodin 2005; Dryzek 2010; Curato 2012; Mansbridge et al., 2012; Parkinson & Mansbridge 2012; Owen & Smith 2015).

The paper will proceed as follows. The next section highlights some conceptual and analytical problems of the DQI as the dominant empirical strategy for measuring parliamentary deliberation. In the third section, a rhetorical analysis of parliamentary debate is carried out in order to identify some elements that condition the deliberative potential of contemporary assemblies. The fourth section presents a systemic approach that addresses the shortcomings of quantitative strategies such as the DQI. The idea here is that parliamentary deliberation is determined both by structural and contextual factors whose interaction can only be analyzed through a holistic framework that grasps the embeddedness of parliaments within the broader political system. Finally, the paper concludes that agonist and deliberative dynamics coexist in democratic parliaments, while the latter cannot be deemed as a moment of formal, closed and quantifiable debate.

II. Measuring Parliamentary Deliberation with the Discourse Quality Index

Relying on the analysis of parliamentary debates through the DQI, the group made up of Steiner, Bächtiger, Spörndli and Steenbergen (2004) hold that the fact that an 'ideal speech situation' as described by Habermas is rarely produced in real politics does not dismiss the deliberative model as a regulative criterion to determine where a given political discourse lies on the 'total absence of deliberation - ideal deliberative situation' continuum (Steiner 2008, p.189). Here, the DQI becomes, according to their promoters, the instrument able to measure the deliberative quality of political discourses.

In the DQI, the unit of analysis is the 'speech act', i.e., a discourse delivered by a speaker during a parliamentary debate (Steiner et al., 2004, pp.52-73). The text of the discourse, included in the minutes, is broken down into smaller units, so that only the parts containing a demand or proposal about a specific decision are coded[2], since it is there where potentially deliberative features may be found (Bächtiger et al., 2007, p.88). This index originally had seven indicators designed to capture the Habermasian concept of deliberation: 1) speaker's ability to participate freely in a debate without being interrupted, 2) level of justification (to what extent a speech gives good or poor justification for its demands), 3) content of justifications (whether appeals are made in terms of narrow group interests or in terms of the common good), 4) respect for the groups that are to be helped through particular policies, 5) respect toward the demands of other actors, 6) respect toward the counterarguments (whether the speaker ignores or acknowledges the counterarguments raised by other speakers), 7) 'constructive politics', which measures if the debate leads to consensus building.

As each indicator is paired with coding numerical values, the possibility to quantitatively measure the deliberative quality of discourses is the main difference between this empirical approach and other previous experiences (Steiner et al., 2004, pp.46-47). The reliability of this instrument, as they argue, is backed by the statistical data showing a great coincidence between the coding decisions independently made by two different analysts (Steiner et al., 2004, pp.67-73), which would mean that the indicators and their respective coding values are clear enough to be applied coherently by different researchers to different debates. Thus, according to their promoters, the DQI accomplishes four goals: it is theoretically grounded, it applies to observable phenomena, it is general and reliable.

[2]Coding a text involves conferring a certain value on sentences or words in accordance with a previously established categorization schema. In the case of the DQI, which uses a manual coding, the specification of coding values and the instructions for applying them are set out in Steiner et al. (2004, pp.170-179).

Building upon the DQI these authors test their hypotheses in order to state that institutional and polarization factors influence the quality of parliamentary deliberation. Thus, deliberation would be maximized in consensual democracies, with presidential systems (Washington model), when the opposition has veto power, in debates in second chambers (senates), in fora with no publicity and on low-polarized issues (Steiner et al., 2004, p.135). Nonetheless, they note that parliamentary deliberation cannot be explained exclusively relying on those factors, as there is scope for a different action within the same institutional context. Thus, although the institutional rules may influence the option for a co-operative or competitive interaction, this choice can also respond to the basic strategies of the parties, or to a specific role played by an actor in a certain context. In this sense, they acknowledge that the partisan strategies restrict the deliberative potential of many parliamentary debates imposing a limit to the 'institutional engineering' (Steiner et al., 2004, pp.122; Bächtiger et al., 2008, p.287; Bächtiger & Hangartner 2010, p.625).

However, the results provided by applying the DQI to selected parliamentary discourses are puzzling: out of its seven indicators, only the three indicators intended to capture the deliberative notion of 'respect' - to the affected groups, to the demands of interlocutors and to counterarguments - move coherently in relation to the main hypotheses. In contrast, the data provided by the remaining indicators are weakly related with respect to the same discourse, or they even contradict each other (Steiner et al., 2004, pp.99-104, 165; Bächtiger & Hangartner 2010, p.619). In this regard, the indicator of 'constructive politics' is particularly relevant: in a parliamentary debate where participants are willing to yield to the force of the better argument, a direct correlation may be expected between high levels of respect to the counterarguments of the adversary and the changes in the political positions after the debate. However, the results obtained using the DQI show a frequent contradiction between, on the one hand, high levels of respect to counterarguments and demands of the adversary and, on the other, very low levels in the indicator of 'constructive politics', that is, all participants stand by their initial positions after the debate dismissing any attempt of reconciliation (Steiner et al., 2004, p.136; Bächtiger et al., 2005, p.235; 2007, p.94).

I maintain that the measurement difficulties using the DQI reveal both conceptual and analytical problems. Firstly, Steiner et al. (2004) depart from a stretched concept of deliberation, which makes them dismiss an essential element in Habermasian theory such as sincerity, as they admit that it is impossible to measure the veracity of the statements made by the legislators (Steenbergen et al., 2003, p.26; Bächtiger et al., 2005, p.232). Although they state that this difficulty does not rule out the DQI as a measuring instrument (Steiner et al., 2004, p.70), the fact is that the incapacity to distinguish between communicative 'speech acts' and strategic 'speech acts' questions the validity of its coding, since the DQI is not able to grasp the rhetorical element of parliamentary discourses. Thus, in a debate, legislators can disguise strategic positions with formal appeals to the common good, respect or consensus. The DQI could give a high deliberative value to hypocritical discourses, since it would attribute high scores to formal expressions that hide the speaker's actual intentions.

Instead of concluding that their quantitative instrument does not grasp the rhetorical elements of parliamentary discourses, latter works within this line of research develop a sub-index based on the aggregate values of respect in the original DQI (Bächtiger et al., 2008; Bächtiger & Hangartner 2010). However, this new measurement leaves aside essential elements of the concept of deliberation. Hypothetically, a parliamentary debate that scored an average amount for 'respect' and 'constructive politics' could have the same overall DQI score as one that was high on 'respect' and low on 'constructive politics'. But they would be far from similar. A debate may reflect high levels of respect and yet

not be deliberative if the parties are not really willing to yield to the force of the better argument. In this regard, the Habermasian idea of deliberation cannot be empirically addressed through partial aggregate indicators without causing a conceptual change. Deliberation requires respect to the demands and counter-arguments of the interlocutor as much as it requires a real disposition to change one's position if his reasons are more solid than ours[3]. In fact, Steiner et al. (2004) conceded in subsequent works that a formal assessment of a discourse's properties may validate poor substantive justifications. Paying attention to language's causal particles and to the formal volume of justifications leads to high values in the coding of parliamentary discourses that may not constitute a good deliberation (Bächtiger et al., 2010, p.41-42).

The second and most important deficiency of research with the DQI lies in its analytical approach, excessively focused on the importance of the formal exchange of discourses in institutional settings. Reducing the assessment of parliamentary deliberation to the study of texts gathered in plenary or committee sessions involves decontextualizing the meaning of the parliamentary debate, which takes place within a more complex dynamic. Deliberation involves a dialogical component which is unlikely to be found in formal discourses displayed before a wide audience which, in many cases, it is not primarily constituted by those sited in the chambers. For instance, the DQI 'ignores the external function of discourses' (García Guitián 2014, p.217), usually targeting audiences beyond the members of parliament, including political actors at infra and supra-state levels. Focusing on formal stages leads us to miss the interactions taking place in other contexts and among other actors.

Reducing the idea of parliamentary deliberation to a quantitative assessment of formal speeches means missing a broader view of the parliament's actual embeddedness within the political system and the constraints that such fitting imposes on the deliberative capacity of its members. Thus, for instance, a Spanish legislator feels the pressure to argue in favor of his government's legal proposal even against his own judgement, due to the close ties between the Executive and Legislative in a parliamentary model. On the other hand, the rigid separation between these two powers in the US presidential model allows an American senator to defend his criteria even against his political coreligionists in government. As the fourth section of the paper will show, parliamentary activity is determined by internal and external factors whose interaction can only be grasped from a holistic framework.

III. Parliamentary Rhetoric

From an agonist perspective, the legislators want to convince others, not to be convinced (Hendriks et al., 2007, p.369), which turns this forum into a place for confrontation, and parliamentary debate into a persuasion game by means of discourses. In legislative assemblies, unlike discussions aimed at seeking for truth, the debate is aimed at making decisions within a time limit (Palonen 2008). In addition, speakers represent conflicting political options, which means that they face discussions with a competitive spirit that encourages the defense of one's own statements and the attack on the opposite position (Ilie 2007, p.134). To this effect, language, far from being a neutral vehicle, turns into a battlefield where contenders try to impose their conceptual frames (Kohn 2000, p.412; Tsakona 2012).

In this sense, a rhetorical analysis makes it possible to contextualize the parliamentary discourses within the agonist dynamic where they are given, which includes strategic and emotional uses, non-verbal elements and interaction between the speaker and the audience. More precisely, this viewpoint reveals two dichotomies substantially conditioning the deliberative potential of parlia-

ments: the dialogical or monological nature of communication; and the existence (or lack thereof) of publicity in debates.

Firstly, parliamentary discourse is characterized by a regulated interaction among participants which brings into play institutionalized communication patterns (Ilie 2010a, p.8). In parliamentary debates, a speaker's intervention is usually strictly regulated according to internal rules, establishing the conditions for the presidency to give the floor, the way in which speakers must behave when they have the floor and the time constraints they must respect (Ilie 2007, p.135). These norms put clear limits on spontaneity and even more on the possibility of striking up a real dialogue as expected in deliberation (Landwehr & Holzinger 2010, pp.389-390). The lack of a fluent dialogue usually turns the debate into a succession of monologues where each legislator defends his position, neither going into reasoning with the previous speaker nor, consequently, offering arguments to refute him.

Secondly, parliamentary debates today are usually covered by the media in most democratic countries, so representatives are aware that they are being evaluated by an audience that goes beyond those present in the chamber (Ilie 2007, p.132; Habermas 2005, p.390). Thus, in a context of partisan battle, the will to overcome in the public dispute reinforces the agonist dynamic in this forum. In this regard, the great difference between the current parliamentary debate and that of previous periods is that today the oratory does not aim at convincing the legislators as much as it aims at justifying before the public opinion the decisions previously taken in other places (Marafioti 2007, pp.95, 105).

Representatives try to meet the expectations of their voters, which makes them remain firm in their positions rather than contradicting themselves before their electorate (Stasavage 2007, pp.60-62). On the contrary, debates behind closed doors allow them to change their positions without fear of penalization (Chambers 2005, p.260; Elster 1998, pp.109-111). While in the first case publicity contributes to increase the confrontation, in the second case the exchange of opinions and information in a discreet environment can reduce the discrepancies based on mistaken data or premises, favoring consensus (Stasavage 2007, p.61). From this perspective, in parliaments, the normative principle of publicity would contradict in practice one of the epistemic aims of deliberation, which is the search for the most reasonable decisions. Deliberation would need publicity to safeguard the public interest - restricting the appearance of sectarian interests - while it would also require reserved contexts to protect the quality of reasoning or, as Chambers puts it, the 'Socratic element' of deliberation. This 'Socratic element' requires a debate 'in dialogue with others', which can be achieved more easily in reserved fora (Chambers 2005, p.258).

In fact, a reserved debate does not necessarily involve abandoning public reason, as nothing keeps participants in a closed deliberation from defending the general interest. Liberal democracies provide examples of reserved contexts - supreme courts, cabinet meetings, constitutional committees - which are more adequate for a calm reasoned discussion for the sake of the collective interest (Gutmman & Thompson 1996, p.104; Bessette 1994, pp.205-209). Although nothing guarantees that closed meetings achieve high deliberative standards, many pressures leading to an agonist dynamic disappear in this context. However, secrecy increases the risk of participants moving towards negotiation, pressures or the mere exchange of favors as a way to reach agreements (Chambers 2004, p.404; Elster 1998, p.110). Therefore, we face a dilemma that demands we weigh up the conflicting values according to the circumstances.

At this point it should be borne in mind that, after the so-called 'rhetorical turn' of political theory, the traditional dichotomous opposition between rhetoric (emotion) and deliberation (reason) is giving way to views that try to inte-

grate both ideas coherently (Garsten 2006; Yack 2006; Dryzek 2010). More precisely, Chambers (2004, pp.401-402) defends the possibility of a 'deliberative rhetoric', able to combine the Socratic element of truth-seeking and the political uses of emotion oriented to the common good. Thus, what this author calls 'plebiscitary rhetoric' would call upon the prejudices and low passions of the audience, would hide the private interests under deceptions and manipulations, and would be dogmatic and opposed to the autonomy of individuals. On the contrary, rhetoric can be deliberative when it calls upon the human capacity for practical judgment and creates a dynamic relationship between the speaker and the audience, where the former promotes reflection and active reasoning instead of visceral reactions (Chambers 2009, p.335).

Is then plebiscitary rhetoric a communicative style inherent to the parliamentary debate? Although the use of plebiscitary or deliberative rhetoric ultimately depends upon the will of the speaker, both the political culture of the country and the tradition of each legislative chamber contribute to socialize its members in certain uses of oratory (Toye 2013, p.5; Bayley 2004, p.14). In this sense, discursive practices vary greatly across European parliaments, some of them being more aggressive and focusing on the emotional side, the use of stereotypes and personal attacks than others (Ilie 2010a, p.6). However, keeping other factors constant, the incentives for a plebiscitary rhetoric will increase as the partisan competition increases around a discussion, what will tend to happen in formal and public debates. In short, combining publicity and parliamentary debate with the partisan interests of political groups tends to reinforce competitive agonism, inviting speakers to use a plebiscitary rhetoric. In addition, this type of rhetoric is also the result of the difficulties for dialogical communication in a forum made up of hundreds of individuals with strict rules for oral interventions.

Thus, debates in a big assembly usually end up being dominated by a small number of charismatic speakers attempting to prevail, calling upon the emotions of the audience and not developing arguments (Elster 1998, p.109). Inversely, the small size of some parliamentary subcommittees would facilitate dialogical relations. Together with this, the informal communication among legislators outside the institutional spaces (in corridors, offices, etc.) could favor communicative exchanges far from the public pressure, but also beyond the scope of quantitative indicators (Arter 2006, p.255). These interactions are dismissed by the analysis of discourses with the DQI.

IV. Parliaments and Political Systems

Democratic parliaments are not an autonomous actor in the political cycle (Norton 1998b, p.190). Analyzing what happens inside this institution requires to understand that it constitutes a convergence point of several dynamics. In this sense, the different designs of the parliamentary institution and the heterogeneity of factors determining the political context of each country hinder the comparative studies between legislatures (Arter 2006, p.247). In order to grasp the interconnection of the parliaments' internal affairs with the broad political dynamics that can affect their deliberative capability, I propose to follow in this section a systemic approach. To do so, I reformulate Mezey's (1979) analytical framework for the comparative study on the parliaments' legislative autonomy - further developed by Norton (1998a, 1998b) and McGann (2006) - focusing this time on the impact of their selected factors on the specific matter of deliberation.

In this sense, there are differences corresponding to the constitutional framing of the parliament or to its development through internal regulations. Others are caused by the uses of each assembly. The complexity lies on the fact that the

constitutional designs interact with the parliaments' internal regulations, as well as with other key elements of the political system, in such a way that one-dimensional explanations can rarely be found. Thus, as mentioned before, differences in the constitutional design may explain the notable independence of the American Congress with respect to the executive power incarnated in the figure of the President, in contrast to parliamentary models such as the British or the Spanish (Linz 1994; Norton 1998a, 1998b). However, the cases of dissidence among British legislators (Kam 2009, pp.1, 3; Baldwin 2005, pp.430-431) notably outnumber those among their Spanish colleagues. Here, elements like the electoral system or the parliamentary tradition of each country add new explicative factors.

Focusing on the discourses delivered during parliamentary debates leads us to miss a broader understanding of the prior interactions taking place in sub-committees, in contacts with members of the government, in meetings between legislators and experts or lobbies, in closed meetings of the parliamentary groups, etc. This empirical-quantitative approach ignores the possibility of deliberation taking place in other places that are more discreet, dialogical and informal, in a more diffuse and sequential way. Therefore, the analysis needs to incorporate a broader view of the internal dynamics and the external determinants that the institution faces regarding its deliberative potential (García Guitián 2014, p.214). Where are discussions held openly? Which stages and parliamentary functions favor dialogical discussions? Who determines the legislators' positions, and how?

Answering these questions requires developing a holistic approach able to dynamically grasp the main determinants of parliamentary deliberation, taking into account the influence that both the political system and the internal configuration of this institution have on the autonomy of its members. Additionally, this approach calls for a broader understanding of the parliament's contribution to deliberation in the public sphere (Habermas 2005, p.390). When deliberation is seen from this perspective, partisanship comes up as a key element, as it limits the representatives' autonomy to change their position in consideration of the arguments they listen to. Here, the degree of partisanship in a parliament may vary depending on factors such as the political culture of the country[4]; the presence of a presidential system or a parliamentary system; the type of electoral system; or the specific design of the committees and sub-committees. Although these factors do not directly determine the level of deliberation, they encourage or discourage competitive or cooperative attitudes among legislators who, in turn, hinder or promote a sincere willingness for deliberation.

In this sense, a systemic approach must distinguish between structural factors and contextual factors of partisanship in parliaments (see Table 1). While the former corresponds to stable elements of the political system, the latter refer to internal determinants of parliamentary activity which may reinforce or re-

[4]For example, Ilie's study on the British and Swedish parliaments found that the first forum, characteristically competitive, displayed higher levels of emotional appeals and polarization. On the contrary, debates in the Swedish assembly focused more on fact-based argumentation to show solvency and personal credibility (Ilie 2004, pp.79-82). Here, these countries' different political cultures could explain their different parliamentary styles.

Table 1 - Partisanship in Parliaments

Structural factors	Contextual factors
Political Culture	Parliamentary Norms and Committee System
Constitutional Design	Publicity of Debates
Electoral System	Issue Polarization
Electoral Candidatures	Absolute / Relative Majority
	Parliamentary Function

Source: elaborated by the author.

duce the trend fixed by the structural elements. In this sense, the structural factors of a country - competitive political culture, Westminster parliamentary model, proportional electoral system with closed lists, a rigid control of electoral candidatures by the party elite - may make the dominant logic in its parliament highly partisan and, therefore, discourage deliberation. Nevertheless, favorable contextual factors may relax that situation in some debates, creating an environment more propitious for communicative rationality.

Narrowing our focus to the contextual factors, an essential field for analysis are the parliamentary norms that set the procedures and the internal life of the institution, since they condition the behavior of the political actors. Strictly regarding the scope for deliberation, the analysis must especially stress two aspects: the control of the political agenda and the existence of dialogical stages favoring cooperation over partisan competition. Concerning the first aspect, in the Westminster model, the governmental control of the parliamentary agenda through its political majority may avoid the formulation of initiatives that are divisive or inappropriate (Carey 2009, p.126; Kam 2009, pp.26-37; Norton 1998a, p.11). On the contrary, when the government does not have a solid parliamentary majority, or when the chamber's regulations guarantee room for minorities in fixing the agenda, the role of the parliament is revitalized (Inter-parliamentary Union 2005, pp.24-25).

Focusing on the design of spaces for cooperative dialogue, the role of the committees and sub-committees acquires a key importance. Once again, the internal regulations of each parliament determine the relationship of these stages with the plenary, their material resources and their influence in the parliamentary functions (Laundy 1989). It is common for parliaments to try to confer a supra-partisan spirit on their legislative committees and sub-committees, seeking cooperative attitudes toward the norms under discussion (Norton 1990, p.145). The paradigm in this regard are the committees and subcommittees of the American Congress, which have traditionally defended their final proposals as the result of an exhaustive deliberation of their members[5] (Bessette 1994, pp.158-162).

Other contextual factors - proposed by Steiner et al. (2004) as original hypotheses - refer to the publicity of parliamentary debates, the degree of polarization of the issue being discussed and the presence or absence of absolute majorities. Firstly, as explained in the previous section, publicity tends to promote partisan competition and the subsequent use of a plebiscitary rhetoric, which explains why most parliamentary committees work behind closed doors where a real political discussion and negotiation takes place[6]. Also, discreet parliamentary group meetings allow the legislators to have a greater deliberative influence on the decisions of their group, which will be later defended in the formal bodies of the chamber (Norton 1998b, p.199). Secondly, the less polarized issues, usually more technical, will tend to favor a constructive attitude among participants. Thirdly, the absence of an absolute majority obliges the relative majority in parliament to reach agreements with the opposition or with a coalition partner in order to go ahead with certain initiatives, which may require a more cooperative style. The 'variable geometry' tried by President Rodríguez Zapatero in the Spanish IX Parliamentary Term (2008-2011) constitutes a good example of this trend (Casal 2012).

As a last contextual factor, parliamentary interventions can be of very different kinds - oral or written questions, discourses given in debates on general politics, discussions in a committee or sub-committee - and respond to communicative logics as different as dialogue, negotiation, the display of conflict or discrediting the opponent (Ilie 2010b, pp. 9-12). In this sense, we should distinguish analytically among the different parliamentary functions, as it is likely

[5]In this sense, innovation experiences such as the one developed in the Scottish parliament are interesting (Davidson & Stark 2011, pp.166-171). In addition, the incorporation of internet and the new technologies to parliaments can improve not only their transparency and accountability but, perhaps, the citizens' involvement on the legislative process (Leston-Bandeira 2007; Bernardes & Leston-Bandeira 2016).

[6]In this regard, Bessette mentions the negative effects on the quality of deliberation in the American Congress of the reforms that opened the legislative process to public scrutiny between 1960 and 1970 (Bessette 1994, pp.221-225). Along the same line, see also Binder and Lee (2013, p.63) and Warren and Mansbridge (2013, pp.106-107).

that the functions of control and political orientation highlight the 'government-opposition' conflict, while partisanship is relaxed in the legislative debates, when the different groups try to influence the final text of the norms through their amendments. Therefore, a greater potential for deliberation may be expected in interactions corresponding to the legislative function.

Finally, we must widen the analytical scope to assess the impact of parliamentary activity within the global political system (Habermas 1996). From this angle, deliberation in parliaments should be seen through the lens of the 'systemic turn' in deliberative theory (Owen & Smith 2015). Concretely, the notion of 'deliberative system' developed by Parkinson & Mansbridge (2012) highlights the possibility of looking at the deliberative ideal beyond deliberative experiences at the local level and in experimental groups. In this sense, what is important for a large-scale deliberative democracy is to use institutional designs to create a well-crafted division of deliberative labor that finally achieves a global impact on the broad public sphere.

According to this framing, while the parliament's legislative function usually corresponds to an internal deliberation aimed at shaping the political will of this body, the function of controlling the government connects with the debate in the public sphere. From this angle, the control function - as well as the debates on general politics, investiture, presidential statements - contributes to disseminating plural information and arguments that help the citizens to form their own political judgment before they exercise electoral accountability (Habermas, 2005, p.388; 2006, p.421). Hence, there would be two different communicative dynamics in parliaments: a legislative deliberation, of an internal nature, and an external communication around government control and the debates on general politics. The first allows alternate formal debate stages and informal dialogue in private places, seeking for cooperation among the involved actors. The second one, an inherently public dynamic, tends to monologue and competition, and thus is often accompanied by plebiscitary rhetoric. However, this kind of debate may end up indirectly introducing issues for deliberation in the public sphere.

V. Conclusion

Although we should not expect parliaments to show the high deliberation standards that may be achieved in other fora carefully designed for that exclusive purpose (Warren 2007, p.284), this does not rule out the existence of deliberative moments in contemporary legislatures. Contributing to the growing interest on this question, this essay suggests that studying deliberation in parliaments requires combining the empirical, rhetorical and systemic approaches in a flexible framework for analysis. Thus, the paper has highlighted two important weaknesses of the DQI as the main quantitative tool for measuring deliberation. In the first place, it cannot measure the sincerity of the speakers, which is one of the key elements in the Habermasian theory of communicative speech acts. Hence, the DQI could give high deliberative scores to hypocritical or strategic uses of language. In the second place, focusing on the formal exchange of discourses in parliamentary sessions implies searching for deliberation in situations where publicity and partisan competition incentive a plebiscitarian rhetoric.

The complexity of studying deliberation in parliaments comes from their special position as an intersection point between deliberative theory and empirical political science. Hence, the heterogeneous nature of this institution recommends studying the deliberative phenomenon in different moments in the life of legislatures through a plurality of strategies, where qualitative methods must play a relevant role. No instrument to measure deliberation is self-sufficient,

which means that the best alternative is combining them (Dryzek 2005). In addition, since potentially deliberative communication may take place in dialogical and informal stages, approaching this phenomenon requires an exploration of the reality hidden behind the discourses. Thus, in-depth interviews with selected parliamentary actors are especially useful, as they provide an indirect approach to the exchanges that take place in private spaces.

Finally, a systemic approach allows us to integrate the determinants responding to the internal organization of the parliamentary activity together with those caused by the insertion of this institution within each political system. This approach also allows us to tackle the parliament's contribution to deliberation in the broad political sphere. In this explanatory model many deliberation types are distributed along different institutions: governments, parliaments, political parties, civil society, media (Habermas 1996; 2005; 2006; Goodin 2005; Neblo 2005; Warren 2007; Curato 2012). From this angle, parliaments have a twofold deliberative potential: one with an internal projection in the formation of its political will, and another with an external projection as an essential part of a complex network of democratic institutions.

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O processo deliberativo nos parlamentos: uma revisão das abordagens empíricas, retóricas e sistêmicas

RESUMO Introdução: Discutimos três abordagens diferentes para estudar o processo de deliberação nos parlamentos: empírica, retórica e sistêmica. **Materiais e Métodos:** Através de uma revisão crítica da literatura científica, abordamos alguns problemas conceituais e analíticos das abordagens empírico-quantitativas destinadas a mensurar a deliberação parlamentar, enfatizando a utilidade das abordagens retóricas e sistêmicas para apreender o componente conflitivo dos debates parlamentares e sua inserção no sistema político mais amplo. **Resultados:** A dinâmica deliberativa das câmaras democráticas não pode ser reduzida a um debate formal, fechado e quantificável. Por isso, propomos um modelo alternativo para a análise dos processos deliberativos. **Discussão:** A natureza heterogênea dos parlamentos recomenda analisar o fenômeno deliberativo em diferentes momentos e instâncias, que incluem debates formais, reuniões a portas fechadas e até trocas informais fora do plenário e das comissões. Essa visão desafia o predomínio do enquadramento empírico-quantitativo da deliberação parlamentar na literatura e defende uma estratégia de pesquisa mais holística, baseada na combinação das abordagens empírica, retórica e sistêmica.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: parlamentos; deliberação; retórica; Índice de Qualidade do Discurso; revisão da literatura.